

7/7/69

Dear Dick,

Your letters of the 26 and 7/2. postmarked 7/2 and 7/3, arrived today.

Something funny happened to me yesterday, so I'm replying immediately. My own unscientific diagnosis is exhaustion, though I had no feeling of its onset. The hospital doctor thought it from the heat, which I had not felt. He gave me a shot of phenobarb, two yours later I fell asleep and slept for 10 hours. Today I plan no writing, possibly a short walk, weather permitting, and some reading. I have a speech to make tonight and will. Work had been progressing rather well, but I'll wait until I have had a chance to restore myself a bit before I resume it. As of now the addition to COUP is about 35,000 words, which may be about half. Not having read a single word of it, my opinion should be discounted. My impression is that it is and will be persuasive.

Your BBA letter is quite helpful. I'll return the yard one when I am moving around more.

There have been a few developments that might be encouraging. I do not take time by an undependable medium. A few new and promising contacts, sources. And my smoking has been enhanced by a few better smokes than are usually available.

Molesworth: I phoned him a few minutes ago. He wasn't in. His wife has the impression he had been too busy to make his own copies of the Arch. negatives. As I had earlier, I told her you require them for your work and he should send them. I have to see him anyway because the affidavit he executed for John is inadequate.

CE399 residues: you misunderstood me or my writing is unclear. I never believed there were human residues. My points were that there was no excuse for not testing for and identifying and that human residues are almost indestructible. Esp. in PM. The essence of my argument is that the absence of testing for these residues is a prima facie proof they were not expected to be there. I do not believe I went into the fragments on this, though, may have, but my opinion is that they would retain more because of their irregular shapes.

Weight of 399: your hunch is correct. I had assumed the weight was that before sampling for spectro. Now that you call it to my attention, I assume this is the weight after sampling, based on this thinking: the need for weighing arose later. Spectro need should have been immediate. I have a simple solution. You can do it or I will, your choice: get the archives to weigh it and certify the weight. Maybe, if I feel better, I'll do it and send you a copy of the request and the response. Hooray for you. We all missed that.

Roffman: do not regard his attitude as unhelpful. Encourage him to correspond with those with whom his is. Let him regard the others of us as he seems to. He will get answers no one else will. There have been other cases.

Sneyd: Suggest you not take time if you are pressed for carrying this further at this moment, until you see what I have assembled. Had I really gone over my files in the original draft of COUP I'd have gone into this there. I have, rather simplified and abbreviated, in the add. I think it is adequate to make the point. I have the full statements made for I had a number of papers clipped. I'd forgotten how much I had.

The Toronto Star clipping is valuable (undated). At some point I'd like to be able to approach her as no one else has. If and when it can be done without great effort, can you seek her address from McRae?

Thanks for \$\$\$. Suggest you make no further effort on EC. With those who may have joined him, there is high probability one or more are not what they seem to be. One such accusation is public. If there is response, fine. But I think if there is none it should cool, for a number of reasons + do not make explicit now. Some things require time to pass.

Your recommendation to Gary on Herald is a good one. He had saked me for some and I'd forgotten him, probably because, as I first told you, I'd make no effort, he's yours.

