

The Wounding of James Tague Refutes the Lone-Gunman Theory of the JFK Assassination

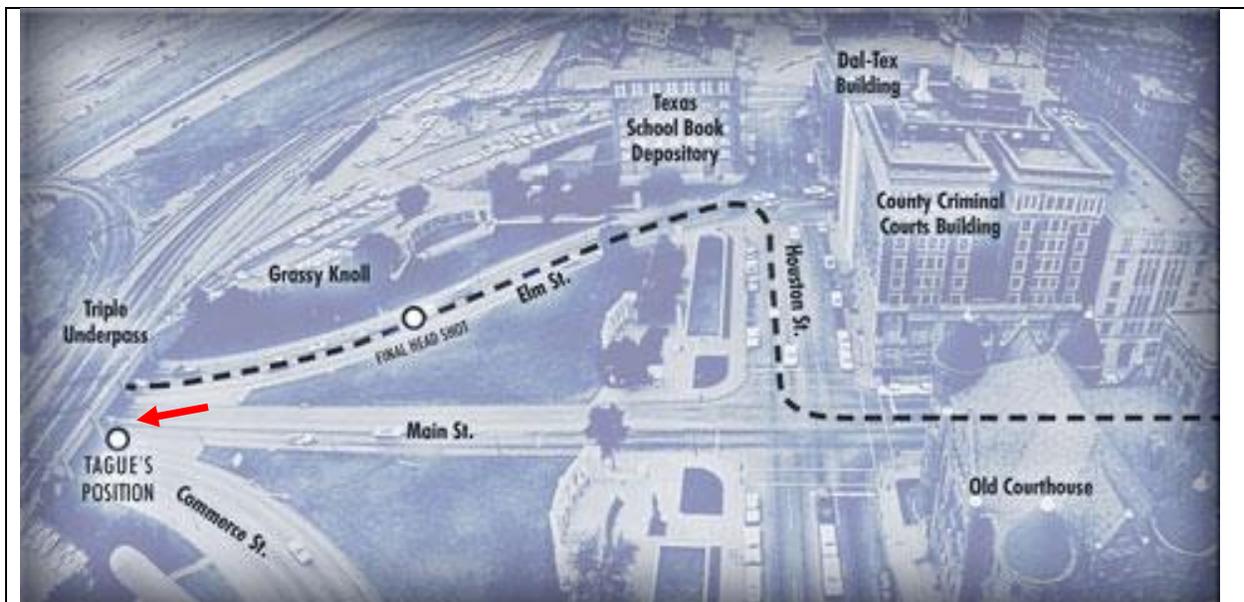
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When the shots were fired at President John F. Kennedy in Dealey Plaza in Dallas on November 22, 1963, James Tague was standing near the triple underpass in the plaza. He was about 450 feet from the Texas School Book Depository (TSBD). Suddenly, a bullet or a large fragment struck the curb on Main Street about 20 feet from where he was standing. Moments after the shooting, a police officer noticed that Tague was bleeding from his left cheek. Tague had been struck by a piece of concrete that had been sent flying by the bullet, or by a fragment from the bullet that hit the curb, or by a fragment that struck him before it hit anything else. The curb scar was deep enough that Tague assumed he could have been cut by a chip of concrete from it. He recalled that when the shooting started he had felt a sting on his cheek. Later, he described the mark on the curb as it appeared when he saw it:

There was a mark. Quite obviously, it was a bullet, and it was very fresh. (Weisberg, *Case Open*, 141; *Warren Commission Report* 116, hereafter cited as WCR [Note: I am using the Barnes & Noble edition of the report.])

