

Friday 18 August 1967 (Later)

Dear Tink,

I am in process of re-reading your uncorrected manuscript, and some additional questions and comments occur to me, which I am mentioning but which you may ignore if they are anachronistic, irrelevant, or trivial.

Chapter 3, page 15

The wire sent to the FBI field office in Dallas on the morning of 11/23/67 is a valuable new addition to the evidence which tends to invalidate the autopsy report. You have quoted this wire in that context. But here is another interesting question which arises from this telegram and related or collateral information which has emerged fairly recently: the response and the follow-up, if any, on the part of the federal investigators receiving these results of the autopsy findings.

It is Saturday morning in Dallas. Oswald is in jail. During the morning, he has been interrogated again by Captain Fritz, in the presence of FBI agent James Bookhout, SS agent David Grant, SS Inspector Thomas Kelley, and U.S. Marshall Robert Nash, among others. He had already been arraigned for the Tippit killing and allegedly for the assassination, neither of the arraignment bills of particulars having mentioned unknown co-conspirators with Oswald. The interrogation did not include questions about accomplices. Oswald was already seen by the authorities as the lone assassin.

The wire transmitting the autopsy findings presumably is received by the head of the FBI Dallas office, Gordon Shanklin, and logic alone suggests that he did not merely file it away. We must infer that Shanklin transmitted the sense of the wire to his man at the police headquarters (Bookhout and/or other agents) and through them, or directly, to Curry and/or Fritz. (If he withheld the information on the autopsy results, the implications would be grave.)

Although it is not documented, we may infer also that Inspector Kelley was being kept in the picture by the Secret Service, and that he too was aware of the autopsy findings. He may have shared this information with Forrest Sorrels, head of the SS Dallas office.

All of these officials as well as their principals in Washington must also have known, from radio, TV, and newspaper reports (including the Perry press conference) that the doctors at Parkland Hospital had found an entrance bullet wound at the Adam's apple. Eyewitness reports publicized on 11/22/63 spoke of a bullet striking the right temple or the right front of the head. Some of these officials (including Sorrels specifically) had also viewed the Zapruder film and seen with their own eyes the backward head snap at frame 313 ff.

Over and above all this explicit evidence inimical to the theory that Oswald was the lone assassin, it must have been known in the high echelons of both the FBI and the SS (and possibly also by the Dallas outposts of both establishments) that the assassination had been blueprinted for the Miami police, with astonishing accuracy, on November 9, two weeks earlier. The tape recording had been turned over to the SS and the FBI on or very shortly after November 9. It included the explicit prediction that a man would be picked up within hours "to throw dust in the eyes of the American people."

On Saturday morning, then, the federal agencies had prima facie evidence of crossfire and conspiracy, and some evidence suggesting that the accused lone assassin might not be implicated at all. Oswald was alive, in police custody, but without legal representation. (Investigation that same morning by FBI agents Clements and De Brueys of the Bogard allegations tended to support the evidence for conspiracy involving Oswald, later interpreted as a possible gambit to implicate Oswald by impersonation. But, as indicated in my chapter on the auto demonstration--published as an article in TMO last year--the two FBI agents failed to take the indicated action after hearing Bogard, or so it would appear from the available evidence.)

On the basis of this prima facie case for a conspiracy in which Oswald was implicated, or perhaps only a patsy, certain action became mandatory on the part of the FBI and/or the SS at the highest level. (1) To inform Curry and Fritz and to cut off their stream of statements to the press and public to the effect that Oswald alone was guilty. (2) To concentrate on eliciting from Oswald during the interrogations the identities of his fellow-conspirators. (3) To institute a manhunt for the other rifleman or riflemen. (4) To institute the most rigorous security measures for Oswald's safety, since he was the only solid link to the other assassins, and especially because he was automatically a threat to their escape and immunity from suspicion.

