

14 December 1966

Dr. John K. Lattimer
130 Fort Washington Avenue
New York, N.Y.

Dear Dr. Lattimer,

Your article on the assassination of President Kennedy in the October 24, 1966 JAMA belatedly has come to my attention. I will take the liberty of commenting on one or two points.

You say on page 327, column 3, paragraph 2, that 6.5 bullets do not distort readily, citing a study of wound ballistics in World War II. May I invite your attention to Commission Exhibit No. 856 (Bearings and Exhibits, XVII, page 850). Although 260 rounds of ammunition were acquired for the wound penetration tests conducted at Edgewood Arsenal (V, page 75), the Exhibits present only two of the test bullets after firing. Arlen Specter, the assistant counsel who was responsible for the relevant phase of evidence, has conceded that not one of the test bullets emerged after single bone penetration undeformed. Since the stretcher bullet supposedly shattered a rib as well as a radius, it is incomprehensible to most students of the evidence that it should have emerged undeformed, unutilated, and all but pristine.

Although you argue on page 327 that bullets of this caliber do not distort readily (even after shattering 10 cm. of the fifth rib and the right radius), you then suggest on page 332 that the mark on the curb may have been caused by a bullet disrupted when it struck a twig, a fragment of whose lead core proceeded to strike the concrete. Here the reasoning escapes me--I would have thought that bone was as hard as or harder than a twig.

I greatly regret that time does not permit me to undertake the detailed discussion of the condition of the alleged assassination rifle which the rifle deserves. It was not the scope alone that was defective, but also the bolt and the trigger (see testimony of Dr. Simmons, III, pages 447-451). The rifle capability of the alleged assassin, and the marksmanship tests by three master (champion) riflemen, require even longer exposition, which I shall not attempt. The facts have been set forth in a number of published works, including Inquest, by Edward Jay Epstein, which I commend to you.

Your article does not discuss the controversy which centers around the autopsy findings and photographs, which is just as well. Had you treated that problem, you might have encountered considerable difficulty in maintaining belief in the lone assassin or, indeed, in any of the findings set forth in the Warren Report.

Yours sincerely,

Sylvia Hoagher
302 West 12 Street
New York, N.Y. 10014

College of Physicians & Surgeons of Columbia University | New York, N.Y. 10032

DEPARTMENT OF UROLOGY

620 West 168th Street

February 3rd, 1967

Miss Sylvia Meagher
302 West 12th Street
New York, New York 10014

Dear Miss Meagher:

Thank you for your letter of 14 December, 1966, to which I am sorry to be so late in replying. Your thoughtful comments are appreciated. I am interested to know how you have become so keenly interested in the details of this matter. I would also be very interested to hear of any new evidence which would tend to disprove the contentions of the Warren Commission investigators.

The "pristine" condition of the "stretcher bullet" to which you refer, is certainly of great interest, and, as I said above, I would be happy to see any evidence that it did not do the things attributed to it by the Warren Commission. My experience with bullet wounds, as a military surgeon, during World War II, would still leave me open-minded on the possibility that this bullet might have performed all of these things which you describe as "incomprehensible".

After reading through the autopsy report in great detail, I am compelled to say that I would consider it entirely possible that did all the things ascribed to it and still emerge in the condition indicated. We would all like to do our own tests, and on all of these interesting questions, but as you point out, time does not permit.

If you have seen photographs of the autopsy or have other factual information I would certainly be interested to see it.

Your prescience in assembling a detailed index of the Warren Report was excellent. I am trying to purchase a copy of your index.


Miss Sylvia Meagher

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February 3rd, 1967

I appreciate your writing, and hope you will keep me posted of any relevant discrepancies which you uncover in your obviously painstaking scrutiny of the matter.

Sincerely,


John K. Lattimer, M.D.
Professor of Urology
Chairman, Department of Urology

JKL:fh

14 February 1967

Dr. John K. Lattimer
Professor of Urology
Chairman, Department of Urology
College of Physicians and Surgeons
of Columbia University
620 West 168 Street
New York NY 10032

Dear Dr. Lattimer,

I appreciate your friendly letter of the 3rd. It is so long now since I became immersed in the endless convolutions and ambiguities of the assassination evidence that I can scarcely reconstruct the starting point—I think I can best summarize it by saying that the bulletins out of Dallas on November 22-24, 1963 constituted a highly implausible story which, as time wore on, picked up new anomalies and additional suspect features, so that there was a diminution rather than an increase in credibility.

