

15 January 1970

Dear Tink:

Yes, between us we have, I think, really hit on something. The fragment must be from the thigh, of course, as you deduced, and devil take Curry's caption. Now, here is what Sauvage said in his book, pages 61-62:

"Following Richard Dudman in the St. Louis Post-Dispatch, reporters thus counted on their fingers and discovered that the three shots apparently had produced four bullets: one in Kennedy's back, one found on a stretcher, one in fragments on the floor of the car, and one in Connally's thigh. Underlying this arithmetic problem was a confusion lasting several weeks as to what happened to the bullet that hit Connally.

"For days, and without taking into account what had been said the day before...assorted doctors and detectives...spoke with equal assurance and incompetence about the bullet that 'pierced' Connally's thigh and about the bullet that 'lodged' in it. Reporter Dudman's reasoning was based on the second version, an understandable choice since it was the one offered by Connally's physician, Dr. Robert Shaw, on November 23. But those who accepted the other version also appeared to have access to official information, and I could not see why such a simple problem could not be settled.

"I therefore called the Executive Mansion at Austin, Texas, reached one of the Governor's aides, and asked him to tell me...whether the bullet had lodged in Connally's thigh or passed through. I had to wait a few minutes...and then the reply: 'The bullet came apart; only a fragment was left in the thigh, and it was removed.'

This much I had remembered clearly from Sauvage's book; but my memory is growing progressively more vague, so I will interrupt this letter in order to check the various other works in the bookcase. To be continued.

(Later)

Joesten, in his original book (May 1964) page 99, also worries about the fact that three shots had produced at least four bullets, stating: "One bullet we know for a fact was in Governor Connally's thigh." He may have based that flat statement on Sauvage and/or Dudman, both of whom he proceeds to quote (articles in Commentary and New Republic respectively).

There is also ambiguous and contrary evidence in Volume XXI, Price Exhibit No. 11, consisting of a memorandum dated Dec. 11, 1963 by Elizabeth Wright, Director of Nurses, describing in minute detail her activities on 11/22/63. In this memo she says that she asked Dr. Shires (late in the afternoon or early in the evening, as I reconstruct it) "what in the way of bullets had been found." (To digress, she asked this because O.P. Wright, no relation, who had received CE 399 from Tomlinson, had asked her "somewhere down the line...to find out where the instrument of injury actually was." Wright certainly did not identify the stretcher bullet with Connally, did he?) Shires told her, she continues, that "the only fragment removed was by Dr. Gregory in the thigh." That is how the memo was typed. But the word "thigh" has a line through it, and the word "wrist" is inserted in ink in its place.

Mrs. Wright then determines from Shire that this fragment was given to Ranger Nolan of the Highway Patrol (described by Shires as "Officer Knowland of the Dallas City Police"), who ~~personally~~ gave it to Curry's men.

In CE 2003, the omnibus report on the assassination by the Dallas Police, there is a list titled "Evidence" on page 130 of the report, which includes "fragments" removed from Connally (I don't have it before me) given by nurse Audrey Bell to Officer Nolan to Fritz to the police lab (this from memory). Gregory too refers to fragments, plural, recovered incidentally during surgery on the wrist.

What bothers me about Mrs. Wright's report is that Dr. Shires had no reason on 11/22/63 to misrepresent the number of fragments recovered or their source. Did he actually say the "thigh" or was that a genuine error by Mrs. Wright? Was the correction made on or before December 11, at which time the single-bullet theory had not yet been conceived? I think it was, because later in the memo there are unaltered mentions of the fragment from the wrist.

Shires had no reason to fudge the evidence on 11/22/63; but perhaps he did not know that a thigh fragment had been recovered. According to Sauvage, Shaw said so the next day, as did Connally's own spokesman somewhat later. What we really could use would be a tape or transcript of Shaw's 11/23/63 statements to the press, but I feel sure it has suffered the same fate as the Perry tapes.

I think there is no hope of getting anything out of Curry. I wrote him on a very innocuous question, really just to see if I could establish contact in order to raise more important questions later, but he has not replied and is unlikely to respond to any questions from anyone about the evidence, since he must suspect the depths of his own ignorance.

The fact that remains, when all is said and done, is that there was a large bullet fragment among the items of evidence turned over to the FBI on 11/22/63 which we cannot identify conclusively and which, after leaving the Dallas police premises, is never again seen or heard about. I don't think it could have arrived in Washington in time to be planted in the car. In other words, the FBI has done away with that magnificently huge bullet fragment, at some point in the investigation, and the Parkland doctor or doctors who presumably recovered it from some part of Connally's body have obliged by making the fragment non-existent.

Well, I'm only rambling now. I don't know just how we can best pursue this further, nor do I know what Liften (who also hit the ceiling when he saw the photo in Curry's book and the size of that fragment) may be doing, if anything. Let's both give it more thought. By the way, the Curry photo (page 88) is also a CE and appears in reduced size somewhere in Volume XVI. Wonder what would happen if we went to the Archives and asked to see each of the actual objects in that photo? I suspect that they would be unable to produce anything that corresponds to that so-called fragment from Connally's arm.

No other news for the moment. Love,