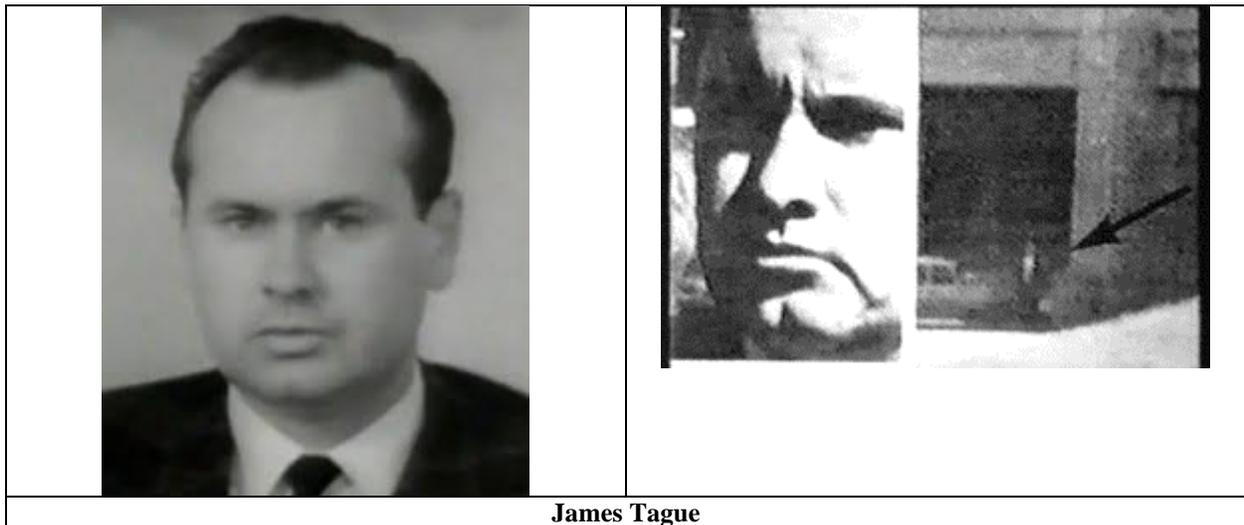
Deputy Sheriff Buddy Walthers, who saw the mark soon after the shooting, agreed that it had been caused by a bullet (Hurt 135). Patrolman Clyde Haygood, who radioed in the incident at around 12:40, said Tague might have been hit “by a ricochet from the bullet off the concrete” (WCR 116; Hurt 131). In a 1966 filmed interview, Tague unequivocally said the curb mark was the result of a bullet striking the curb.



Map of Dealey Plaza Showing James Tague's Location

Why does the wounding of Tague destroy the lone-gunman scenario? For a number of reasons. One reason is that it proves there were at least four bullets fired at the president, but the lone-assassin theory allows for only three shots. There is good evidence, which is now accepted even by several leading Warren Commission (WC) defenders, that the first shot was fired much earlier than the commission thought it was, and that it missed.

The lone-gunman theory allows for only one miss. Yet, if the supposed miss from the sixth-floor window hit the curb near Tague, without striking anything else first, then it was a wild miss. Realizing this fact, and accepting the evidence of an early first-shot miss, most modern lone-gunman theorists claim that only a fragment caused the mark on the curb. Here is where the lone-assassin case gets particularly desperate.



James Tague

J. Edgar Hoover said the mark on the curb must have been caused by the lead fragment of a bullet. The WC suggested the fragment might have come from the fatal head shot. That is, that a lead fragment from the fatal head shot struck the curb and sent a piece of concrete or lead streaking toward Tague. However, the limousine was about 260 feet away from the Tague curb spot when the fatal head shot occurred, so the missile would have had to travel that distance to reach the curb.

Furthermore, according to this hypothesis, the lead fragment separated from its metal jacket while plowing through JFK's skull, exited the skull, then somehow cleared the limousine's roll bar and traveled over 200 feet to the south Main Street curb, yet struck the curb with enough force (1) to send a concrete chip flying 20 feet, and (2) to cause that chip to cut Tague's face at the end of the 20-foot journey.

But after plowing through a human skull, it is extremely doubtful the fragment could have traveled over 200 feet and still have been moving fast enough to visibly mark the curb and to send a concrete chip, or a lead fragment, streaking toward Tague. Moreover, how could the supposed fragment have traveled the required distance and speed, when two other fragments from the head shot dropped into the car and did not even penetrate the windshield or the soft

surfaces on which they were found? Other researchers have noted the marked implausibility of this theory. Jim Marrs:

