

**FREDONIA**  
STATE UNIVERSITY COLLEGE  
Fredonia, New York 14063



Department of Sociology  
and Anthropology  
716-673-3205

January 11, 1984

Ms. Sylvia Meagher  
202 W. 12th St.  
New York, N.Y.

Dear Sylvia:

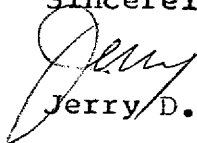
A while back you were kind enough to send me a copy of CD 1245 on the "epileptic seizure." This started a process that culminated in the enclosed article for The Continuing Inquiry that I am sending today to Penn Jones. I thought you might be interested in what I have done on the matter.

Next week I begin teaching for the second time a college course on the assassination. I use Accessories as a textbook, along with Summers' Conspiracy and the HSCA Report. The first time around my students reacted very favorably to your book. Again, my thanks to you for having written it and for your bibliographic work.

My manuscript is basically complete but on "hold" for the moment as I look for a literary agent who might be able to place it. With continued research some of my perspectives on details have changed, but my basic "conspiracy and cover-up" viewpoint is quite intact.

I met Mary Farrell on my recent trip to Dallas and she spoke warmly of you. Mary's media reputation as the assassination "archivist" is well-deserved, and her personal contacts with the likes of Marina Oswald and Jeanne de Mohrenschildt could produce some valuable information. Penn Jones, whom I also met, is another story. He flatly refused to document his sources on any of his sensational claims. Like yourself on the Teresa Norton/Lynn Carlin connection, I've come to distrust him as a source. While his Continuing Inquiry obviously caters to nuts like Mae Brussell, he has published some stuff with scholarly value, which is why I am sending him the epileptic seizure article.

Sincerely yours,

  
Jerry D. Rose

## THE EPILEPTIC SEIZURE

by

Jerry D. Rose

State University College, Fredonia, New York

The fact that a man suffered an "epileptic seizure" at Elm and Houston Streets within a quarter-hour of the President's assassination at that location has excited much suspicion and speculation over the years. According to DPD radio logs, at 12:18 P.M., Sergeant D.V. Harkness, at that time in charge of traffic control in the TSBD area, radioed the dispatcher to report the incident and ask for an ambulance at the scene.(1) Subsequently, the radio logs show, ambulance 606 was dispatched there; its driver picked up the victim and reported himself "enroute" to Parkland Hospital at 12:24 P.M.(2) Also, in one version of the radio log, a DPD patrolman, apparently one Bill Barnes, was directed to "meet" the ambulance at Parkland.(3).

The mighty coincidence of such a happening so close in time and place to the assassination raises the obvious suspicion that the "seizure" may have been staged to provide a diversion to focus public and police attention on the street and away from places in surrounding buildings and/or the grassy knoll at which assassins were moving into position for the kill. Even Sergeant Harkness seems to have had such a suspicion; at 12:48 he radioed a different dispatcher to inform him that the episode preceded the assassination and to direct that a squad car be sent to Parkland to investigate. (4) Either the dispatcher ignored this instruction or else the dispatched squad (and Patrolman Barnes as well) failed to do the investigation or to report on the results thereof. Nor does an examination of the log of patients received in the emergency room at Parkland on November 22 (5) show any record of a patient admitted with any such "complaint." In fact nothing about the episode beyond the radio log entries appears in either the Warren Report or its twenty six volumes of Hearings. Incredible as it may seem, there is no indication in Warren Commission documents that the FBI investigated the incident at any time before May of 1964. Even this belated investigation is contained only in a document withheld from publication in the twenty six volumes: Commission Document 1245. (6)

CD 1245 relates a strange tale of FBI "investigation." It seems that, at 10:15 P.M. on May 12, 1964, a former employee of the Oneal Funeral Home, 3206 Oak Lawn, Dallas, telephoned a night clerk at the Dallas FBI office to report his November 22 experience of having received a call for an ambulance to pick up an "epileptic seizure" at Elm and Houston. Though taken to Parkland, the patient had "disappeared" in the process of being registered. The employee did not know the victim's name, but he did know the name of the ambulance driver, Aubrey Rike. Apparently more curious than the FBI, this citizen said his call was prompted by the fact that he "felt it possible that this incident may have been planned to distract attention from the 'shooting' that was to follow."

