



Dept of Classics
QUEEN'S UNIVERSITY
KINGSTON, ONTARIO

27 May 1969

Sylvia Meagher
NY, NY

Dear Sylvia:

Enclosed is Josiah Thompson's recent reply to my memo, and my letter to Thompson. I plan to make no revisions in the memo, except perhaps an addition describing Thompson's explanation. I do not believe him.

I would be inclined to accept an innocent explanation if I were not aware of numerous errors in Six Seconds that I cannot attribute merely to carelessness. He has treated the most important issues of the assassination so poorly that it is an easy matter to discredit their importance merely by citing his treatment.

I consider that the worst thing that an analyst of the assassination can do is to be right for the wrong reasons-- worse even than being wrong about the issue itself. In this regard, I do not regard Thompson differently from the way I regard Garrison. I would rather see a dozen George Thompsons on the scene than one Josiah Thompson, for we can laugh off the Georges, but we have to deal seriously with ~~Thomson~~ Josiah's blunders.

The issue of the cartridge case did not turn me against Thompson, for I had noted many serious errors and deficiencies before this. It is just that this one deals with a matter that concerns me, and that it seems the least attributable to innocent error. There are other instances, but not as clear as this.

The results of another test may interest you, for it concerns a matter that you treated in Accessories, the rifle clip that was supposed to fall through the bottom of the rifle when the last round is chambered. I have already sent you a picture showing the clip sticking out of the magazine as Lt. Day is carrying the rifle away from the TSBD. I am satisfied that it is possible for the clip to have jammed in the position that you see it in that picture.

In testing the rifle and clip to which I had access here in Canada, the clip slipped right through and out of the rifle. It virtually rests on air after the last round is chambered, and I would not have supposed that it was possible for it to be in good enough condition to hold cartridges and still be in bad enough condition to jam. I was reluctant to deform the clip that I had, for it was the only one in my possession, but when I visited Weisberg on my recent trip to the States, I used his rifle and clip, and without any effort to deform the clip I found that it jammed in the position where you see it in the Day picture.

Harold took pictures showing how the clip is supposed to drop out of the rifle, and probably will treat the matter in something that he writes. He seemed unconcerned with my advice

that it was not an issue that he should push too far, for it is clear that the explanation that the clip was found in the rifle is satisfactory. It is right to criticize them (as you rightly do) for not taking into consideration that the clip is supposed to fall from the rifle, but I am not sure that Harold will limit himself to that. He did not bother to get pictures of the clip sticking in the rifle.

I consider myself an able critic of prose style, but I have gotten so used to reading Harold's stuff, so eager to focus on the substance, that I missed its deficiencies. With proper advice he could trim his work to a third of the length, and get all the substance with far more impact. This occurred to me very recently, and I regret that I have not offered proper criticism to him. He writes fast and does not bother to rewrite. I doubt whether I could have much influence on him in any case.

Regardless whether the man in the doorway of Altgen's photo is Lovelady or Oswald, the issue is still as important as it ever was. I am not convinced that the man is Lovelady, but will not argue that it is Oswald; I can go either way, depending on what else turns up. I am convinced, however, that the FBI believed that it was ~~Oswald~~ Oswald. Their knowledge at the time indicated that Lovelady was wearing the short-sleeved striped shirt; no other information on Lovelady's shirt ~~xxx~~ existed. Given that information, whether true or not, they had to exclude Lovelady. Perhaps I am wrong, but it is my understanding that Lovelady himself believed that he was wearing the striped shirt and that he had said so when interviewed by a newsman. If that is not correct, then please let me know, for I make much of this matter when I lecture on the assassination. I do not assert that the man is Oswald, but I do assert that the FBI had every reason to believe that the man was Oswald.

Sprague has pictures that CBS took of Lovelady standing in the doorway in his checkered shirt. They did not use them on their TV whitewash.

I doubt whether further research on the cartridge cases will amount to anything that I can use. Further examination of photographs drives me farther and farther away from my initial suspicions. I am disappointed, but not discouraged. There are plenty of other things to fool with. There are many matters that interest me, but I think I'll concentrate on the firearms evidence, for it seems that I am better informed than most critics in that area, and I may be able to spot something that others missed.

If I get into the N.Y. area this summer, I shall try to let you know beforehand, in the hope that I may get to see you for a short time again.

Still,

Dick

Dick Bernabei

P.S. If it will be useful to you, I shall be glad to write a summary account of Thompson's more flagrant errors. I don't have the book before me now, but several examples come to mind readily, matters in which he should have known that he was wrong, and could easily be proved wrong. For example, the photo and caption which depict "witness" Howard Brennan looking up to the Depository window is a piece of blatant fakery, either Thompson's or that of the person who prepared the photo for Thompson. That picture has been severely cropped; the uncropped version clearly shows Brennan looking up not at the TSBD, but at the Dal-Tex building. Sprague has an uncropped version of the photo. There is more, mostly omissions of stuff that bears importantly on the issues that he treats.

If you want a list, please ~~like~~ tell me, for otherwise I won't go ahead with it.

I don't hold anybody but Thompson responsible for his blunders, least of all you.