

14 September 1968

Mr. Robert Ockene
Bobbs-Merrill Co.
3 West 57 Street
New York 10019

*Not sent
See revised letter of 15 Sept.
mailed &
cc Bethel
Arnoni
Thompson*

Dear Bob,

Thanks for sending me a xerox of Tom Bethell's letter of the 6th; I am sending him a copy of this letter.

I am glad to clarify the question of the information which came into my possession in confidence, when I was invited to read a monograph by the head of a university department. Because ethical reasons prohibit me from disclosing the contents of the monograph in any detail until such time as it has been accepted for publication and is protected by copyright, I have tried to mention it very guardedly and with circumspection. Apparently, that caused Tom completely to misinterpret the significance of the new findings.

It is true that the unpublished monograph convincingly explains how the autopsy surgeons may innocently have arrived at a measurement ("14 cm. below the right mastoid process") which places the bullet wound some inches higher than the site indicated by the holes in the coat and shirt. But the author also proves that the bullet that entered in the lower position indicated by the clothing holes could not have exited at the Adam's apple and that even if it had entered at the higher site erroneously suggested by the innocent mistake in measurement, it was still an anatomical impossibility for that bullet to exit at the Adam's apple.

Therefore, it was only the measurement ("14 cm....etc.") that was innocent; but the subsequent testimony in which the autopsy surgeons adjusted the position of the wound as seen by the eye, below the neck by a sufficient distance to require an upward trajectory for exit at the Adam's apple, that testimony was certainly disingenuous. I believe that the autopsy surgeons, after their private conferences with Specter, deliberately misrepresented the facts about the real location of the wound in order to accomodate Specter's single-bullet theory.

The unpublished monograph, then, in no way removes "one of the major obstacles to accepting the Warren Report." Nor does an earlier shot (long postulated by Ray Marcus and others) do it. An earlier shot would have to be at least 42 frames before ^{Connally's} visible reaction at frame 238. That would place the earlier shot (by a "lone assassin") at some point before frame 196, when JFK was concealed from the window by tree foliage. Even if we accept for the sake of

argument that "the assassin" got a lucky hit by firing a shot despite the interference of the tree, that bullet could not have exited at the Adam's apple. Presumably, Tom would then account for it as Tink Thompson did, by attribution to a fragment of bone or metal from the later head shot (which I reject for numerous reasons). The second shot by the "lone assassin" would next strike Connally, at frame 238. But it now seems almost indisputable that Connally's wounds could not possibly have been produced by one bullet (testimony of Dr. Shaw; opinions of Drs. Light and Dolce, brought to light in Thompson's book; and CBS wound penetration tests in which every one of the test bullets failed to complete the penetrations, even though CBS violated verisimilitude by omitting the simulated rib). This brings us to a minimum of three bullets (four, if Thompson's hypothesis of the wound at the anterior neck is rejected), before any head shot. The head shot (never mind the direction, which is totally irreconcilable with the window according to Wecht, Riddle, and Thompson's quantification figures), if there was only one, makes a minimum of four shots. If there were two head shots, as Thompson and Marcus argue, we are left with at least 5 and possibly 6 shots.

Add to this the curious information which I received in a letter only yesterday, from someone reporting on a recent dialogue with a Commission lawyer --that, as to the head shot, "this was thoroughly discussed among the staff and agreement was reached that dum-dum bullets had been used"!

No, as the saying goes, anyway you slice it, it's still a quagmire for the Warren Report and its romantic beaux. As Tom's letter indicates, he and I have always had serious disagreements on the question of Oswald's implication in the assassination and on the interpretation of particular items of evidence. We have often discussed and corresponded at great length on these matters, so that I have been concerned that any book he did on New Orleans might appear to defend the WR.

What does really surprise me, in his letter to you, is his statement that he is "quite interested in the possibility that all the pieces of the Warren Commission's puzzle can in fact be assembled so that they all fit." If one commands all the evidence, in its specificity and its aggregate, such a notion is simply not to be taken seriously. Indeed, it is anachronistic to enter into any dialogue on such terms, and gratuitous to have to deal with arguments based on false assumptions. Tom disputes my "argument that the undated note is not consistent

with the interpretation that Oswald intended to shoot Walker." But that is not my argument. It is crystal-clear from pages 286-287 of Accessories that my argument is that the undated note is not consistent with Marina Oswald's claim that she had no prior knowledge of Oswald's intentions. After making that point, I do raise questions about the compatibility of certain parts of the undated note with the alleged attempt to shoot Walker, but I discuss these in the vastly larger context of the totality of known evidence which compels me to reject the Commission's conclusion that Oswald was implicated in the Walker shooting.

