

1 December 1966

My dear Mr. Ball,

A friend was kind enough to send me a page from the Dallas Morning News of November 27, 1966, in which I read excerpts from the transcript of a panel discussion at the convention of Associated Press Managing Editors in San Diego on November 17th, including remarks made by you.

Referring to the identification of the rifle found in the Depository, you acknowledged that both Seymour Weitzman and Eugene Boone "later on that day" said it was a Mauser. May I point out that the Warren Report attributes the mis-identification solely to Weitzman, and that his affidavit stating that the rifle was a Mauser was in fact dated November 23, 1963?

You stated further that "because he was an expert, Weitzman made the mistake." That is not the explanation presented in the Warren Report. Moreover, I note that Weitzman was not shown the Carcano rifle in order that he might testify as to whether or not it was the rifle he and Boone had found; nor was he shown a photograph of the rifle, but only a picture of cartons behind which a rifle was protruding. I wonder if you really consider that consistent with what you described as "the most extensive investigation ever conducted in American history"? (I note also that the Commission failed to establish any contact or communication between Wade, who also described the rifle as a Mauser, and either Weitzman or Boone--another regrettable omission since it leaves unresolved the source of Wade's erroneous information.)

You declared also, "Since when did rifles give off a puff of smoke? They don't do it." For your information, Sir, an FBI report in Volume XXVI of the Hearings and Exhibits (CE 3133) states that when the Carcano rifle was fired in sunlight and in shade, at the Commission's request, "a small amount of white smoke" was seen. (I resist the temptation to exclaim "Put that in your pipe...")

Finally, one general comment: It does not seem fair play to ask the critics to argue their case in a context other than the official published Report and Hearings and Exhibits and to contend with a growing list of improvisations, revisions, and alternatives presented in debate by spokesmen or apologists for the Warren Commission. I should think that the "certain amount of pride" which you proclaimed in itself would cause you to defend the Report on the basis of the public record and to abjure unofficial and personal amendment of the printed texts, which texts (and not variations and afterthoughts) are under challenge. It creates the impression that those who defend the Report are unable to justify it strictly in its own terms.

Yours sincerely,

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