

Notes on Meeting of Warrenologists - Sunday 3 October 1965

Present

Maggie Field (X)

*See back of
last page for her minus on EE*

Isabel Davis

Vince Salandria and wife

Ed Epstein (c/o Dept of Govt Cornell University Ithaca NY)

Joe Lobenthal

Stamm

Leo Sauvage

Bill Grehan

SM

(No-Shows: Jones Harris, Fred Cook, Norma Aitchison)

One subject of discussion was Mrs. Field's album on Oswald-with-Rifle, showing (a) ring present on one photo, absent on the other (b) striking fullness of hair, more like Minsk photos than thin-haired LHO of about six months later (c) In CE 133-B the left arm has appearance and position which has been said to Mrs. Field to be "anatomically impossible."

Later in the day the airmail special delivery package arrived from California, containing a series of photostats in which Mrs Field has attempted to demolish the WC's conclusions, seriatim, by excerpts from the H&E, so as to show the average person (non-student of the case) at a glance the fraudulence of the WC's assertions and findings. Several of those present wished to purchase copies.

Vince Salandria read a long portion of his first draft of an article on the Zapruder film and frames, in which he attempts to demonstrate that Gov C was hit in frame 292, thus decisively demonstrating that there were at least two assassins. He feels certain that the Governor was shot from the TSED but that the head shot in frame 313 had to come from grassy knoll. It was suggested that he modify his comments on the drawing of the Governor postulating a trajectory with the right wrist on the left leg. Considerable discussion of the "45° trajectory" incessantly quoted by Specter. Salandria believes Specter used this figure trying to explain the wrist wound but the Parkland doctors spoiled his game by insisting on flattening the trajectory (ie see 6H Shaw and Gregory Exhibit, in which Shaw raised the position of the exit wound at right nipple, changing trajectory from about 45 to about 25°). It was also suggested to Salandria that he add, re stretcher bullet, that when examined it bore no trace of blood or tissue.

SM had brief discussion with Salandria and Epstein re ammunition clip; they were only mildly interested. Epstein expressed desire to buy copy of SM's subject index; I explained I had no copy but if I decided to sign the contract, it would be published early 1966.

The most interesting, important, and hitherto unknown information came from Ed Epstein, who is doing his doctoral thesis on the Warren Commission procedures and methods of work. He has had full access to every member of the WC and every one of the counsel, except for Warren himself. There follows an attempt to reconstruct, so far as possible and as accurately as possible (but allowance must be made here for error of recollection) some of the intensely significant material exposed by Epstein.

1. All the work was done by counsel; the members of the Commission (except for Warren) spent very little time on the investigation and when they were present in force it was for background material only (ie testimony of Marina and Marguerite) but not on the facts of the case. Some of the counsel (or most?) thought Warren was stupid. However, he was relatively well informed and made many important decisions--some so antithetical to some members of the staff that they threatened to resign (ie Coleman and perhaps Adams).
2. One of the major differences among counsel was whether they should prepare the witnesses, as in a courtroom proceeding when each adversary prepares his witness before actual testimony. Two factions--one for, one against, such preparation of witnesses. The problem was presented to Warren, who said of course go ahead and prepare them, saw no reason why not.
3. Ball and others who examined Helen Markham reached the conclusion that she was a psychopathic liar and strongly recommended that the WC should not rely on her or give her any important role. The members of the WC, however, instructed Rankin that they wanted to use her, so Redlich inherited the job of rewriting Ball's (rejected) draft of Chapter IV in accordance with the WC's wishes (ie using Markham as major witness).

4. Ball did draft Chapter IV but it was rejected for stylistic and other reasons (he offered to make his draft available to Epstein). He was offended by the rejection of his draft. Redlich had to rewrite the whole chapter. Specter did Chapter III. In spite of this, Ball in his Beverly Hills debate claimed that he had prepared the autopsy surgeons before they testified (apparently not true) and that he was the author of Chapter IV. Lobenthal reminded me that he had had an hour with Redlich some time ago (during the New School course), by dropping in on him "cold." Redlich is completely disinclined to give such interviews and Lobenthal does not feel he would have obtained an appointment, had he tried.

5. Liebeler, a supporter of Goldwater, was very offended and upset about some aspect of the investigation--which I do not recall, though Epstein specified what it was. Coleman was about ready to resign because he did not like Brennan, was very suspicious, and was opposed to the role Brennan plays in the WR. In a recent appearance before some group (lawyers? politicians?) he did not include his WC work among his credentials. Someone pointed out that Specter too omitted that from his credentials in his current political campaign but Salandria said, no, he has really milked that.

6. As late as September, there was a series of panic memoranda from counsel, saying, alas, it's all over, there is really no evidence against Oswald, it's finished, the case has fallen apart. All these panic letters went to Willens, who had the job of patching up the hole in the case, which each time he managed to do.