None of these steps were taken. On the contrary, statements by Dallas officials on Saturday--after the rifle was traced to Oswald's post office box --became bolder and even more categorical. Did they know from the FBI or the SS the nature of the autopsy findings and the Zapruder film? Did they know about the Miami tape? If not, it would seem that neither the FBI nor the SS transmitted the information, but suppressed it, from the Dallas police and all other parties. The inferences, in terms of the competence and disinterest of these federal agencies--and therefore their moral responsibility for Oswald's fate--is self-evident. (Life magazine had also viewed the Zapruder film, before the so-called lone assassin was murdered.)

### Chapter 3, page 31

It is true that the Parkland doctors had considered a fragment driven downward and out the throat; didn't they also consider a bullet entering the throat and deflected upwards, blasting out of the head?

### Chapter 3, page 32

The significance of the position of the ragged tear of the right front of the trachea may be influenced by the fact that the trachea was deviated to the left (i.e., by the collapse of the right lung). If the trachea was torn at the right front after deviation, there is not necessarily a right-to-left trajectory. What caused the collapse of the lung (shown by bubbling of air and blood as well as by the tracheal deviation)--the bullet in the back? or the presumed exit of a fragment of bone (or metal) from the head shot?

Comments on the Manuscript of  
SIX SECONDS IN DALLAS by  
Josiah Thompson

(Meagher 7/19/67)

Preface

Pages 2a and 3: "A year later he published in The Minority of One the startling revelation that the FBI Summary Report of December 9, 1963 disclosed that the bullet which wounded the President had not exited. Soon afterward Edward Epstein published the FBI Supplemental Report of January 13, 1964, which reiterated the finding that the bullet had not exited. Epstein's book Inquest, which paralleled the substance of Salandria's earlier analysis of the evidence, became an overnight best-seller."

Page 5: "Sylvia Meagher, author of the Subject Index to the Warren Report and the Hearings and Exhibits and of the book Accessories After the Fact: The Warren Commission, The Authorities, and The Report, was kind enough..." etc.

(I suggest that you mention Accessories here because it is mentioned later, in the notes. Also, to avoid misunderstanding, you might say that I prepared "the index for this book" so as to differentiate it from the Subject Index.)

Chapter I

Page 4, line 8: Please delete "of the World Health Organization" and insert "researcher and critic of the Warren Report" or "author of a subject index and critical study of the Warren Report" or the like.

Page 9, end of paragraph 2: To the best of my knowledge, the Commission did not study the Moorman photo at all. It did not mention this photo in its Report nor publish it in its Exhibits.

Chapter II

Page 5, line 11: You may wish to describe the location of "the truck yards" in relation to the Depository or the grassy knoll. Also, I think the Romack/Rackley divergence was the exception, not the rule, and it may be attributable to defective hearing (do we know Rackley's physical condition?). Other pairs or groups of witnesses standing together seem generally consistent with each other on the number and source of the shots—i.e., Jean Hill/Moorman; the Newmans; Campbell/Truly; Lovelady/Shelley; etc.

Page 14, line 16:

I never heard of "F.M. Bell" and he is not listed in Lane's inventory of witnesses. Since he is "new," you may wish to add a few identifying words, indicating that Bell was discovered and interviewed by you for the first time, never questioned by the federal or local agencies or the Commission even though he took photographs, etc.

Page 16, end of paragraph 2:

It is not insignificant that sheriff's officers familiar with Dealey Plaza and presumably with any sound distortion characteristics there, positioned on Houston Street, nevertheless sped past the Depository and to the knoll area. As officers of the law, they were professionally familiar with the sounds of gunfire, it must be presumed. On both scores, then, it assumes some significance that these men (as well as police officers and ordinary spectators) rushed past the Depository and up the knoll. In the absence of an acoustical study, we are entitled to make inferences on the basis of differentiation between citizen bystanders and professional officers of the law who happened to be witnesses.

### Chapter III

Page 17 footnote:

Despite the clear evidence that James and his colleagues changed their findings after the body became inaccessible, the Warren Report (page 88) falsely asserts that the change resulted from "further exploration during the autopsy."

Page 24, caption bottom left:

The Warren Report (page 97) says explicitly that "the back of the stand-in...was marked with chalk at the point where the bullet entered."

