

to Edward Riva
Life Mag.

1249 Hi Point St.
L.A. Calif. 90035
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Dear Ed,

Thanks for your comments re the B.B. I will try to answer your questions in order.

First, you ask if it wasn't possible for 399 to come from JFK's stretcher, despite the very strong evidence against it. I suppose one can't absolutely eliminate such a possibility; although in my own mind his stretcher is excluded as one of the two in the corridor. However, in my piece I do not exclude it, as you will note on pg 79 where I concede that for purposes of the article either of the two stretchers in the corridor could have been Kennedy's or Connally's.

You state you would like to be told that it would have been impossible for a bullet on a stripped stretcher to avoid detection. Here we are in the area of probability. I realized when planning the article that I couldn't prove to a certainty that 399 was planted, but only that an objective study of the evidence leads to that conclusion beyond reasonable doubt. Logically, it seems to me, one can believe 399 was discovered legitimately on JFK's stretcher only by considering reasonably surmountable all the impediments noted in JFK-10, pg. 79-83.

Referring to your second point re the tracing of 399 in chapters 8 and 9, I did not intend to infer that the bullet they were shown was different from the one they supposedly handled, but noted it only because this information was included in the FBI report. That report is not detailed enough to justify inferences on this point. (for instance, "failed to identify it" could mean the individual said, ". . . that definitely does not look like the bullet I handled"; or it could mean, ". . . it looks like the one I handled but I couldn't say for sure it was the same one.")

If, in fact, 399 is not the same bullet Tomlinson found, it would point to a substitution after the original stretcher bullet came into the hands of federal authorities (assuming Wright didn't do it). At present, I have no facts to move this particular question out of the realm of speculation. However, I am more inclined to believe there was no substitution involved after Tomlinson discovered it.

As to 399's cleanliness, I'll stand on the reasoning against cleaning presented on pg 44, granting that it's not decisive.

If the authorities did not suspect 399's legitimacy -- as I believe they did -- they could have easily inquired on this point and presented the facts if they discovered one of those handling it had wiped it free of matter.

Your remaining points:

1. Hyp. B2 -- because of the obfuscation re weight~~s~~ of the fragments allegedly left by 399, I do not rely on the weight argument, but rather on the fact that the experts really find no place on 399 from which the fragments deposited in Connally could have come.
2. Hyp. B3, objection a -- Dr. Gregory says (v.4.p.121-122) that the coat fibers in the wrist wound shows that the missile was not pristine when it struck the wrist (that it was struck by an "irregular object"). Otherwise it would have gone cleanly in nose first, and probably not carried cloth into the wound.
3. Re the thigh wound and fragment in femur; I don't know what the answer is, other than my belief that a spent bullet couldn't throw a fragment into the bone. To me, this is another case where an official statement can be factually demolished without being able to supply, with confidence, an alternative hypothesis. As to the statement that the thigh wound appeared to have been caused by a bullet, and not a fragment; I don't think we can consider that statement conclusive. A couple of other critics believe a bullet was removed from his thigh, and seem to remember such a statement by a Parkland doctor at a hospital press conference (Weisberg makes point of the thigh wound being larger and deeper than noted in the Report), but I know of ~~no~~ evidence sufficient to lead me to conclude a substantially whole bullet was removed. I think it more likely a large fragment was removed from a fairly deep thigh wound. If such a fragment was traveling fairly fast on impact, it might have thrown off a fragment that penetrated deeper than itself ~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~ (same speed when broken from larger fragment on impacting thigh, but smaller mass, therefore, ~~striking~~ less resistance?)

I have not studied carefully the sources of ammunition, although some other critics have done so. Commenting generally, though I would say the following:

1. my study of the evidence (Zapruder frames, etc.) convinces me shots came from two directions outside of the TSBD, and that shot(s) probably also came from somewhere in that building; thus, conspiracy was involved.
2. my reading of the evidence convinces me that Oswald had been set up in advance.
3. from 1 and 2, we have a conspiracy of considerable dimensions.

Believing the above, I don't think the conspirators would want to depend on old and unreliable ammunition. I am inclined to believe that if such was used at all, it was only in the Mannlicher-Carcano, and only ~~if known~~ because the assassins also had other (more reliable) weapons firing at their target.

To me, the most likely explanation of the throat wound was the first one given -- an entry. Since I believe there was "no lane of exit" for the bullet which struck JFK's back, the only alternative cause for the throat wound other than an entry would be an exiting fragment of bone or metal from the head shot (which, I am sure you are aware, was one of the several sub-versions of the first officially leaked announcements that all the bullets had entered the rear, Dec. 16-18, '63; still six months prior to the leaked JFK-JC double hit theory).

However, since JFK clearly clutches at his throat long ~~is~~ before the head shot, I don't see how the throat wound could have been caused by ~~an exiting fragment~~ such an exiting fragment. Here again, I can't explain what happened to a bullet entering the throat. It seems it should have come out the ~~back~~. Maybe it did, though I am inclined to doubt it. The NYTimes of Nov 27 '63 carried a story saying the bullet which entered his throat ranged downward, damaging a lung, and did not exit.

