

14 December 1966

Dr. John K. Lattimer
180 Fort Washington Avenue
New York, N.Y.

Dear Dr. Lattimer,

Your article on the assassination of President Kennedy in the October 24, 1966 JAMA belatedly has come to my attention. I will take the liberty of commenting on one or two points.

You say on page 327, column 3, paragraph 2, that 6.5 bullets do not distort readily, citing a study of wound ballistics in World War II. May I invite your attention to Commission Exhibit No. 856 (Bearings and Exhibits, XVII, page 850). Although 260 rounds of ammunition were acquired for the wound penetration tests conducted at Edgewood Arsenal (V, page 75), the Exhibits present only two of the test bullets after firing. Arlen Specter, the assistant counsel who was responsible for the relevant phase of evidence, has conceded that not one of the test bullets emerged after single bone penetration undeformed. Since the stretcher bullet supposedly shattered a rib as well as a radius, it is incomprehensible to most students of the evidence that it should have emerged undeformed, unutilated, and all but pristine.

Although you argue on page 327 that bullets of this caliber do not distort readily (even after shattering 10 cm. of the fifth rib and the right radius), you then suggest on page 332 that the mark on the curb may have been caused by a bullet disrupted when it struck a twig, a fragment of whose lead core proceeded to strike the concrete. Here the reasoning escapes me--I would have thought that bone was as hard as or harder than a twig.

I greatly regret that time does not permit me to undertake the detailed discussion of the condition of the alleged assassination rifle which the rifle deserves. It was not the scope alone that was defective, but also the bolt and the trigger (see testimony of Dr. Simmons, III; pages 447-451). The rifle capability of the alleged assassin, and the marksmanship tests by three master (champion) riflemen, require even longer exposition, which I shall not attempt. The facts have been set forth in a number of published works, including Inquest, by Edward Jay Epstein, which I commend to you.

Your article does not discuss the controversy which centers around the autopsy findings and photographs, which is just as well. Had you treated that problem, you might have encountered considerable difficulty in maintaining belief in the lone assassin or, indeed, in any of the findings set forth in the Warren Report.

Yours sincerely,

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