7. Very important is the fact that Epstein has had access not only to all internal memoranda of the WC but to photographic material not included in the WR and to the five-volume FBI report. That report rejects the single-bullet theory and concludes that Governor Connally was hit was a second bullet. I question whether the FBI actually rejects the single-bullet hypothesis because the five-volume report was in December, before the formulation of the single-bullet-theory. Also, the discussion elicited the fact that the Army ballistics tests (goats etc) are not relevant to the single-bullet-theory, which came later than the tests; and that the WC could have but did not request a second series of tests to demonstrate the feasibility of the single-missile-theory. In the Army tests, a bullet

was finally produced which somewhat resembled the stretcher bullet, and the WC leaned heavily on that. The WR claims there were seven shots; but Epstein says there were far more tries than that before they could produce a bullet resembling the stretcher bullet.

8. Epstein is also very suspicious of the Tippit bullets. Originally only one bullet was produced for the FBI, a bullet which was found to be almost identifiable with the revolver alleged to belong to Oswald. Month after month all official sources and documents said Tippit was shot three times (not four times, as in the official mythology). Burt Griffin, described by Epstein as tough, brilliant, independent lawyer, made a flash raid on the Dallas police files, and recovered three more Tippit bullets. Epstein suspects that the first bullet was planted to incriminate Oswald and that when the three real Tippit bullets were suddenly recovered by Griffin's bold raid, the story had to be changed and Tippit was from then on shot four times, because they had ~~was~~ four bullets. We checked the testimony on the number of shells recovered at the Tippit scene on 11/22--four, apparently, to Epstein's and my disappointment--two picked up by Benavides, one each by the Davis women. But I pointed to the strange radio log entry, of an instruction to shake down the Texas Theater for two shells, which was cancelled after a few minutes--the instruction I somehow recall originated with Fritz but I can't remember why I recall it that way and have not stopped to check the records.

9. We had a fairly long discussion on the lineups, on McWatters testimony among others. Mrs Field pointed out something very important which had escaped me--that is, that the participants in the lineup were all asked their names and where they worked. Therefore, no one could possibly have failed to identify Oswald, even if they overlooked his protests, charges of frameup, and facial injuries. Sauvage has read the book on lineups and identifications by Patrick Wall ("Eyewitness Identification in Criminal Cases") reviewed in NYU Law Review issue that contains symposium on Warren Report--feels the Wall book constitutes a terrific rebuff to Warren and the "Satisfaction" with the fairness of the lineups in the WR.

10. The Supreme court justices were unhappy about Warren taking the chairmanship of the Commission; one of them strongly urged him to consider the implications--if Ruby's conviction came to the Court, Warren disqualifying himself, and there was a 4-4 split--it might cost a man's life. Warren is said to have replied to that justice, "None of your business."

11. None of the counsel believed Marina Oswald, but Warren and most of the other Commission members did, and of course they prevailed.

12. The Commission is furious with Gerald Ford for his book "Portrait of the Assassin" (original title was "Portrait of an Assassin") because at the end they had a meeting and a gentleman's agreement not to break ranks after the report came out, to maintain a unified position, etc. Ford sat there, having already signed a contract for the book, nevertheless agreeing to the arrangement. Now they are absolutely furious with him. Also, Epstein said that Ford's book as submitted to the publishers did not include the present Chapter 1. The publishers were not willing to publish his manuscript as it was, saying it was all material in the public domain, to which they could have assigned one of their own hacks. They insisted on something hitherto unknown and sensational--Ford, rather than lose the contract (\$20,000 ???), dug into his files and minutes and whipped up Chapter 1, with the Hudkins affair. Re Hudkins, Epstein says that Leon Jaworski (?) personal assistant or counsel to the President, was sent to interview Hudkins and McCormick (?) of the Dallas Morning News, who were the sources of the Oswald/FBI recruit story; also that Secret Service interviewed Hudkins. I recalled to Epstein that Ford did not seem to know that, judging from his letter to me.

13. Epstein rather liked Ford, thought he was intelligent and well-informed. The original draft of the WC's conclusion was "there was no conspiracy" but Ford insisted that that be changed to "there was no evidence of a conspiracy" ~~ie~~ leaving open the door to a possible later revelation that there was a (communist) conspiracy. Such investigation as was undertaken of the existence of a conspiracy was directed solely to a communist conspiracy--for example, Jack Ruby's money was checked against serial numbers of known "communist" money.

(Here I will interpolate that Maggie Field told me the preceding night that she was sworn to absolute secrecy, but could tell me, from information which she is obliged to keep absolutely secret by her Beverly Hills associate R-M-, that we were on the right track (ie there was a definite conspiracy) and not to get discouraged.)

14. Mrs Field believes that she heard Epstein say that he saw FBI vouchers to Oswald among the papers to which he had access--I am certain that she is mistaken, but this should be checked with Epstein just the same.

