

Please read this (and copy)
and send it as soon as possible
to Sylvia

6 November 1970

From... Dick Bernabei
To..... Paul Hoch

(Reply to Hoch's letter of 29 October)

You want me to provide reasons for some of the things I characterized as facts? After your remark about my "naive physical argument" (which, after all, proved true), I hesitate to provide reasons for any of the phenomena that I described.

In my objection to your use of standard 30/06 ammunition I intended to suggest not merely that the effects which they produce in melons might be different from the effects produced produced by 6.5 M-C bullets, but that the effects probably (I am on the verge of saying "undoubtedly") would be different both in degree and in kind. I assert this largely on the basis of knowledge derived from previous observations (the ole apples-fall-down-from-trees trick): vastly different types of ammunition always produce vastly different results when they strike identical targets. I hesitate to describe what I think are the causes of this, for I fear that you may rightly make me appear a fool by assailing my explanation of the fact without in the least assailing the fact. I am not equipped to argue with you about the physical causes of ballistic phenomena (unless we can conduct our discussion in Greek or Latin), but I am more than well equipped to argue about the effects, ~~which xxxxxxxx~~ ~~xxxxxx~~ which are, I presume, what interest you and me.

I would not dare to speculate what would be the effect of a 6.5 M-C bullet striking a melon. Although I know well the characteristics of M-C bullets, I am almost totally unfamiliar with the characteristics of California melons, even less with the characteristics of taped California melons. Presently I can only reasonably predict that the results will be different in ways that significantly bear on the validity of your tests. If I thought that I had the ability reliably to conjecture why certain actual events occur, and to conjecture in terms that would not invite unwarranted derision, believe me, I would provide conjectures. Since I decline to provide conjectures why it happens, please be satisfied merely with the knowledge that it happens. Either provide your own conjectures, or cut down your own apples (waiting, of course, until the apple season comes around). Be satisfied, then, with the certain knowledge that there is always a difference.

It is not of my own volition that I withhold the evidence proving that the bullet which struck JFK in the back of the head was not fully jacketed. If my word does not satisfy you, then know this much more: the conclusion that I disclosed to you did not originate with me. It is the firm conclusion of an eminent forensic pathologist (not one whom you know) who holds a responsible official position in a large Eastern city. He expressed that conclusion without equivocation, and he is willing to go on record publicly as the author of that conclusion, ~~xxxxxx~~ if he is asked. He will be asked, and he will go on record.

The proof concerning the neck wound will come to you eventually. It can wait for a while, since it does not bear directly on our immediate interest, the head.

On the matter of my second letter, concerning the speed of the camera, it does not yet appear to me that Harold and Fred "have pretty well shot down (my) argument." Both described my error as minor, which, I presume, does not affect the overall thrust of my argument. Fred assured me that he has proofs that the camera was taking 18 frames, but did not disclose them to me. For the time being, until Fred shows me the proofs, I tentatively trust his word, and let the matter hang-fire. I agree with you that the matter is unimportant, but not for the reasons that you state.

Your remark, "As you can see, I generally agree with you", throws me for a loop. If you "generally agree" with me about the significance of the dust-like fragments, and in addition know from me and from several others that every part of your hypothesis, every aspect of your tests, are fraudulent in ways that set it in the class of problems related to the question how many angels can dance on the head of a pin-- if you "generally agree and know all that, how can you take one step further in seeking to iron out the irremovable kinks in your hypothesis? How can you resist reeling back from it in disgust as from a heap of maggots eating shit? I do not understand such behavior. You have invariably sought to debilitate everyone's opinion except that of the very person you ought to be assailing-- your own. (Alvarez's, if you like).

I did not discuss the official explanation of the dust-like fragments because the official explanation is poppycock, as is your conjecture. It was not my intent to revile the Warren Commission or its hacks, but merely to establish beyond doubt that JFK was hit in the right-front part of his head. I did that, and I do not welcome criticism that I failed to do more.

