

Neon 20 July 1965

Dear Maggie,

Your special delivery envelope has just arrived and I am sorry that I misunderstood your original comments about the back of the Stemmons sign and put you through the trouble of this lengthy explanation. I followed your letter in the relevant frames in CE 885 and of course I do see the black cloud and then the two new lines and their evolution. The difficulty is in interpreting these lines or streaks: I have little or no knowledge of the technical aspects of photographic analysis and cannot judge whether these lines suggest the impact of a bullet or bullets. Now, Lobenthal has mentioned that he has a client in Boston who is a photo expert and that he might ask an opinion on the photo enlargements showing the puff of smoke, etc. (Lobenthal and I have agreed to share the use of this material and he will not expect to receive another set from you, as I may have mentioned already.) I will call his attention to your analysis of the back of the sign and perhaps he will be able to obtain an opinion on that also.

I agree completely that the omission of the four frames between 207 and 212 is highly significant; I too searched the 26 volumes for an explanation and found none. Let me explain, before I overlook this, what happened as a result of my erroneous impression during our first telephone conversation that you were speaking of a bullet hole in the back of the sign. I examined the frames and it seemed to me that in 212, just under the fixed black line near the bottom, and almost 3-12" from the edge of the page, there was a small round puncture mark. However, it appeared to change position in subsequent frames.

Therefore, I asked Stamm to examine the back of the sign throughout the frames in which it appears, telling him nothing more. I thought that the experiment would serve as a check on me, since I found something that I expected (erroneously) to be there. Stamm found nothing, as I have mentioned in an earlier letter; but a friend of his, who was equally in the dark, saw what he thought was a bullet hole. As you see, then, I was looking for a bullet hole, but Stamm was not, nor his friend.

Turning to your questions about Curtis Crawford: (1) No, he did not see the Zapruder films projected on a screen but saw only color transparencies corresponding to the frames in CE 885, that is, with the four missing frames between 207 and 212 missing from the color slides too. His examination of the slides took place just before the first of this year; he examined them under the microscope as well as with the naked eye. As best I can recall and repeat his findings, and I hope I do not do them too much violence, Crawford felt that only a fraction of a second separated the visible reaction to a bullet in the President and the Governor, and that the Governor could not have been hit by a bullet in the back at any time before his visible reaction unless the bullet that hit him had first passed through the body of the President. He thought that the President's reaction started in about frame 223 and the Governor's in about 230-231—that is, 7 or 8 frames apart or less than half a second. After seeing the slides, Crawford utilized a laboratory skeleton and reached the conclusion that Connally's position in frame 228 would have produced the known trajectory of the bullet through his chest if he was struck in that frame. The internal illogic of that conclusion is self-evident: where was the bullet between frames 220/222 when the President was hit and frame 228 when the same bullet, by Crawford's reasoning, struck the Governor in the back? The velocity of the bullet would not permit it to have motionless for 6/18th or 8/18th of a second.

My notes of Crawford's phencall of 1/1/65 reporting on his visit to the Archives indicate that he did not see the movement of Mrs. Kennedy's hat, which had convinced me that the President was hit by frame 204; and that he said that one of the color transparencies was misnumbered. In view of the coolness I feel since his abrupt departure on his recent visit, I do not feel inclined to ask him to clarify these matters. However, I have always felt that his capitulation to the official camp was incomprehensible, even if his interpretation of the Zapruder slides was generally correct, for so many crucial and sinister problems remained unresolved, including those which Crawford himself has raised, with considerable shrewdness and intelligence, in his radio lecture.

I have to interpolate here a purely personal speculation, of the kind that I prefer to exclude in judging human behavior but which may shed some light on Crawford's conscious, or sub-conscious, motivation. Last November or December, when I was working closely with him, he asked me one night whether I would be willing to collaborate with him on a book attacking the Warren Report. I had serious hesitations, mainly because Crawford wished to take the position of a "judge" while I wished to assume the role of defense counsel (to Oswald). We agreed to think about the pros and cons and make a decision at a later time; but in discussing the personal risks that might be involved—for me, the loss of a job or even a career that has been one of the major satisfactions in my life—he seemed to be telling me that he would be vulnerable to charges of sex deviation. I do not think I am misinterpreting; in fact, there are many signs to confirm that inference. It would, of course, to a large degree explain the later retreat from a position which incurred the danger of such exposure and humiliation. Needless to say, Maggie, this must be kept confidential and not go further than between the two of us. I believe the deviation, if it exists, is completely irrelevant and in a civilized society would be given no more importance than freckles or left-handedness; but as society exists, deviation can be ruinous, especially to a non-conformist who advertises a challenge to orthodoxy.

Your mystification and that of your colleagues is natural; I leave it to your discretion to explain as much of this as you consider appropriate. But, so far as I know, he did not see anyone in Washington who might have influenced or coerced him. He did see Joseph Loftus of the NY Times, who had lost all interest; and Richard Dudman, who showed some continuing interest in the case but whose duties had not permitted him to follow developments or study the Warren Report closely. Unfortunately, Crawford did not ask Dudman any questions about the windshield and the bullet hole vs the bullet cracks; he discussed only the medical findings, especially the nature of the wound in the front of the neck, and Dudman told him that the Secret Service reenactment of December was, according to one of their agents, an attempt to discover how the President could have been shot in the front from the back. At that stage, the theory was that the first shot had been fired when the car was still on Houston Street.