I get the impression you are dispirited because some of the things did not pen out as you'd expected. If this is wrong, good. If it is right, I want to try and persuade you not to feel this way, that it is not warranted. Such things often happen. Rather than a negative we already have a firm and worthwhile positive from it. It has advanced our knowledge, of the fact and of the character, direction and doctrine of the investigation, both of which, + immediately and in the future, are important. Not every hit is a home run, if a home run is longed for or not. Many are wasted, yet some walks are determinative. Without intending to assume a professorial air, I'd like you to ask if this experience, per se, has not been worth its cost to you? We have to learn to take them as they come. Some things must wait. By nature I am inclined to rush, get things done and over with. I have some many on the back burner now I cannot recall them all. Example: recently I postponed a decision on what several years ago I'd have grabbed, an offer to ghost a book for a principaa who I do not name not by oversight. As of now, I think my ultimate decision will be negative, but I'll make it when the time comes. As you know, I am not in any sense expert in matters concerning weapons. I am satisfied my suspicions and analyses held up as well as they did. The absence of any explanation of the dents, most particularly when the one we were able to reach a conclusion on is so innocent, in itself requires exactly what you did. As of now I am inclined to believe it requires more interest (and time) on your initial focus, the shoulder dents. Both, it seems to me, cannot have been made the same way. In satisfying outself how the throats dents were made we have eliminated this possibility for those on the shoulder. Your initial explanation, in general, still seems valid. Now we should be asking outselfs why, were it innocent and so obviously a pressing fact requiring definitive answer, did the skilled FBI and the skilled lawyers, ignore them? The answer may, again, turn out to be innocent, so far as cause is concerned. Until it does, My belief is what you first suggested to me. Inturn, since that doesn't happen with my weapon, it makes me wonder what there could have been with that one to cause it. Right now I'd not be a bit surprised if eventually we learn that it was something that would have made it imperative at that time. This is extreme. I refuse to eliminate it as a possibility. Like so many others, it will have to await its day. I really believe your ~~xxx~~ has been positive, a constructive addition to our knowledge, and I have not changed my plans for so handling it when + get back to AGENT O, whether or not we have added to it. Time does help, because none of us has infallible thinking machines. As with what you just told me on the sample taken from the nose, it suddenly dawns on us.

+ have not gone into Lifton because a letter dealing with this has crossed in the mail. Please take it seriously and regard him as a great hazard. When Gary returns, consult him because unlike me he is not personally involved. From the first + have regard him as sick. There is ample reason today for regarding this as an inadequate explanation, though it is still accurate. I now know he has a mental illness that abs, from time to time, required emergency treatment.

Shins up and thanks. Hope the thesis work is going well.

Best

2 July 1969

Harold Weisberg
Frederick, Md.

Harold:

I am writing quickly, so please excuse elipses.
On Molesworth's pictures: I got them all, but not the negatives from the archives. They do not give much useful information. I think that we have gone as far as we can go on the basis of photos. If Dr. Nichols gets the cases, we might get some important questions answered. Until then, all we can do is form the questions. I am still not satisfied regarding the cause of the shoulder dents-- I can only guess that, like the dents on the case mouths, they were caused during ejection. But I would like to see it done, just to be sure, for my experience with other types of rifles indicates that these were caused in the course of chambering. With possession of the rifle we could settle the question; otherwise we can only guess, which is a bad thing to do with this weird rifle which does many things that other rifles do not do. The lack of discernible marks on the brass at the base of Frazier's two tests, and their presence on the three evidence cases is a mystery to me; all I can say is that there should be similar (sometimes identical) marks on all. This problem can only be resolved by direct observation under a microscope, and comparison with Frazier's test cases and cases that we collect ourselves. You just can't tell that much from pictures.

CE 399 residues: Unless you can cite chapter and verse, I urge you not to assume and not to imply that the residues on 399 were human residues, blood or flesh. I have checked the record as carefully as I am able; unless I have missed something, there is nothing in the record which indicates that the residues are human. The record implies that, but it does not state it. When Frazier was asked about "blood or other matter", he merely said something like "not enough to interfere with the examination" of 399. As far as the record is concerned, it is unwarranted to assume that the residue was human. I have the notion that 399 never hurt anybody, and that if there was "residue" on it, it was cotton or some other material that 399 had been collected in. The same applies to the two fragments that were identified with the rifle; Frazier mentions wiping them for examination, but he does not say what he wiped off. It could have been cow shit, for all we know.

I'll look for a bibliographical reference on the importance of examining residues and will send it later if I can find it. I am not sure whether I took notes on this, but I am quite sure that any firearms examiner will support it, that examination of residues may be very important, and is required.