Even with such a broad hint to the FBI to get on the stick with its investigation, it required 14 days for two FBI agents, A. Raymond Switzer and Eugene F. Petrakis, to contact the ambulance driver. Rike remembered that he and an attendant, Dennis McGuire, had "picked up a man who was conscious and only slightly injured with a facial laceration." Rike said that, in the "confusion" surrounding the President's arrival at Parkland, the victim "walked off." He also said that a Secret Service agent at Parkland told him not to move the ambulance "because they might need it to move the President to another

location." Rike said that the ambulance "cleared" the hospital at 3:00 P.M. and returned to Oneal. Rike's memory of involvement in historic events seems strangely confused; the radio logs show that ambulance 606 was indeed used in a rather mysterious way in the movement of the President to "another location": to transport the body from Parkland to Love Field shortly after 2:00 P.M. (7) Rike thought the victim's name should be in the funeral home's records.

Also on May 26, agents Switzer and Petrakis contacted an Oneal employee and got the name of the "victim," one Jerry B. Belknap of 1212 Ross Drive, Irving. The funeral home apparently got his name and address on November 22 because "on December 2, 1963, Belknap paid his ambulance bill of \$12.50" (Rike and McGuire were seemingly alert enough to get the man's name and address before he walked off at Parkland.)

Finally, on June 8, 1964, nearly a full month after the FBI received its hot tip from a Dallas citizen, agent Switzer contacted Belknap and rendered the report that is reprinted here. There are an extraordinary number of loose ends that dangle after this, the final FBI report on the matter. Rike and McGuire should have been questioned on how it was that they did not see that their patient was immediately registered at Parkland (the assassination-related "confusion" should not have begun until about ten minutes after their arrival); the "nurse" who supposedly gave him the glass of water whether she or he remembered the incident; Belknap himself how he managed to "return" to Dealey Plaza where the Dallas Morning News is located and what was the nature of the "one or two occasions" in which he had seen Jack Ruby. So far as I know, no investigator, official or private, has asked any of these questions of any of these people. I was fortunate enough to locate and talk with one of the principals: Jerry B. Belknap, who still lives at 1212 Ross Drive, Irving. A research associate, Keith Freedman, and I went to Belknap's home, where he lives with his father and mother, on November 21, 1983. Belknap was extremely cooperative and amiable, though his mother was seemingly (and understandably) a bit nervous with our presence and, after a time, told Belknap to "cut it short" because "we have a lot of things to do today." Belknap told us we were the first private investigators who had contacted him. He confirmed the essence of the story he told the FBI in June, 1964, though there were a few contradictions and some intriguing additional details that he added.

Contrary to his FBI statement, Belknap told us that he did lose consciousness; he stepped back from the crowd and the "next thing he knew" a policeman was standing over him. He said that after his arrival at Parkland he was placed in the hallway on a table; he held up his hands to indicate that the table was about 27 inches long (curtain rod length!). When he requested attention he was directed to "lay down" on the table! Finally, there was a great rush of people past him who made a left turn into another section of the emergency room. Belknap denied that he took one of his "regular medications" before he left; rather a male attendant offered him a glass of water and an aspirin. He finally did despair of getting any medical attention and walked out without registering. Outside he caught a city bus to go back to Dealey Plaza and to work at the News. Only when he was back downtown did he learn of the President's shooting; apparently he neither heard anyone at Parkland say nor did he ask what all the "confusion" was about. I also queried Belknap about his previous acquaintance with Jack Ruby and was told that he had seen Ruby once "over on Akard" at which time he was "acting like a big shot." When I asked him to explain, he compared the Ruby behavior to that of Dallas Cowboy football player Butch Johnson, apparently one of the more notorious "celebrators" of successful football plays. I am still trying to picture Jack Ruby on the street doing a victory celebration.

Probably the most interesting revelation of Belknap during this interview was that there were official interviews with him both before and after the interview reported in CD 1245. He remembers distinctly that officials from both the DPD and the FBI visited him; probably within a few days of the assassination and definitely while he was still employed at the News. He commented on the apparent distrust between the two agencies which explained, in his mind, why both the DPD and the FBI had to ask him the same questions. If Belknap was truthful on this, the FBI's suggestion in CD 1245 that it first contacted Belknap only after the Oneal employee phoned the Dallas FBI office in May, 1964 will be shown up as a piece of posturing by an agency that apparently made an earlier investigation and then covered up its own investigation. Belknap even suggested the process by which the Bureau made its June, 1964 report of an interview with himself. He said that, possibly in the summer of 1964, an agent called him on the telephone and got him to confirm the results of the earlier interview. Agent Switzer then proceeded to write up a report that gives the appearance of being a first-time interview conducted on June 11, 1964.