As to why 399 was planted, I believe, as I stated in the conclusion, this was done to ensure identification with the Garcano. "Finding" the rifle or expended shells is not nearly as strong, in my opinion, as tying the firearm to a specific slug that had allegedly hit a victim. I do not agree the conspirators could assume that bullets or fragments traceable to the Garcano could be legitimately recovered -- granting, of course, the Garcano was one of the weapons used. According to Sauvage, a leading internationally-used crime text by Soderman and O'Connell says that positive identification can be made with a specific firearm only if the bullet is largely undeformed. This conflicts with Frazier who claims to have made positive identification of the two large fragments, 567 and 569, with the rifle. Even assuming Frazier is correct, I certainly don't think the conspirators could rely in advance on such a fortunate development.

You cite the seeming contradiction between a well-planned conspiracy and an apparent goof of planting so perfect a bullet. I think the answer to this and to other examples that can be cited is that not all the steps went precisely according to plan, and that last minute improvisation had to be employed in a number of ~~instances~~ instances (in my opinion, Oswald was not supposed to live as long as he did after the assassination).

Developments are coming thick and fast in recent weeks, and I find myself wondering just where this whole thing is going in the ~~next~~ near future. I no longer feel -- as I did until a few weeks ago -- that it would blow over as a public issue after a period of excitement re the critical books and articles.

I have felt--for almost three years now--that the most ~~potentially damning single~~ potentially damning single piece of evidence against the official case (and at the same time, prima facie evidence of conspiracy and frameup), is the Life coverphoto of Feb 21, '64 -- Oswald with rifle. This is also the single piece of evidence, ostensibly against Oswald, with which the public is most familiar.

I am referring, of course, to the apparent nose-shadow/body-shadow discrepancy. I have ~~never~~ photographed many people, posed as Oswald, and have been unable to approximate both shadows in one picture. When the nose-shadow is duplicated the body-shadow falls straight behind, and when the body-shadow is duplicated the nose-shadow goes to the right, and, unlike the Oswald photo--the right ear is totally shaded.

Three-fourths of forty-five professional opinions I have received say the photo is a composite. And the way the FBI "handled" the question indicates to me they themselves may well have doubted its authenticity. They ignore this very relevant question and deal instead with numerous less relevant ones in Shaneyfelt Ex. 14, v.21, p.455, although the shadow discrepancy had been publicly raised as early as March, 1964; then an FBI man was posed by Shaneyfelt, ~~with a blank~~ v.17, p.522, and the head blanked out, despite the fact Shaneyfelt says he took the photo to "duplicate the lighting of the (Life-Oswald) photograph, v.4., p.281. He says he blanked out the head " . . . because it was one of the employees of the FBI, and I felt it desirable to blank out the head since it was not pertinent."

The head and face was "not pertinent" in a photo allegedly taken to duplicate lighting; and presumably was omitted to avoid embarrassment to the individual! But numerous other FBI men appear in other Exhibit photos, and in situations where ~~many~~ the faces were, indeed, irrelevant to the purpose (to cite just two such photos, v.18, p.86 and 96). It seems that the "pertinence" of faces in FBI demonstration photos is inversely proportional to the necessity of learning something from them.

Shaneyfelt, of course, says he finds no evidence of material doctoring in the picture; but leaves a small off, saying that he cannot absolutely rule out the possibility.

Shaneyfelt's testimony notwithstanding, I believe official suspicion of the photo may be the reason for its delayed appearance three months after the assassination. Since ~~this~~ this photo was allegedly found in the ~~the~~ Paine's garage by police on Nov 23, and since all evidence was supposedly turned over to the FBI within days of Oswald's death, I can see no other logical reason for them to have withheld this "clincher" of guilt (in the public's mind) at a time when rumors and speculation ~~was~~ rampant. My guess is that the photo got out via sale by an unauthorized source, and, once out, those in official positions who may have suspected it dared not repudiate it.

Every major news media in the country has it well within its ability to run some posed photos (indeed, as does anyone with a camera) in order to make its own determination on this crucial point. Since Life made this photo famous, it would seem fitting that they should do it. I trust you won't think me ~~me~~ overly cynical if I say I don't expect it.

I, ~~know~~ too, was very pleased to meet you. Your letter was a reminder that here and there in the media there must be a significant number of people who have rejected the official lies and are making an effort to determine the facts regarding this historic ~~xxx~~ crime -- the full implications of which ~~we~~ we may ~~just~~ be just beginning to perceive.

I'll be happy to keep in touch with you. In case you are not already aware of her, you have in New York a person who is probably the most knowledgeable individual in the country on the entire contents of the Report and the 26 volumes. She is:

Mrs. Sylvia Meagher
302 W. 12th St.
N.Y. 10014
CH 2-4293

Cordially,


Raymond Marcus