The chain of possession of the two fragments: All the info is from heresy testimony and unsworn FBI reports. These are CEs 567 and 569. Frazier mentions the chain of possession at 5 H 66ff (also see 3H432 and 435); Kellerman refers to them at 2 H 90. It is also in CE 2011 (24 H 413) which mentions Mills ~~xxxxxx~~ and Paterni as closest to the original time of finding. It does not actually state that Mills and Paterni found them, but that is implied. In any case the chain goes back to them. The ~~xxx~~ same topic is treated in CD 80 and 87(b) which I have not yet seen. Sylvia Meagher mentioned these to me. She also mentions another document (which I must treat confidentially, since she learned of it through another person who is going to use it for another purpose than this) that names Paterni and Mills as the

finders. Even so, not direct testimony was taken on the finding of these fragments-- only heresay. In any other investigation such a gap would be incredible, but is standard for this one. Opinion: I don't think those fragments ever hurt anybody either-- I wish that I could prove it. This is the weakest feature of the whole inquiry into these fragments. Frazier's positive identification of them with the rifle is sound.

The weight of CE 399: When I got Nichols' letter indicating that fired bullets lost about .5 grains merely through the process of firing, I revised my opinion about 158.6 grains possibly being the normal weight after firing (i.e. no loss of weight due to fragmentation after striking an object). But subsequently I received information that causes me to believe the change of opinion was hasty, in spite of Nichols' apparently conclusive test results. I am in touch with a young man (a high school student) named Howard Roffman who has been doing work in the hope eventually of publishing what he finds (he is concerned exclusively with events on Dealey Plaza). In a letter he cited the bullet (I forget the exhibit number) that Olivier fired through a goat. I have not yet checked the record, but rely here only on Roffman's statement. That bullet weighs 158.8 grains and (according to Olivier, I think) lost no fragments. I meant to check this, but have not yet gotten to it.

Another point; probably it amounts to nothing, but if Nichols gets the bullet, it should be checked. I'll bet you don't know whether ~~it~~ 158.6 grains is the weight of the bullet before or after the sliver was taken from the nose for spectrographic analysis. If you think as I do, then you assume that 158.6 is the weight of the bullet before the sliver was removed. But as far as I can determine, there is no record of that. Let me put it this way: it would not surprize me to learn that ~~it~~ 158.6 is its present weight. I do not see where that bullet can have lost weight except in the sliver that Frazier took from the nose, and from the size of the sliver I guess that he took between 2 and 3 grains.

This could be nothing more than a slip of the tongue, but it bears watching in case we develop some new information about 399. When Frazier was asked about the weight of 399, he describes ~~it~~ the weight in the present tense: the bullet "weighs" 158.6 grains. I approach this business cautiously, for I am talking on the knife edge of uncertainty and almost groundless speculation. Moreover, I have not checked all of the record on this. So just treat it as a question: what is the present weight of 399?

I'd better stop before I really go over the deep end.

Roffman is going to send me some pictures of some of the ~~evidence~~ evidence. I won't be able to send you copies, for he wished me to treat his material confidentially. If ~~with~~ worthwhile material turns up, I'll let you know by verbal description and specify what should be regarded confidential. Roffman's work (what I have seen so far) is mostly a reshuffling of old information, much of it not worth considering, but I must treat it confidentially if he so desires. He is a good worker, but until now he has been working in a vacuum, free of criticism and not in possession of some relevant material. I am going to let him drain me of whatever help I can give him in the form of criticism and advice, then I'll introduce him to other researchers. He is unbelievably credulous of the WC investigators and supporters, very skeptical of WR critics (you, for example, make mountains out of molehills). He even writes

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and weight

Ernesto
 to Hoover for information! I think he is good, though. His biggest problem is that he does not understand the cover-up, the official chicanery, etc. He is young, though, and will learn. He is an amateur photographer, does his own photo work, all of it good.

Archives pictures: Before I order anything, I want to see what Roffman is going to send me. Then I will know what I want.