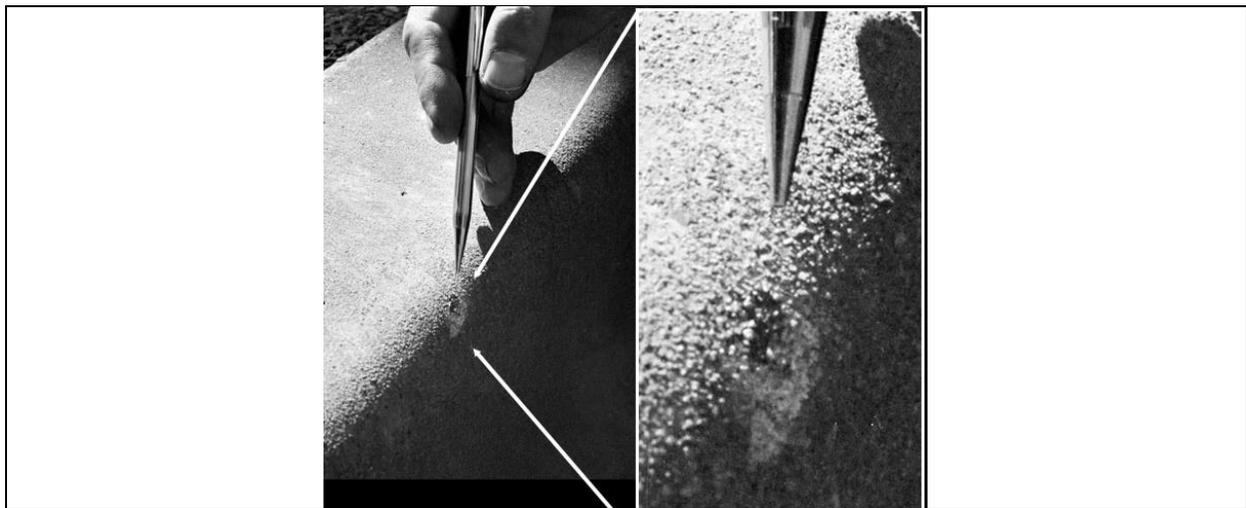
. . . the only . . . [bullet] that could have lost such an amount of lead is the final head shot and that was at a location more than 200 feet away, a considerable distance for a small fragment to travel and still impact the curb as described.

If the bullet mark on the curb was a miss, it was an incredible miss. If the shot that struck the Main Street curb came from the Texas School Book Depository's sixth floor, it must have missed Kennedy by thirty-three feet in the air and twenty-one feet to the right. Such a miss is hardly compatible with that claim that Oswald was able to hit home with two out of three shots from his inefficient rifle aiming at a target moving laterally and away from him. . . . (Marrs 63)

Sylvia Meagher:

It [the WC] suggests that a fragment from the bullet that hit the President's head might have produced the mark on the curb, ignoring the fact that two large fragments (equivalent respectively to one-fourth and one-eighth of the mass of the bullet) had dropped into the car without even penetrating the windshield or the relatively soft surfaces on which they were found. (WCR 76-77, 557; 5 H 66-74) If those fragments suffered such a dramatic loss of velocity upon impact and fragmentation, how could a different piece of the bullet retain sufficient momentum to travel about 260 feet farther, and to cut Tague's face and/or mark the curb? (Meagher 7)

Moreover, in order for a fragment from the head shot to have struck the curb near Tague, it would have had to somehow fly over the limousine's roll bar and its windshield, and then dive down to the curb. However, it is hard to imagine how the fragment could have flown over the roll bar and/or the windshield, much less dived down to hit the curb and still retained enough force to create a readily visible mark on the curb and to send a concrete chip, or a piece of the bullet fragment, streaking toward Tague.



The Mark on the Curb Near Tague

In addition, if the missile had been fired from the sixth-floor window, the bullet would have approached from the right rear and would have struck the head at a downward angle of around 20 degrees. How would a fragment from such a bullet have traveled upward so as to clear both the roll bar and the windshield?

And even if this amazing fragment had been deflected upward so as to clear the roll bar and windshield, how could it have retained enough force to travel over 200 feet, mark a concrete curb, and then send a concrete chip flying so fast that it could cut a man's face? Even if it is assumed that Tague was cut by something other than a chip of concrete from the curb, there is still the fact that the curb was visibly marked and that some concrete had been blasted out of the curb mark by the object that caused it (which is why Tague and others assumed he could have been cut by a piece of concrete from the curb scar).