Page 35, paragraph 2, line 6:

Ray Marcus has argued strongly against the thesis of expulsion of the bullet during cardiac massage, on the basis of a canvass he undertook of forensic pathologists. Have you discussed this with him? Remember, the Washington Post was told by the FBI that a bullet was removed during the autopsy. When Specter later came up with his single-missile theory, a bullet found and removed during the autopsy would have been inadmissible. Admittedly, the evidence that no bullet could be found during the autopsy is stronger than the FBI statement to the Washington Post. But if the results of Ray's canvass are valid, there is some real difficulty with the theory that the bullet was forced out of the body during cardiac massage.

Page 36, end of paragraph 1:

You have made a surprisingly persuasive case for the anterior neck wound as the product of a fragment from the head shot. Does the possibility still remain that this wound might have been caused by the entry of a bullet smaller than 6.5 mm? which lodged in the body and went undetected by the autopsy surgeons because they were not fully competent to read the X-rays?

Chapter IV

Page 4, end of  
footnote:

That the WR (page 116) claims that examination disclosed no indication of a bullet strike is not really probative—look at the way the investigation ignored the bullet mark on the curb (reported by Tague and others) until forced to do something about it, in July/August 1964; and look at the other bullet scar on Elm Street, disclosed by Weisberg in WW2 (which you discuss in a later chapter). Remember also photographs taken and published on or shortly after 11/22/63 of police or sheriff's officers pointing to the turf where a bullet had been recovered (Lillian Castellano of Los Angeles is the authority on this).

Page 24, line 1: Insert here footnote 15 in Chapter VI. You say that you are inclined to accept the earlier figure. The later figure, however, is more consistent with the size of the bullet holes in the coat and shirt. Also, Connally's scar measurement (still accessible) might be significant. It seems perilous to predicate a second weapon of larger caliber bullets on a wound measurement that may be twice the magnitude of the actual wound.

Chapter V

Page 13: Last line is missing on my copy.

Page 14: Middle of page, "Dr. R. A. J. Riddle"

Page 30: Is a word missing at the end of line 1?

Page 36, line 1: Change to "half-moon shaped fragment..."

Notes page 3: "Two fragments, ballistically matched to Oswald's rifle..." has been questioned by Sauvage, relying on Soderman & O'Neill, as too small for conclusive identification. Also, the chain of possession of the car and its contents is unsatisfactory.

Last paragraph of note 16, excellent point.

Chapter VI

Page 11: In sixth line from bottom, the footnote number should be "13" (not "15").

Page 17: In paragraph 2, you say "clearly, Oswald's rifle was used;" it seems to me that you should qualify this statement. No one checked the rifle to see if it had been fired that day; there was no gunpowder smell on the sixth floor; Frazier failed to check the rifle the next day for metal fouling; and you yourself demonstrate the suspicion which attaches to one of the shells (in fact, to all three) and to the stretcher bullet. With so many strange and unexplained (and even sinister) anomalies, some doubt must attach to the use—and the ownership—of the rifle.

You have not discussed here the method by which the rifle was introduced into the Depository. I feel strongly that the Frazier/Randle testimony destroys the conclusion that Oswald carried the rifle in that morning in the notorious paper bag. In a later chapter, you do discuss reports suggesting that two men may have taken a rifle into the building the previous evening. This is another reason to qualify the statement that Oswald's

*rifle Oswald was used.*

Page 19, para. 2: What is the position of the right wrist in frames 234-238? Is it in alignment to be penetrated by the bullet exiting from the right nipple? (For my information.)

Page 24, para. 2: Line 4--I seem to remember that someone, possibly Mark Lane on one of his TV debates, insisted that the appearance of the SS men looking strenuously to their right rear was an optical illusion, resulting from foreshortening or use of a zoom lens or the like. Supposedly the SS men were really looking at the knoll area. Is this possible?

Lines 9-12--Someone has made the point that the SS agents all thought the shots came from their right rear, regardless of their own location. Agents still on Houston Street, like those already proceeding down Elm, said "right rear."

Pages 25-26: Personally I am disinclined to consider Brennan a bona fide witness. Reliance on his testimony should be qualified by an indication that he lied (or says he lied) to the police at the lineup, and was unreliable and inaccurate in his account of the man in the window (sitting vs standing, etc.).