Lifton: ~~xxxxxx~~ I have been in touch with Lifton recently after a long lapse, but I do not believe any of what he or I said concerned you. I wrote and asked for info concerning the charges made against Dr. Noguchi in L.A. (information that I got from Schoener on the day after I wrote to Lifton), and I asked for clarification of some matters concerned with the apparent bullet holes in the walls of the Ambassador Hotel kitchen-- questions that occurred to me after seeing a recent L.A. Free Press article with a photo of two holes and another photo showing cops examining a third hole.

I am vaguely aware of Lifton's charges, although the info did not come from him. I put no credence in them, but think it best to treat Lifton as a friend (but not in confidence). This at least might give me a keyhole peek at what is in his mind, whether or not it is worth knowing what is there. I think it wise for your sake as well as for mine. I have not been in close touch with him anyway. The information that I am getting comes from Schoener. Whatever the circumstances, I am not competent to render opinions about personalities, because although I have had some letter contact, I do not know many people personally, and in many cases do not enjoy their confidence.

Sneyd on the plane from Lisbon: BEA letter is enclosed. The Scotland Yard letter to Dawnay that I gave you is the only one that I had-- the only copy, that is; that is Dawnay's copy to me. I meant to make a copy of it for myself when I passed it to you, but forgot. Would you please send me a copy now? Those are the two most important documents from Dawnay, and that is all I have. Dawnay wrote a couple of articles on this for the LA Free Press, but mentioned only his interviews, not these documents, which for me are the basis of my belief that there were two Sneyds. Two things are important: evidence that a Sneyd was on that morning flight from Lisbon while the other was at the Pax Hotel, and evidence that one of them had very short hair while the other had a normal haircut.

I could not get a verbatim record of the Clark-Hoover statement on the arrest. The best record is in the Washington Post, a story ~~xxxxxx~~ by Hoagland, of about 9 June 1968. I wrote to the Wash.-Post and ~~xxxx~~ N.Y. Times for a verbatim record, but they referred me to news stories. The news stories are unanimous on the statement, however: Sneyd was arrested while in transit from Lisbon; he was on that early morning flight.

Agreed on Blair's book on Ray: a command performance with all the "right" answers and the proper degree of "whew!" at all the "remarkable coincidences" and "mysteries". I doubt whether he based his writing only on news stories. There must have been a large degree of consultation with "responsible" authorities, perhaps even their editing of his crap.

Shil,

Doc

DE KN/AT/31

27 June 1969

Harold:

Enclosed are \$10 in cash and other miscellaness. I now owe you \$45.

I read an AP story this week which indicated that the Panthers are not getting on well with Cubans. The story may be good for the U.S. propoganda machine, but if true I doubt whether I shall get any sort of response from Cleaver.

I received 4 pictures from Molesworth. My recollection is that I purchased negatives. If so, I would like to have them, both for the clearest copy possible and for the ability to reproduce them for others. I am especially interested in the one that shows the cases lined up as in the picture that Thompson used in his book. Even though it is not as good as the picture that Thompson used, it shows a particular thing better than the Six Seconds picture. I remember noting in the negative of this picture that the dent in CE 544 appears to have striations in it. If so, I want to know for sure.

The other pictures are Okay, but not more help than what we have-- they give no new information.

Gary Schoemer may be going to Dallas next ~~month~~ month. If he does, he will try to see Jerry Herald. I have tried the best I could with him, but he does not answer my letters. I hope that Gary has better luck.

On the cartridge cases, I have not found anything very significant, except for what I passed to you and Nichols previously--- just things that cause me confusion. If Nichols gets the cases and can get someone good to observe them under a microscope along with tests, we may learn much more, but you cannot go very far with pictures.

Later I'll get a memo on them summarizing all that has transpired. Right now I am busy with other things. As long as you have all that I can now give you on the cartridge cases, there is no rush for a continuous account.

I may have more to say about CE 399 later. I am awaiting some pictures from a young man in Philadelphia who until recently has been working alone. I'll tell you more about him later.

Still,

Dick

Bernabei

for history

23 June 1969

John Nichols
London 1969

Dear John:

I have to confess my uncertainty in detecting the latent nature
of your work, and in detecting that it is of the same order
as the work of John ... in the history of the ...
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John

for history