Belknap also furnished the interesting information that an investigator from "some Committee in Washington" had contacted him within the last few years. If the staff of the House Select Committee on Assassinations did contact him, they apparently concealed that fact as successfully as the FBI concealed its first interview with him. At least I have found no reference to Belknap nor the epileptic seizure incident in the Committee's Report nor in its volumes of Hearings.

Where are we left with the epileptic seizure episode? Based on FBI interviews of Belknap as well as that done by Freedman and myself, I think there are three possible interpretations of Belknap's role in the assassination conspiracy.

First, Belknap may indeed have been an innocent victim who experienced a purely coincidental brush with historical circumstances. Before talking with Belknap, I regarded this interpretation about as unlikely as the story of that other victim of "bad luck"---the Steve Witt who only intended to "heckle" the President with his umbrella and had the misfortune of heckling at the very place and moment of the President's assassination. When one talks with Belknap, one gets the impression of a man of utter sincerity and also as being one of life's born losers. However, the additional details he gave me --- the short table at Parkland, his leaving the hospital with no inkling that the President had been brought there, his account of his observation of Jack Ruby --- are so inherently incredible that I have to wonder if Belknap is, after all, an extremely skillful actor.

Second, it is possible that Belknap was an assassination conspirator, hired or blackmailed into providing the "diversion" that would allow the assassins to move into their kill positions. The major factor favoring such an interpretation is the extreme convenience to conspirators of the street disturbance created by his "seizure." The assassins were seemingly "lucky" in a number of respects, but could they have been that lucky?

In addition to its "diversionary" function, it might be considered that the "seizure" furnished the excuse for two Oneal employees, Aubrey Rike and Dennis McGuire, to be at Parkland at the time of the President's arrival. These were the two employees who, according to David Lifton, loaded the President's body in a coffin brought there by their employer, Vernon Oneal. (8) If there was chicanery in the handling of the President's body, as Lifton asserts, it may have (Lifton to the contrary) started in Dallas and it was necessary to have pre-designated body handlers at Parkland to begin to effect the body-alteration

plot. I am certainly not accusing Rike, McGuire or Oneal, but such a possibility should definitely be investigated.

Finally, and the interpretation to which I am presently inclined: Belknap may not have been the "epileptic seizure" at all but---as has been suggested of Steve Witt as the self-confirmed "umbrella man"---he may have been "invented" after the fact to provide an explanation for a seemingly-sinister coincidence. There is no doubt that a man was removed by ambulance at Elm and Houston shortly before the assassination; a number of witnesses comment on having seen the event. (9) If the "victim" was a conspirator his role was presumably satisfied when the commotion was created and---assuming the collusion of the ambulance driver and attendant---was dropped at some point after he was safely removed from the scene. If the ambulance personnel needed their "excuse" for going to Parkland in anticipation of the arrival of an assassinated President, they could have proceeded there without their "victim," knowing that the ensuing "confusion" would cover their irregular movements.

The best evidence for this interpretation is the utter silence of any and all Parkland employees concerning the arrival of a seizure victim. (10) As so often noted, virtually every adult American remembers vividly where he or she was and what he or she was doing at the time of the assassination. If Jerry Belknap had been at Parkland at that time, somebody must have been dealing with him (such as those who supposedly told him to "lay down" on the short table) and yet nobody, to my knowledge, has remembered such a detail of his or her activity at that time. This fact, plus the incredibilities of Belknap's version of his treatment at Parkland and his departure therefrom, leads to a grave doubt that any epileptic seizure victim arrived at Parkland on that afternoon.

