

1/29/70

Dear Dick,

Your 26th mailing, of the 2-pp add to the 399 study and your 1/8 to HR, came this morning. It is good to write of things other than preoccupied me yesterday, the lingering effects of which I feel today.

On 399, these small suggestions: last part, appendix, rather than saying that "A" metallic fragment was deposited in the chest, which may be an inadequate representation, I would take the space, in any revision, to say that after this injury was cleansed a metallic fragment was visible in post-operative X-rays (and is not mentioned in the Report or in any of the testimony before the members of the Commission). Rather than saying, "several metallic fragments were deposited in Connolly's right wrist, I'd suggest saying that after all of his motion, and after that wound was cleansed, several metallic fragments were recovered from the wrist. Of the thigh fragment, you might want to add that its size was carefully hidden by the Commission, in both testimony and Report.

My reasons are to indicate the high probability that even this totally disqualifying degree of fragmentation acknowledged is entirely insufficient, for there is high probability other fragments were deposited and not recovered.

As you realize from my letter to Joan and his to me, he did duplicate my work with the end of 399, they did take a picture for him (he says more than one), and this or any of these cannot possibly be mine. Therefore, in your consideration of my argument that more has been removed - and I am not suggesting any accident, as with the Tink picture- I think you should bear in mind that they just cannot and do not lose pictures and negatives of this stuff, nor is it likely that Johnson has forgotten it. He had quite a business over it. You have seen his reaction when he is merely with me. I am anxious for your confirmation that they had it when we were there together and for a stat of the print they sent you. Were Joan's dishonesty may have a side benefit....I do not think anyone can understand how much that rotten business really sickens me, how it preys on my jangled nerves.

Your letter to Howard is the best and the most. When I came to your opinion, that you have trouble believing Specter is bereft of conscience, I made a note to argue with you, but when I came to the next line, where you show awareness of his "instinct for self-preservation", we are in complete accord, except, possibly, in degree. I think it dominates everything he did after the full enormity of what he had done in taking the autopsy testimony dished upon him. I briefed Howard this way.

You are the first to my recollection to articulate my long belief, "every time they push the panic button we benefit". I have worked on this basis for a long time and you are aware of some of the benefits. I have gone further, in ways I have not communicated to you simply because I did not want to prepare possible eavesdroppers. And your advice re: med. examiners is so important. It is perhaps even more of a problem with me because of my nature and method. I try and engaged the interviewee in conversation, just turn him own, and can requires a certain amount of communication of this hazardous kind. I tried to prepare Howard, but you put it much better than I did, and more succinctly.

I think your formulation, "I can't refute the witnesses who said they saw rifle and/or shooting from this window" in to bestow a credibility on this "testimony" it does not warrant. The only one to even claim to have seen shooting

is history's least credible, Brennan. The "testimony" on a rifle being positively seen is so wanting the Commission had to skirt around it, as a rereading of this part of the Report will disclose. They say their conclusion doesn't rest on Brennan alone (and even Curry found him incredible), and they follow with nothingness, Fisher and friend, Euins (Pipe thing) and Jackson, who had to have seen shooting if he saw rifle. There remains no evidence that a shot was fired from there and no credible evidence a rifle was even seen there. I think you bent too far backward here.

Last words, p. 2 "Besides, I do not think that knowledge of the location is as important as other factors". I disagree. If we have, as I now do, positive proof they deliberately mislocated this wound, that is quintessential in several areas: how the crime was committed, how many people it required, how many shots were fired and from where and by whom, conspiracy, etc. And what more lucid exposition on the integrity of the work and those who did it, those who, knowing better, have been silent? On the basis of our earlier, negative knowledge, your comment can be justified but today I think it is wrong.

Though I disagree with these few things, I think it is an excellent letter which should be of great benefit to Howard.

I will be at the Archives tomorrow, but only to see something I have forced out, not connected with anything in which you have been interested. I may also skim a few documents. But I will not be there for long and will not make an issue of 399 and the six. I would rather see your picture first and get them to take the picture I want for me, to attract no great attention to this interest. I'll then pick Howard up at Bud's and we'll come here.

If you find anything I told Joan unwarranted, unfair or invalid, please do tell me, as promptly as you can...I find myself wondering if he plans to use this stuff in LOOK. If he does, I'll sue them both, if I have to be my own lawyer, as in this case I believe would be unlikely, with the written record I have, including his original letters. If you have any suggestions, I can use them. This is very troubling, upsetting, a further contribution to my anxieties...and I now wonder, as I did earlier, if he, in fact, might not be the source of the snide comments Lifton made that required knowledge he could have gotten only from mail interception or one of a very small number of people telling him. His comment did quote John, but Lifton also fabricates this sort of thing. It is SOP with him, for multiple reasons.