Also, one or more of the specialists on the Zapruder film have told me that Brennan at no time seemed to "glance up" at the Depository windows. (See Lane's discussion of Brennan in Rush to Judgment)

Page 27, para. 1: Penultimate sentence: for my information, how marked is the change of the mass, over what period of time (span of frames), and how does it compare with the known human figures in the 5th floor windows?

Page 29 chart: I have difficulty with the angle of declination ( $18.5 - 17^\circ$ ) in the face of the cited trajectory of  $45^\circ$  or  $45-60^\circ$  by Specter, Humes, Sibert and O'Neill. Suppose it really was a  $45^\circ$  angle of declination--you say elsewhere that there is no location which would have produced such a trajectory. Would there be an eligible location (elsewhere in the Depository, or another building) at a point earlier than Z frame 210? If part of the Sibert/O'Neill report is rejected arbitrarily, it can be used as an argument against their general accuracy. The exaggeration of the angle, if it is valid, is the fault of the autopsy surgeons, not Sibert/O'Neill, who seem to have reported faithfully what they actually heard and saw.

Page 32, Note 21: See comment above.

### Chapter VII

Page 5, para 1: End of penultimate line--some characteristics were definitely not attributable to the Carcano rifle. You might say "...loaded into a weapon (including a rifle other than Oswald's) at least twice..."

(Resumed, Sunday 20 August 1967)

Chapter X, page 24

The younger of the two men seen by the three Dal-Tex women could not have been Oswald, who was then en route to Irving with Wesley Frazier (or had already arrived at the Paine residence).

Appendix V, page 2

A point that occurred to me after I wrote a review of the CBS affair and after I sent CBS a four-page letter challenging most of their major contentions relates to the three blurred frames (190, 227, and 318). The afterthought is that the interval between the first two blurred frames is only 37 frames, or five frames short of the minimum of 42 frames (2.3 seconds) needed to operate the bolt on the Carcano.

Appendix V, page 5

Under unusual stress, a human being may become capable of a prodigious feat of physical strength, but no amount of stress can endow him with a skill (whether on a typewriter, a piano, or a rifle) beyond his previously acquired level. When the skill characteristically diminishes with disuse, only methodical practice will restore it. But Oswald never acquired skill as a rifleman beyond the minimum of the intermediate Marine Corps scale ("sharpshooter"). That was in 1958. The Commission was unable to uncover any evidence of Oswald's rifle practice in the months before the assassination and concedes that the rifle was not in Oswald's possession from September 23 to November 21-22, 1963. Thus, as your text implies, the conclusion drawn by CBS is absurd on every level.

It was good to hear from you last night. With one exception, all of the preceding comments can be ignored, but I hope that you will find it possible to incorporate in Chapter X, page 24, the sense of the comment made at the top of this page.

As ever,

Sylvia Meagher

Supplementary Comments on  
SIX SECONDS IN DALLAS  
by Josiah Thompson

(Meagher 7/24/67)

Chapter VI

Page 20: Asterisk corresponding with footnote at bottom of page is missing from the text.

Page 21: Paragraph 2, line 3—delete "The Report" and insert "A report" or phrase that will not be confused with the Warren Report.

See also reference to the arrest of a suspect in a sports coat, in Allan Sweatt's report XIX 532; and "young airman" arrested, according to Garland Slack, in CE 2999. A further reference to the arrest of a suspect (perhaps the same as in Sweatt's report) is found in Joesten's book, "Oswald: Assassin or Fall-Guy?", page 73. Joesten cites a press account involving officer Barker and the apprehension of a man wearing horn-rimmed glasses, a plaid coat and a raincoat, after workers on the 3rd floor of the TSEB pecked at the window and pointed the man out to the police officer.

Chapter VIII

Page 11: Paragraph 2, last sentence—How did he leave the building? Baker and Truly were running up the stairs; Victoria Adams and Sandra Styles were running down the stairs from the 4th floor; Oswald was on the 2nd floor drinking a coke, and went via the landing to office where Mrs. Reid saw him.