It is possible, of course, on this interpretation, that Belknap himself was picked up at Elm and Houston and then dropped at the unknown location. There is actually a considerably stronger possibility that Belknap was the "seizure" victim than that he was taken to Parkland. The possibility could be---or could have been---checked out by having bystander witnesses view Belknap for their opinions of whether he was, indeed, the man picked up at Elm and Houston. My reason for doubting that Belknap was the man picked up by the ambulance is based on a reflection of the apparent fact that Belknap was prone to seizures as a result of a childhood accident: his having (as he told us) been hit by an automobile as he got off a school bus. If I were organizing a conspiracy in which I wanted a precisely-timed "seizure" at a given place, I would certainly not use a person prone to actual seizures, lest the person have a real seizure at an inopportune moment. Since I happen to believe---for reasons that I could not possibly explain here---that there was police complicity in the assassination, I have to reflect that the police could easily have gone (before or after the assassination) to its files of accident reports to find a person who could be groomed as an investigatory stand-in for the man removed by ambulance. Any event as dramatic and police-involving as an automobile striking a child leaving a school bus would surely be in those files. (Belknap lived in Irving, and given the questionable involvements of the Irving PD in such matters as the searches of the Ruth Paine home, the November 24 transfer of Marina Oswald into the hands of the Secret Service, and the discovery of Oswald's "undated note" concerning the Walker shooting, it is fully believable that the conspiracy reached into the ranks of that police department as well.) I wonder, too, if this grooming activity were not the real purpose of those early and unreported visits by the DPD and the FBI to Belknap. I have no idea what kind of pressure these agents may have used on Belknap to secure his "cooperation" as an invented seizure victim if, indeed, this is an accurate scenario of the genesis of Belknap as such a victim.

This analysis is obviously filled with a great many "it is possibles" and "I wonder whethers". The only thing about this episode of which I am absolutely certain are: (a) that this episode is imminently worthy of "continuing inquiry" and (b) that the Federal Bureau of "Investigation" did not come within a mile of investigating aspects of the episode that cried for attention; or, if they did investigate, they found intimations of policy complicity in the assassination and suppressed the results of their investigations. My view of the assassination crime and the cover-up investigations is essentially that of George O'Toole: that members of the DPD were up to their ears in assassination involvement, and that the DPD used information---spurious and real---about Oswald's FBI connections to blackmail the Bureau away from any real investigation of the crime. (11) The epileptic seizure episode may well have furnished an important example of that shadowy relationship between the DPD and the FBI.

#### FOOTNOTES

1. 23H839.
2. 23H840.
3. The "official" versions of the DPD radio logs that appear in the Warren Commission exhibits include the ambulance driver's request for a police car to meet him at Parkland but no indication of the dispatching of such a car. Judith Bonner's (Investigation of a Homicide) "unauthorized" version of the logs, presumably based on her close access to DPD records, includes an entry directing the squad car assigned to Barnes to meet the ambulance at Parkland. Since Bonner's book strikes me as essentially a would-be white-wash of official investigations, I cannot believe that she fabricated this entry; rather I assume that the instructions to Barnes was on the tape and that both the DPD and FBI compilers omitted it to give themselves an excuse for not having questioned Barnes on the matter.
4. 23H917.
5. 21H156.
6. I am indebted to Sylvia Meagher for calling this document to my attention.
7. 23H882-4. Originally, ambulance 606 simply called the dispatcher to get clearance for a "coach" carrying the casket to Love Field. A few minutes later 606 reported itself as approaching "Air Cargo" (presumably at Love Field). One might think that for some reason 606 went along as an escort for the "coach" but, unaccountably 606 asked the dispatcher (with negative results) if he knew the location of "the coach" as 606 was approaching Love Field. This is only one of many screaming incongruities I have found in the movements of ambulances around Dallas on the afternoon of November 22.
8. David Lifton, Best Evidence, p. 674. Lifton's information clarifies a bit the identity of the "coach" referred to in footnote 7. Rike, McGuire and Oneal supposedly loaded the body in the same "hearse" that Oneal had used to bring the coffin to Parkland. The subsequent movements of ambulance 606 remain as mysterious as ever.
9. 2H174 (Arnold Rowland, who refers to the victim as a "colored boy"---Belknap is white); 3H141-2 (Howard Brennan, who gives no description of the "victim"); 7H514 (Mrs. Donald Baker, who saw the ambulance arrival but did not see whom it picked up.)
10. One hospital employee (21H414) did refer to a mysterious "Mr. X" who was supposedly a patient in the emergency room but whose name was not on the patient register. While "X" may have been Jerry Belknap, his description of himself as being ignored by hospital personnel and his conspicuous placement in a hallway does not quite square with the more mysterious aura of "X".
11. George O'Toole. The Assassination Tapes.