Thank you for sending me the back-up testimony from the eyewitnesses. I had covered just about the same ground in my research (although I omitted a few of the witnesses you mention), and prepared a draft for inclusion in my manuscript. I think I will send you this draft, together with a section on Betty MacDonald, to read and for your comments—but, alas, I will have to ask you to mail this material back, as these pages belong in the carbon copy of my manuscript (which has reached 205 pages). If that arrangement is satisfactory, I can send you other sections, a few at a time, as I would find it awkward to do without the copy of the whole manuscript for an extended period. (I don't think I have been very clear in this paragraph but perhaps you will understand anyhow.)

As you will see, I think there is enough rope to hang the Commission twice over, in its own published material exclusively. I am trying so far as possible to restrict my attack on the Report to the data found in the H & E volumes. By the way, the Mark Lane people have six witnesses who saw a puff of smoke, but apparently three of the six do not figure in the official volumes but were located in the course of visits to Dallas.

This brings me to the distressing business of my feelings about the Lane group, which are growing increasingly bitter in spite of my determination not to be drawn into the in-fighting that has grieved me so much (Sauvage vs Buchanan, etc.). But how can one not be affronted by this kind of incident? (which I will describe as economically as possible). One of the people at the New School was a youth named Stewart Galanor, who was from the Mark Lane Committee and who seemed to be a victim of the cultism which has sprung up around Lane, with or without his encouragement. Some weeks ago I had a letter from Galanor, providing me with the source of a statement made by Lane on a local television program which had been mocked and criticized as completely unfounded by Leo Sauvage. The letter gave a post office box as the return address. I replied to that post office box, sending a fairly lengthy letter and enclosing a copy of the letter I had received from Western Cartridge Co. Subsequently I wrote Galanor another letter, by way of a post-script to my first reply, because I realized that I had overlooked one point.

On Saturday, Galanor telephoned me to obtain certain references and other information which I had found in the H & E volumes, which he needed for work he is now doing on Mark Lane's book, which is being mimeographed preliminary to search for a publisher. When I asked if he had received my letters (I forgot to mention that the first letter had been returned by the post office because Galanor was not authorized to receive mail at the box, which was taken by the Citizens' Committee of Inquiry, and that when I tracked this down, I put the returned envelope in another envelope, addressed this time to Galanor c/o the CG of I), he said that he had not. He told me that the first letter had been thrown away as "not important" without being shown to him but that Lane (or his chief assistant, a woman named Grisswold) had appropriated the enclosure—that is, the copy of the letter I had received from Western C.C. The second letter, Galanor had no knowledge about at all.

I was incensed. On the advice of Lobenthal (I have not yet been in touch with him personally but Isabel spoke with him about her legal action on a different matter and also made this inquiry for me), I have written to Lane and told him that any unauthorized use of the copy of that letter, intended for Galanor and not for anyone else or for the CG of I, would result in immediate legal action by my attorney. If I am going to jeopardize my job, I will do it on the strength of my book, and not because of any unauthorized use of my appropriated correspondence.

What do you think of this unconscionable behavior? Underneath my anger, I am saddened and distressed that people in our own camp should be so ruthless and indifferent to the rights of others, to say nothing of common courtesy. And I am trying to force myself to disregard the incident and not allow myself to develop a real animus toward Lane and his retinue.

As I mentioned, I am now on leave from the office and working (much harder) at home; this means that I have no access to the photocopy machine (thermofax) and cannot copy the letter from Western Cartridge Co. immediately. I will gladly do so at the first opportunity, at a commercial place, but it means a trip uptown. The ad from the February 1963 American Rifleman is another problem, because I do not have the actual page from the magazine but only a photocopy of it, which cannot be photocopied except on a Xerox, to which I have no access at any time.

I am enclosing a typewritten copy of the letter from Western C.C., if that is of any use, and an unsuccessful copy of the ad which was Xeroxed on a previous occasion with unsatisfactory results. If you use a magnifying glass, you can just about make out the specifications—that is, on the first line, "Only 36" overall, weighs only 5 1/2 lbs" etc.

It is hardly a reciprocation for everything you have sent me so unstintingly, but I will send you better copies as soon as I can have them made. Please bear with me.

One reason for my inability to rush out and do things is that I am trying to arrange a quick trip to Washington to see the Zapruder color transparencies for myself. I have been debating whether or not to invest the time and money; sometimes I think I should forego it, and other times I feel that I should go. But there is a problem with the cat, who needs to be looked after if I am away longer than a day, and sundry other problems, including my reluctance and laziness to make a physical move, when my brain is so worn out and I do not trust myself to "see" properly what is in the slides. I should mention that I have a pass to the Archives, obtained not without difficulty; in the correspondence before the pass was granted, I was informed that there are no facilities for the projection of the Zapruder film and that none of the other evidence will be available before September.

I smile and sympathize with the picture of your family summoning you to the swimming pool. This is the first "pale" summer of my adult life. I am trying to exclude everything in the way of social life. It is not possible. Some invitations cannot be refused without alienating people who are dear, and who will not understand; some obligations cannot be shirked. So, where I envisaged long, long undisturbed days at work on the case, I find myself still frustrated by all manner of intrusion, and there is no help for it!

Since I tend to be compulsive and merciless with myself, I am going through this "vacation" as though Satan was snapping at my heels.

Forgive this long letter. I don't even know if the postage will be sufficient, without the facilities at the office—I will take a stab at it and pray that you don't have to pay added costs. My very best to you, Maggie, and renewed thanks.

Fondly yours,