

7 October 1964

Dear Mr. Crawford,

The item which just caused my scalp to prickle and provoked me to telephone you concerns the palmprints. Perhaps it is not nearly as significant as it appears to me at first glance but it did cause me a small emotional shock.

Among the various misunderstandings and inadvertent false impressions connected with the police/FBI investigatory work, in addition to the startling business of the Mauser/Carcano, is the handling of the latent palmprint on the rifle. The Warren Commission explains (Chapter IV) that Lt. Day developed the latent print and lifted it from the rifle, leaving no trace that he had done so despite his impression that traces remained. The rifle was sent to the FBI Washington laboratory at 11:45 p.m. on November 22nd, where Latona found a number of prints which had been photographed and protected with cellophane by Lt. Day. He found no identifiable prints, on the rifle or photos; *apparently the wood and metal were of too poor quality to take a good print -*

According to the Commission, Day had kept the lift of the palmprint until November 26th (two days after Oswald was shot to death) at which time he was told to send "everything" to the FBI. Latona then identified the palmprint as that of Oswald. By November 26th the Dallas police were suffering a barrage of scorn and criticism for having let their prisoner be murdered as he was, ^{and} must have been anxious to demonstrate to the country that at least the victim was not an innocent one. *except of course the underside of the barrel which had been returned in excellent shape palmprint 7-40*

Now, if we proceed with Chapter IV we find (under "Oswald at the Window--Palmprints on Cartons" etc) an account of the palmprint found on the carton and learn that Latona identified it also as Oswald's. The Commission does not indicate when Lt. Day--who developed the palmprint and cut it out of the box--forwarded it to Washington. But it must have been on the 22nd or the 23rd at latest, since Latona found that it was probably 24 hours old and said that he could only testify with certainty that it was less than 3 days old. If it had been forwarded and examined on the 26th, that finding would be meaningless. Therefore, the palmprint lifted from the carton must have been examined by Latona on the 23rd, 24th or 25th. The 23rd is most likely, since the rifle was sent for fingerprint examination and identification at 11:45 p.m.

Therefore, we would have to believe that Day lifted and kept a latent palmprint from the rifle, leaving no trace, protected the fingerprints with cellophane, photographed them for good measure and sent the photos to the FBI together with the rifle, and never mentioned the palmprint nor sent a photo of it because he "believed that sufficient traces of it had been left." And, at the same time or shortly thereafter, he sent to the FBI laboratory the palmprint cut out of the carton!

I find it hard to swallow. There are too many slip-ups of this kind. Is it plausible to believe that all were honest errors--the rifle, the palmprint, the map which appeared belatedly, disappeared, and reappeared in another guise? Taken as a body, they suggest planting and falsification of evidence more than they suggest honest errors made in the pressure of the moment even by such a stumblebum outfit as the Dallas police.

Until 11:45 p.m. on November 22nd Lt. Day was the custodian of both the latent palmprint on the rifle and the carton palmprint. It would have been normal to compare the two, note the similarities, ask Latona to confirm that they were identical. The fact that the latent palmprint from the rifle first saw the light of Day on the 26th, and that Day had another palmprint from the carton in his possession for some hours, must give rise to questions.

I need hardly point out the instances in which the Commission discounted testimony because it was belated, especially when that testimony was inconsistent with the official thesis.

Probably you will not regard this business of the palmprints as particularly significant and you may well be right--but I couldn't ignore a prickling scalp.

I am sending you herewith a rough translation of Buchanan's comments on the Warren report from L'Express.

Kindest regards,

Sylvia Meagher