

December
7 November 1970

Dear Sylvia:

The enclosed letter to Wecht is self-explanatory.

Enclosed also is the first draft of a monograph on the multiple minute fragments.

Braverman's letter was rude, but true. There were simplistic things in my letter to Hoch that I would not have written to a person who knew about firearms. I'll send Braverman a copy of my monograph when it is complete. For all his bluster, I do not anticipate getting from him the sort of help that I want, for he may be chicken. On the ~~outside~~ outside of his envelopes he boldly proclaims: THE SOLUTION TO CRIME IS PUNISHMENT, or something like that. I'll bet he would not live up to his bluster when the chips are down, though.

For your information alone, the pathologist to whom I referred is named Fillinget-- of Philadelphia. Howard Roffman interviewed him on some medical matters pertaining to the assassination. When Howard showed him what the Panel said about the large fragment near the hole in the back of the head, Fillinget volunteered the information that it was evidence ~~of~~ that the bullet entering there was not full metal cased. I gather that his response to the information about the fragment was immediate and unequivocal; this caused me to believe that he had had experience with similar things before, and knew their significance. When Howard passed the information to me I immediately concurred, for although the significance escaped me previously, once it was pointed out it was obvious.

The pertinent information is that the large fragment was located on the outer table of the skull, the ~~outside~~ outside surface. Fillinget said that a full metal cased bullet would not shed a fragment in that place. (I believe that he asserted that the bullet which struck at the back was unjacketed, such as those used in revolvers, but the same would apply to soft-nose rifle bullets--i.e., jacketed all over except at the nose, where lead is exposed. For reasons which I do not discuss here, I think it extremely unlikely that a handgun bullet entered there.)

Hard-nose bullets take time to shed their copper cases. This means that if a full metal cased bullet penetrated at the back of the head, it would have to have penetrated for a certain distance into the bone before it began to shed any of its substance, but that would be too late for it to shed a fragment on the outside of the skull. The same does not apply, however, to soft-nose bullets, or to unjacketed lead slugs. Whereas copper is hard and does not strip away instantaneously when it comes in contact with bone, lead is soft and may begin to strip away when it comes in contact with bone. ~~xxxxxxx~~ Hence, a lead projectile can shed a large fragment (by stripping against the sharp edge of fractured bone, not by bursting-- bursting is possible, but does not apply in this particular case), but a copper coated projectile cannot.

Understand that I do not say this on the basis of my own experience, for I am not familiar with the phenomenon in question. I am merely seeking to explain it in terms of what I know about bullets. The assertion that this happens is Fillinger's. The explanation why it happens is my guess.

By the way, this information was not prompted from Fillinger or in any way hinted to him. Howard was merely disclosing some parts of the Panel Report to him. This was one of them. When he heard what the Panel wrote, he rendered the opinion on his own.

From Howard's remarks I gather that Fillinger ~~knows~~ knows his stuff well. I am not referring to Howard's opinion of Fillinger, but to his descriptions of some things that Fillinger said to him, things that I could evaluate on the basis of knowledge in areas where mine is better than most. He seems very sharp, honest, and not afraid to let his opinions be known.

When my monograph on the fragments is in proper shape, I'm going to ask Howard to show it to him and seek an opinion.

Harold has advised me not to try to publish the material on the fragments, but to let him use it in ~~suits~~ legal suits that he is involved in. There's plenty of time in which to decide, but presently my feeling is that after the thing has been properly prepared and has withstood the scrutiny of recognized experts, it should go to print. If Harold has occasion to use it before I am ready to publish, then I shall not object, but otherwise I shall act with the intent of publishing. I am reluctant to attract attention to myself over this, but I can discern some important tactical advantages in doing so. A new name in the field might draw attention to the matter in a way that old names do not. But before it goes, I want to be assured that the writing is convincing and that the case itself is unassailable.

I am tentatively planning to write an abridged version of the draft that I am sending-- something perhaps more suitable for publication, but I want first to have at least one version that contains all the relevant data

Still,

Dick

P.S. Please don't mention to anyone that I disclosed Fillinger's information to you. Howard bound me to secrecy by all sorts of oaths on the River Styx, and I now anticipate that the furies will begin pursuing me with myriad dire curses. I agree with you that

→ the business of guarding "literary property" is worse than an annoyance, I hate it, and practice it only by sense compulsion.