The usual haste,

8 Jan 1970

for Weisberg
Howard Roffman
Philadelphia

Howard:

I have your letter re Specter interview and other mail, but must answer hastily. Please excuse.

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Specter interview: Do not by any means be disappointed by failure to get all that you wanted, for other things may come out of it more valuable than you think. From what is disclosed in your letter I see nothing that you did wrong under such trying circumstances. It's good that S should understand that we know far more than he thinks we know; that will trouble him, and the more troubled he is, the better it is for all. I find it difficult to believe that he is absolutely bereft of conscience; that may eventually turn him. Also there is the instinct of self-preservation which might drive him our way. In any case, I think it far better for him to know that he is cornered than that he should move in comfort. The worst that can happen is that such as Specter and others should become bored with the issue. If you did nothing else, you at least jogged his 'interest', and that is worth gold. Think of what Garrison's failure to get the autopsy material produced for us: the Panel Report and a judicial decision that the autopsy was deficient. Every time they push the panic button we benefit. There's a time to go easy and a time to go hard. ~~xxx~~ What you did and what you got seems just right to me-- at least in so far as it is much more than others might have managed.

Congratulations, too, on your self-control. I am not sure whether I could have maintained it. The "I don't know" about Finck's N.O. testimony was grand.

I think if you had gotten a tape of the interview, I would have been disappointed that you didn't also get a movie of Specter in action. I envy you.

Perhaps you understand now why I raise my ~~xxx~~ eyebrows at knowledge that Specter waxed Thompson in his debate-- or even that Specter agreed to debate Thompson. I find it hard to believe that he would agree to debate unless he knew beforehand that he was going to win.

Helpern's remarks: Information about "deer rifle" is insufficient for the reasons that you mention. If indeed the equipment was such as the shooter normally used on deer, then he used a soft-nosed mushrooming bullet that could have an explosive effect on a human skull. Many factors come into play, and definite determination is not possible without more info than Helpern gives.

Phila. medical examiners: Go easy, especially at first, and learn how much criticism of autopsy does they can take without rushing to their defense. I would give this advice even if they were not acquainted with Finck and the others-- the more so since they are. MDs protect each other almost by instinct. It's best to disclose informations and let them come to conclusions. If they are inclined to be co-operative and not care where the chips fall, then you can probe further. First find out what they are like, then determine how far you can go. By my own experience, often to my eventual disappointment (and something experienced by others), I know that there is a terrible urge to show how much you know. If you have that feeling-- and you do, if you are like

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Book by "English doctor": Forensic Medicine: .303 caliber can pulp brain and smash cranium-- even the military rounds. Much depends on the on-target velocity and other things. It is a much faster bullet than 6.5mm M-C, ~~which is~~ above 2500 feet per sec. muzzle velocity, I think.

What "English doctor" says about bullet disintegration at ranges less than 300 yards is pure crap-- if, as I suppose, he refers to military rounds. Doctor is a quack in this regard. If a military round does not strike bone, it does not fragment. If a military bullet strikes bone, and if the on-target velocity is high, then it might break up by separating from the jacket and dispersing in several relatively large chunks, with perhaps some very small fragments.

The 1895 article refers to the type of bullet represented by such as 399. Before the development of jacketed bullets, bullets were lead or lead alloy. The jackets held the lead together and let it pass into body without producing excessive peripheral damage; more "humane" wounds result.

To understand the difference you've got to see the wounds that different bullets produce at various ranges. Recently I saw the pelt of a wolf that had been hit by a .270 hollow point in the shoulder. The hole was so big that you could stick your head through it-- literally. That .270 slug disintegrated on the shoulder and did not penetrate far into the animal; the other side of the pelt was intact.

Varminting bullets: the 48 gr bullet fired at 4500 fps probably is the caliber known as .220 Swift. It's the fastest hunting caliber that there is. Used almost exclusively for varmints, tho some foolishly use them on deer-- they are not designed for deer.

Eliminating ricochet is a peripheral advantage of the high velocity varminters; that is not the reason why they are designed that way. They are designed to kill small animals instantly without regard for the preservation of the animal's flesh or pelt. Since these animals are not hunted for food, hunter wants an instant kill to ~~be certain~~ be certain. Hunters who want to eat game try to use ammo that does not destroy much meat. The fact that varminters seldom ricochet is a gratifying side effect, but not the reason why these are so designed.

I have other correspondence to get to, and a bad day of classes to prepare for tomorrow.. So long.

Still,

cc Weisberg