Could a fragment from the head shot have struck Tague's face directly, that is, without hitting anything else first? This suggestion is as problematic as the theory that a fragment caused the mark on the curb. For example, in order to have struck Tague's face, the fragment still would have had to somehow fly over the limousine's roll bar and windshield. Dr. Tom Canning, the trajectory expert for the House Select Committee on Assassinations, told the committee that the windshield damage appeared to be too high to have been caused by a fragment from the head-shot missile. Yet, to accept the theory that a fragment from this bullet somehow reached Tague, we would have to believe that the fragment flew well above the damaged portions of the windshield. In fact, it would have had to clear the roll bar and the windshield. But if it had managed to do this, how could it have gone on to strike the curb and/or Tague with any appreciable force?

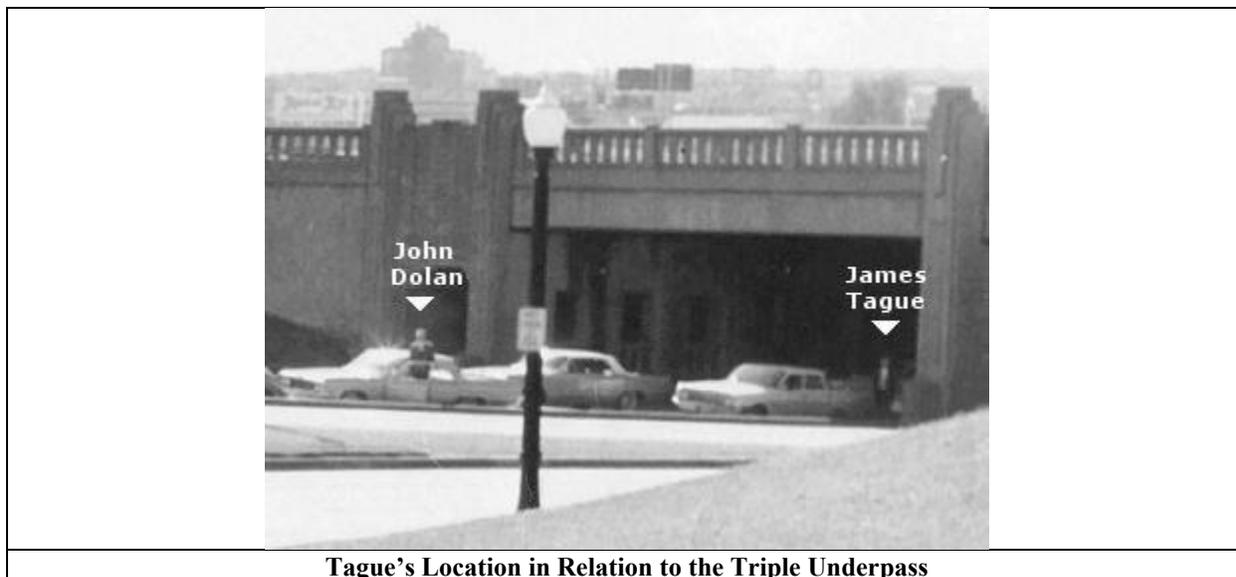
Jim Moore's theory to explain the mark on the curb is even more problematic than the WC's. According to Moore, the first shot struck the road near the right rear of the President's limousine while it, the car, was hidden from the gunman's view by the oak tree in front of the TSBD. Then, says Moore, this missile bounded low beneath the car and then traveled diagonally until it hit the curb, which was nearly 300 feet away (Moore 198). But the metal smears taken from the mark on the curb had no traces of copper in them, which means the bullet that caused the mark could not have been the copper-jacketed ammunition that Oswald supposedly used, assuming the FBI crime lab accurately reported the results of its analysis of the smears.

To make matters worse, Moore says the first shot was fired at frame 186 of the Zapruder film, when the limousine appeared for a split second between a break in the foliage of the oak tree in front of the Depository (Moore 123, 198). Even the WC was highly skeptical of the idea that a gunman would have fired at this time (WCR 98, 105). The gunman would have had only 1/18th of a second to aim and fire during the foliage break, but the human eye requires 1/6th of a second to register and react to data.

