

Haverford College
Haverford, PA. 19041

June 8, 1968

Mr. Mel Dilber
400 East 59th Street
New York City, New York

Dear Mr. Dilber:

Thank you for your letter of May 13 with its interesting questions. I'll try to be as precise and concise answering the questions as possible. On page 221 two Mannlicher-Carcano rifles are shown. The first rifle above comes from the Stackpole Book of Rifles. The bottom rifle captioned Oswald's rifle (bolt is opened) is in fact just that, Oswald's rifle. This photograph came from the National Archives. It is quite apparent that the sling attachment on the Stackpole Carcano would be on the gunman's left side. On Oswald's rifle it is apparent that the forward mount for the sling is on the gunman's right hand side whereas no rear mount is visible. If you turn to the next page 222 you can see Lt. Day carrying the Mannlicher-Carcano out of the building and in this photograph it is quite apparent that both the front and rear mounts for the sling are on the rifleman's left side. I would resolve this seeming contradiction by supposing that the rifle was disassembled probably many times while in the care of the FBI and that when it was photographed for the Archives the front sling attachment was put on the wrong way.

Richard E. Sprague of New York City recently showed me a color photograph taken only seconds after the assassination which shows a man clearly Billy Noland Lovelady in the doorway of the Texas School Book Depository Building. In this photograph Lovelady is wearing a long sleeved shirt checked in large squares. New evidence would seem to corroborate what Lovelady told CBS News some four years after the assassination. I guess I was right after all. Secondly, with regard to your objections to my view that a fragment caused the wound in the President's throat. It is by no means clear to me in my examination of the Zapruder film that the President's distress early in the assassination was due to some sort of "frontal disturbance" prior to the final head shot. As pointed out in Six Seconds in Dallas he does not clutch his throat but rather brings up his elbows, his fists clenched in a spasmodic movement which, in my opinion, could be either the result of a shot in the throat or a shot into the back which did not transit. Your observations with regard to the character of the tear in the front of the President's shirt and the nick on the tie all strike me as quite accurate. Yet I don't see why they sustain the unambiguous conclusion that they could only have been caused by a shot from the front. Most importantly I don't see why the tear in the shirt could not have been caused by a bone or bullet fragment passing from back to front. On my hypothesis the bullet or bone fragment would be traveling on a rather sharp downward trajectory and this might explain some of the particularities of the shirt tear. But

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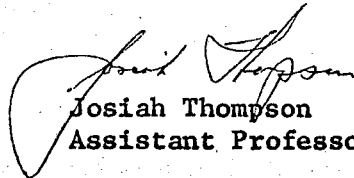
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it may be the case that I am not really addressing myself to your main point.

I hope I have answered the questions which you raise. I, for one, look on disagreements in the interpretation of evidence as a rather healthy phenomenon. With all best wishes, I am,

Sincerely yours,



Josiah Thompson
Assistant Professor of Philosophy

JT:agt