Nothing is easier than to misstate one of my arguments, and to ignore all the other arguments germane to the Walker shooting which are made in Accessories, and then reach the "conclusion" that Oswald did make the attempt on Walker. If Tom believes that the note is consistent with Marina Oswald's story, I think he is obliged to defend his view and not merely to present his conclusion. If he is able to defend his view, he must then deal with all the other objections which have been raised against the WR's conclusion that Oswald shot at Walker--and, in dealing with those objections, he may not rely on the unsupported word of Marina Oswald, who is a self-confessed, demonstrable liar and who, according to a Commission lawyer, lied repeatedly to the FBI, the Secret Service, and the Commission.

Reverting to Tom's acknowledged interest in assembling all the pieces of the WR so that they fit, I intended to mention that at least three pilgrims with the same avowed purpose seem to have given it up as a hopeless task: Curtis Crawford since 1965, Jacob Cohen since 1966, and Wesley Liebeler and 20 assistants from the law faculty and students, since the end of 1966, have been engaged in a search for legitimacy for the WR and as of now they have come up with a deafening silence. When one considers Liebeler's personal stake in rehabilitating the WR, and his insider's access to information and resources to which no outside researcher can aspire, his default on the promised work of exoneration has self-evident significance.

As to the analogy of jig-saw puzzles and bending pieces to make them fit: I can hardly believe that we are obliged to settle for a demonstrably false and fraudulent "solution" rather than none at all. If a crime is unsolved or unsolvable, then it must be classified as such rather than pinned on an innocent accused. And, for the umpteenth time, I must reiterate that the accused is innocent until such time as there is proof beyond a reasonable doubt and from

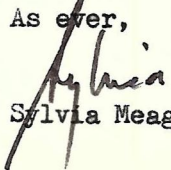
an untainted source of his guilt.

You will remember, Bob, that Ed Epstein in his review of my book argued, along parallel lines with Tom's letter, that after all is said and done, the WR might somehow still be right, on "epistemological grounds." But what he wrote in public, he acknowledged in private to be based on his application of "two standards" and that "by a common sense standard, which as you point out the WR uses, I think your book shows it extremely unlikely, even inconceivable, that a single assassin was responsible." (Letter of 1 December 1967)

Finally, let me say that while I am not insensible of the concession that Ed makes, as does Tom, that Oswald may have had accomplices, and I do not reject categorically the possibility that he was one of a conspiratorial group, I have very grave doubt that he was implicated at all. I have given my reasons at great length in Accessories. If Oswald was a lone assassin, how is it that despite the best honest and deliberately dishonest efforts of the Warren Commission the evidence as to motive, means, and opportunity--in each case, a huge complex of circumstantial and hard evidence--falls apart at every single crucial point when probed? I cannot explain that. If, on the other hand, Oswald was entirely innocent, how is it that so large an agglomeration of circumstantial and hard evidence appears to implicate him, and him alone? That can be explained---by a deliberate systematic effort, horizontally and vertically in time and space, to frame him and legitimize the "lone assassin" finding prerequisite to "domestic tranquillity" and co-existence. Mr. Earl Warren, at the very outset of his career, tried to persuade the then-Governor of California to cover up the sordid fact that the State had deliberately framed Tom Mooney and Warren Billings for a crime of which they were completely innocent and for which they suffered some 20 years of incarceration. (Frameup, by Curt Gentry, pp. 418-419, Norton & Co., New York, 1967) I have no difficulty in believing that what he did in 1938 was even easier for him to do 25 years later --and, as I have neither compromised myself by such services on behalf of the authorities nor published a "Report" filled with cunning misrepresentations and outright falsehoods, in letter and spirit, I decline to have my work equated with the WR, as Tom suggests in his letter.

I am certain that Tom is sincere, as he says, in stating his position on the WR. I will not join the other critics in seeing the ubiquitous CIA in every event which challenges their concepts and convictions. But his sincerity is perhaps the saddest thing of all.

As ever,


Sylvia Meagher