If the assassin nevertheless got downstairs without being seen, which exit did he use? Might he be the man seen by Worrell? (You refer to Worrell's man later; perhaps a mention should be made here, too.)

Chapter IX

Page 21: Line 3—Judge Bagart (B a g e r t)

Chapter X

Question 1: Life's authorized statement does not wholly reassure me. In the summer of 1965, I telephoned Herbert Orth (the man who made the color slides for the Commission) and asked him about damage or excision of any frames. He told me categorically and emphatically that there was no damage to the original Zapruder film, and that there was no interruption in the numerical sequence of color slides made for and given to the Commission. I mention this solely for your information (I am sure Orth would deny his unqualified statement, at this point in time). I also had an interesting talk with Shaneyfelt, on the same question, before speaking to Orth.

Page 16: 3rd line from bottom—"eastern"



Page 36, paras. 2-3: I find the hypothesis of the souvenir-hunter unconvincing. The hospital personnel involved in the treatment of JFK were working in groups or pairs; I don't think anyone was really alone with the body and unobserved at any point. I doubt if even a nurse's aide would have been so irresponsible as to secrete a bullet, and to keep silent all this time about the mischief she caused. I find it psychologically implausible, and unsupported by physical or circumstantial evidence—in short, contrived and all the more ironic because in fact you do postulate a conspiracy involving three riflemen.

The paradox is that the souvenir-hunter hypothesis seeks to find an innocent explanation for a stretcher bullet which in itself (and before the analysis of the shots and trajectories which led you to postulate three riflemen in diverse locations) convinced most of the critics that there was a conspiracy, and this this bullet had been planted or switched, to incriminate a so-called lone assassin. You yourself have now added the very strong collateral evidence of the dented cartridge case.

Isn't the weight of this evidence against an innocent explanation for the stretcher bullet, and the dented cartridge?

Page 38, para 1: Line 5—see earlier discussion of possibility bullet remained lodged in the body and was not detected on the X-rays by the autopsy surgeon(s).

Page 40, para 1: Last lines—is this hypothesis consistent with the size and shape of the thigh wound and the corresponding hole in the trouser leg?

### Chapter VIII

Page 12: Line 4—I was not aware that Mary Woodward had thrown herself to the ground. She did not say so in her by-line story in the Dallas Morning-News, in which she did say others flung themselves over their children, etc.

Line 7—Didn't motorcyclist Haywood lead the chase? He tried to mount the knell on his motorcycle; Margis parked, and ran by foot.

### Chapter IX

Page 6, last line: Delete "of the neck."

Page 30, note 14: Such reports must exist; the Parkland Hospital personnel in their testimony (Volume VI) indicated a total of about 30 interviews by SS or FBI agents. Specter, in questioning these witnesses, showed no awareness of these reports or their contents—which is not to see that he had no awareness of them.

Chapter X

## Question 3:

You may be entirely right in your conclusion that Weitzman made an error but I don't think the question can be dismissed quite so easily. There remains a possibility that a second rifle was found in the Depository and its existence concealed. As I point out in Accessories, Boone reported in writing on 11/22 that the rifle was a Mauser; he testified that Fritz had so identified it; Wade called it a Mauser after consultations with Fritz and Curry (no link between Wade and Weitzman or Boone); and, above, all, the Commission's "investigation" of this whole affair was disgraceful. Weitzman was never even shown the Carcano rifle—not even a photograph from which he could judge whether it was the same or similar in appearance. Other contemporaneous documents supposedly describing the rifle in detail are suppressed from the 26 volumes. In short, I think you are letting the Commission off too easily.

Would you consider deleting this question entirely? It is one item on which our two books would diverge, if not conflict.

Page 31, line 15: Please identify the photograph showing the station wagon.

Appendices

## Appendix I

Omits Congressman Roberts, although he is mentioned on page 3 as corroborating Mrs. Cabell. List should be checked against Lane's list of eyewitnesses, for possible omissions. (I can do this at the indexing or galleyproof stage)

## II and III

I did not try to read these appendices; they are way over my head.