Why would the alleged lone assassin have fired at Z186 when this shot would have had very little chance, if any, of hitting the target and could have alerted the President's driver that the limousine was under attack? (Of course, a gunman firing from the Dal-Tex Building or from the County Records Building would have had a good shot at the limousine just after the limousine

turned onto Elm Street, but lone-assassin theorists claim that all the shots were fired from the sixth floor of the Book Depository.)

The most fanciful theory of all has been proposed by Gerald Posner, the author of the book *Case Closed*. Posner suggests that the mark on the curb was caused by a lead fragment from a bullet that allegedly struck a limb of the oak tree, in spite of the fact that the tree whose limb the bullet supposedly hit was at least 400 feet from the curb. Additionally, according to Posner, this was the first shot, but Tague said it was the second shot that caused the mark on the curb and/or that wounded his face (Weisberg, *Case Open*, 146-147; WCR 116).



Moreover, Posner theorizes that the lead core separated from its copper jacketing after the alleged tree-branch collision and then traveled over 400 feet in a straight line from the Depository to the curb (Posner 326). However, after separating from the jacket and then flying over 400 feet, it is highly doubtful the lead core would have been able to hit the curb with enough force to cause a concrete chip to reach Tague with enough speed to visibly cut his face, nor is it at all likely that such a lead fragment would have had enough force to fly straight to Tague's face and then cut it.

Another problem with Posner's theory is that it would require us to believe that the alleged lone assassin fired--and missed--sometime between Zapruder frames 140 and 166 (see Posner 324; see also Weisberg, *Case Open*, 98). But to make this assumption, we would have to believe that the supposed lone gunman *completely missed, not only Kennedy, but the entire limousine*, from an elevation of 60 feet and from a distance of less than 140 feet. Even the WC admitted it was hard to believe the gunman would have been so wildly off the mark with his first and closest shot (WCR 111).

Additionally, in order for Posner's errant shot to have fragmented off a tree limb, one would think the missile would have had to strike far enough up the limb so that the limb would not move, bend, or snap when the bullet hit it. This would have been a staggering miss from the sixth-floor window.

There are several factors behind Moore's and Posner's convoluted theories:

One, there is persuasive eyewitness testimony that a shot was fired between Z185 and Z190. (In fact, there is good evidence that one shot was fired at around Z140-150 and that another one was fired at around Z190.)

Two, Moore and Posner cannot allow for the possibility that a gunman was firing from one of the buildings adjacent to the TSBD, such as the Dal-Tex Building or the County Records Building, even though those buildings would have afforded an assassin a good view of the limousine from frames 140-210 and beyond.

Three, they cannot accept the plausible suggestion that the mark on the curb was caused by a non-copper-jacketed bullet, or possibly by a lead bullet, because the alleged lone gunman supposedly used copper-jacketed ammunition. Nor can they accept the equally plausible suggestion that the mark was caused by a large fragment from a missed shot that struck much farther down on Elm Street (and, of course, much closer to the south Main Street curb near Tague).

The mark on the curb near Tague and Tague's resulting facial injury present lone-gunman theorists with severe difficulties. Oswald supposedly used copper-jacketed bullets, but the metal smears taken from the mark on the curb had no traces of copper in them, or at least so the FBI said. (This claim cannot be verified because, incredibly, the FBI destroyed the spectrographic plate from the curb scar.)

If it is claimed that the mark was caused by a direct strike from the lone gunman's errant shot, then the single-assassin theory is refuted by the absence of copper in the metal smears and by the significant nature of the miss. On the other hand, if it is assumed that the mark was caused by a lead fragment, the closest fragment that the lone-gunman theory can offer was over 200 feet away, had just finished plowing through a human skull, and would have had to fly over the limousine's roll bar.

It is worth noting that the WC's staffers tried to ignore the wounding of Tague. Before they finally acknowledged the incident, they (along with the FBI and the Secret Service) made the common-sense assumption that Kennedy and Connally were hit by separate bullets (Weisberg, *Selections*, 322-329).

The plain fact of the matter is that the Tague wounding reveals the patently implausible nature of the single-assassin scenario. All of the reasonable explanations for the absence of copper in the curbing section and for Tague's facial injury are incompatible with the lone-gunman theory.

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