I provided that illustration because it was the only one that was readily available to me. Nevertheless, I am satisfied that it properly illustrates the principle that it was intended to illustrate. In time you will have more which, I hope, will be more to your liking. If I have the time and the opportunity (I no longer own a rifle that fires the proper type of bullets), I'll fire tests too (Cut some apples down from trees, so to speak). In the mean time, you may with utmost confidence conjecture not that my "hypothesis" has been confirmed, but that it is not and never has been a hypothesis-- it is a fact. It has been confirmed on many, many occasions in the past by casual observation and by careful experiment, and most recently in the present it has been confirmed by a physicist, you.

You say: "Your letter doesn't indicate whether you have worried about ~~the possibility~~ that possible interpretation." (You should have said "the possibility of that interpretation".) I assure you with all the honesty that I can summon (and even with some embarrassment, as I view some of these things in retrospect) that I have considered that and many, many more

- p.2 (first paragraph; "... saw at least one X-ray"):
 In fact they saw several.
 (last paragraph; "... exceedingly fast-moving":
 This assertion presupposes that ~~xxx~~ normal,
 readily-available, ammunition was used. (E.g.,
 not bullets tipped with mercury fulminate).
- p.5 (second paragraph; "... but a single grain"):
 Even this is far too large to regard as dust-like.
 A grain of lead would be (I think) a couple of
 millimeters square. ^{referring} referring to all the small
 metallic particles in the head, those who saw the
 X-rays said they were less than one millimeter in
 size. ~~That dust was probably xxxxxxxx~~
~~that~~ An individual particle of "dust" was probably
 even smaller than that.

Re Alvarez, you can determine better than I how to go about "stopping" Alvarez, for you know him better than I (Well, maybe you don't). You may begin by expending as much (or even fractionally less) effort in persuading Alvarez that he is wrong as you now spend in persuading us that he is right. If you fail, you will at least have cleared your conscience of any wrongdoing in having fostered his notions.

If Alvarez is impervious to truth, you may point out to him that he will be publicly disgraced when the truth of my "hypothesis" is publicly disclosed, or when the criticisms of Weisberg and others begin to bear down on him. I know, of course, that the press, which he cherishes and which cherishes him, will shield him from criticism, but it cannot shield him that well. He will be exposed as a fraud, the more so if he is informed of the criticisms that vitiate his hypothesis. (Can it be that you have shielded him from criticism so far? That while he writes away serenely in his ivory tower, you are gathering the flac that might disrupt the serenity of his theorizing? If so, then, my good, good friend, I ask you whether you are serving God or Mammon.) Tell Alvarez that he is wrong. Tell him that he cannot be right. And tell him why. His response will tell you what sort of a man he is. He is the snake who enticed poor Eve to eat the apple-- it tasted so good, and brought such fine rewards! The snake prospered, but Eve was cast out of Eden, Eve.

Re my 23 Oct letter to Harold, I'll answer your questions in series:

Question: "Are you deducing that no bullet could deposit fragments near that bone without damaging it? Or is that an expert medical opinion?"-- It is an expert medical opinion, not mine, but that of the forensic pathologist to whom I referred above.

Question: "Are you really sure that the bone was not damaged 'enough' for the Commission's case?"-- I am sure to the degree that the pathologist was sure. He was sure. His ~~Question xxxxxxxx~~ references are those who saw the relevant X-rays.

Question: "Was anyone looking for such damage?"-- Yes; they looked for bone damage and found none. That's the autopsy docs and Panel docs.

Question: "Would it (bone damage) show on X-rays and photos (sic)?"-- Yes, it would (on X-rays, not on photos, since there was no dissection, no exposure of the bone). It must show.

Question: "Why are you so sure the doctor was lying in the letters as opposed to, say, in the Panel Report?"-- I am sure that the doctor is lying in the letters because his answer necessarily implies what is impossible. A bullet cannot have brushed against the the bone without damaging it in a way that is visible on film. That is a medical feature that proves he lied. There is also a purely ballistic feature which is equally conclusive as the medical. What the Panel describes is not only possible, but (as I indicated) probable. It is vague, I know, but even with its vagueness describes what is probable. The Panel doc in letters describes what is both medically and ballistically impossible.

If much of what I have written here and in my previous letter seems rancorous, please understand that it is not rancor, but exasperation, that causes me to write in this way.

Must now stop. Whew!

Still,

Dick