(memo to self--Mrs Salandria's name is Libby)

15. Epstein has seen the MS of Mark Lane's book (Penguin, London??) which he thinks is very poor--full of inaccuracies, devoting long long section to Ruby's friendships with policemen, which is not under dispute (though understated in the WR). Thayer Waldo was the reporter who brought Lane into contact with the man who was the source of the story of the Tippit-Weissman-Ruby meeting; Lane maintains that story in his book. The man does not want his name involved because it would expose the fact that he was having an affair with a Ruby stripper (my comment --Who wasn't??). All those present groaned, feeling sure that an inaccurate poorly-founded book by Lane is going to be used to discredit all of us, indiscriminately.

16. Epstein, criticizing the WC's investigation, gave this example: Because of Lane's public claims that shots came from the overpass, the WC assigned Ball and another counsel to interview the 14 witnesses on the overpass and establish that no shots came from there. This they did, with blinkers (blindners?) on, ignoring the fact that 11 of the 14 said that the shots had come from the grassy knoll. This is an example of conclusions preceding investigation, and investigation limited strictly to substantiating the preconceived conclusion, typical of the whole investigation.

Kellerman & wind shield

& Epstein said yes on incident each
item in his book - not yet written

Pierce Allman - reporter
or TV-
was "S" asked
Lito to
help

17. Epstein said that the FBI tapes of Mark Lane's lectures would fill half my living room (21 x 14). He saw the Richard Hughes picture; does seem to show a man in window, who could be Oswald, if that was what one was told to look for; could be merely cartoons, too. Does not know anything, did not see anything, re Ralph Simpson films.

18. Sauvage made point that the WC in its anxiety to refute ~~Stamm~~ Buchanan (and/or Lane) on various points only succeeded in making its version of events even more vulnerable--as for example the anxiety to prove that the description of the assassin did not originate with Truly--pushing up the time of his report that Oswald was missing by half an hour--and attributing the 12.45 description "most probably" to Brennan. This introduced a much more serious problem--the failure of the police to go immediately to the 6th floor window and search for the ~~man~~ sniper or for traces of him.

This discussion got us into a tremendous fracas, Sauvage and I versus Epstein and Stamm, the latter saying that it was perfectly understandable in the chaos and confusion that the police, even though having numerous reports that the shots came from that window, did not seal the building promptly nor go there immediately--they "waited for instructions" etc etc, the most appalling nonsense. Sauvage and I would not budge. Epstein departed (perhaps because of this fracas, perhaps not, as he had already said some time before that he had to leave), Stamm then reversed himself and reversed himself again, indulging in absurd arguments and making insulting statements to Sauvage and to me. Sauvage dealt with him politely but firmly, and devastated his whole position. If that was not enough, Stamm then got onto his eternal hobby horse--the political context of the assassination, deprecating our collective and individual preoccupation with the evidence (guns, bullets, all that nonsense) --What we needed to was economic study of the state of Texas!!!!!!!!!!!!

I told Stamm he was crazy.

I think he is, at times, and on this subject, just about paranoid.

Earlier Maggie and I had disagreed about the CE 705 radio log entry placing citizen report of Tippit shooting at 1:10 pm. I believe this is typographical error for 1.19 pm based on line by line comparison with CE 1974 radio log, and because preceding entries are 1.15 pm etc. Still, it warrants further examination. So much is faked in that log.

Additional Epstein items

After almost every one of his startling disclosures, I asked Epstein if he intended to include the particular matter in his book and he kept saying that he did. Before he left, however, he said that his book was not yet written --that he had only a rough draft (his doctoral thesis adviser is Professor Hatcher (Andrew?) who has been giving him full help and encouragement). We all wondered afterwards if these sensational exposes of what went on behind-the-scenes would actually find their way into print.

I forgot to mention the following very important items above:

(1) WC tried desperately to get Kellerman to say that he turned in the car in such a way as to crack the windshield, because the crack (made by bullet) was embarrassing and difficult for them to handle. But Kellerman could not help them out.

(2) Epstein says (vs what I understood him to say on the telephone) that there is no record, no transcript, of the off-the-records in testimony.

(3) Pierce Allman seems to be the SS agent who stopped Oswald (on the first floor, not outside the TSB) to ask for the telephone booth. His encounter matches the story Oswald is said to have told during the interrogations. This would place him still in the TSB when he is supposed to be walking to the bus...Epstein doubts LHO ever was on bus, seems to find Craig's white station wagon story quite plausible, McWatters' testimony not at all decisive, Mrs Bledsoe is nutty, thinks she made her identification purely on basis recognition of LHO's shirt, but did not see him on bus.

(4) There was some discussion which I did not really hear about Demohrenschiltdt and maybe Michael Paine being CIA agents...Haiti perfect jump-off for Cuban invasion...

(5) The Commission (and/or FBI and/or CIA) for a while entertained but ultimately rejected the "Manchurian Candidate Theory"--ie, that Oswald was brainwashed in the USSR by technique of hypnosis and drugs which caused his hair-loss, and that Marina regularly reinforced the brainwashing and remote control via drugs (she was trained pharmacist). Again, clear that the Commission in contemplating the possibility of conspiracy limited the source and nature exclusively to a Communist plot.

(OVER)