There is much evidence to disprove the findings in the Warren Report but little of it is "new": most of that irrefutable evidence is contained within the 26 volumes of the Hearings and Exhibits published by the Commission, supposedly in support of its assertions in the Report, but in fact failing to provide the necessary substantiation and in some pivotal instances actually contravening the Commission's conclusions. However preposterous such a judgment may seem, please withhold judgment—I assure you that the conflicts and contradictions, the misrepresentation and omission of relevant or essential data can be fully documented. Not, of course, in a letter. It has required a 700-page manuscript to document some of the major discrepancies between the Warren Report, on the one hand, and the 26 volumes of testimony and exhibits, on the other; and I am happy to say that this manuscript has been accepted by Bobbs-Merrill and will be published in the fall of this year. It will impose a burden on the reader since it will be almost as massive as the Report itself, but I hope very much that it will be read and that the fully documented facts will then be weighed impartially.

Reverting to the stretcher bullet: Ray Marcus of Los Angeles, a fellow-critic of the Warren Report, has recently published an excellent monograph on the bullet (77 pages), which presents coherently all the known evidence—evidence indispensable to the formulation of a valid judgment on the bullet but much of which is not yet familiar even to students of the case. I take the liberty of enclosing an order form, should you wish to obtain a copy. Also enclosed is an ad for my Subject Index together with an Errata sheet.

Perhaps we can have a chat one day. My "normal" work is in the field of public health, although rather removed from the center, these days.

Yours sincerely,

Sylvia Hengher
302 West 12 Street
New York, N.Y. 10014

Enclosures (3)

College of Physicians & Surgeons of Columbia University | New York, N.Y. 10032

620 West 168th Street

DEPARTMENT OF UROLOGY

February 20th, 1967.

Mrs. Sylvia Meagher
302 West 12th Street
New York, N. Y. 10014.

Dear Mrs. Meagher :

Many thanks for your good letter of February 14th with its news of your new book, and the enclosures.

I finally got a copy of your subject index, and had in mind to send it to you for an autograph, but will probably have to get a second copy of it for this purpose, since I refer to the first one inbetween my more "usual" activities whenever time will permit, and some interesting point comes up.

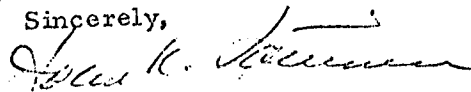
I will look forward to your second book, and also was interested to get the advertismant about the book entitled " THE BASTARD BULLET ", for which I will send immediately.

The vigor and extreme enthusiasm with which you have subscribed to the campaign against the Warren Report, seems, at least to me, to undercut your unique and valuable contribution in the field of documentation of the Report, whether this documentation be merely an index or an accumulation of negative factors. As I have said before, I would be delighted to see new evidence, or even an impressive array of matching facts, as you are attempting to assemble, but I would certainly like to see them presented in an unvarnished manner, rather than with too much emotion or bias. It seems to me that it would strengthen your position and your contribution if this were done.

I have forgotten whether I asked you if you were related to Dr. Stephen Meagher, a chest surgeon who worked with me during World War II in Europe, and who has since died. I had a vague memory that his wife's name was Sylvia.

Best regards,

Sincerely,



John K. Lattimer, M. D.
Professor of Urology

JKL:dms.

page 2.

Mrs. Sylvia Meagher

P. S.

Do you know anything about the location and nature of the fatal wounds of Officer Tippit ?

I have not had time to dig for this, but if you should happen to come across any description of the wounds or data as to where I might find it, I would certainly appreciate this.

Sincerely, JKL.

Professor John K. Lattimer
Department of Urology
College of Physicians and
Surgeons, Columbia University
620 West 168 Street
New York, N.Y. 10032

Dear Dr. Lattimer,

Thank you for your kind words about my index; I hope it will prove useful. I am surprised that you derived the impression that my criticism of the Warren Report has been marked by excessive emotion—I have been told several times that my radio appearances have been effective because I was factual and unemotional. But, to be frank, I do have strong feelings about the case, which I regard as a terrible miscarriage of justice. Fortunately, my forthcoming book will be subjected to antisepsis by the copy editor, all purple passages deleted.

No, I am not related to Dr. Stephen Meagher.

The Tippit autopsy report was not included in the Hearings and Exhibits, so I have no personal knowledge of the findings. However, a Xerox copy is included among the documents in the National Archives (see Whitewash II by Harold Weisberg, Hyattstown, Md. 20734, \$4.95, pages 28-29).

With kind regards,

Yours sincerely,

Sylvia Meagher
302 West 12 Street
New York, N.Y. 10014

Doctor Says One Bullet Hit JFK and Connolly

By BRIAN ROYER

CHICAGO—Could one bullet actually have struck both President Kennedy and Texas Gov. Connolly?

Critics of the Warren Commission's report on the assassination have argued long and hard that it wasn't possible, but a Columbia University surgeon says he has new evidence that supports the commission's right down the line.

His name is Dr. John K. Lattimer, and although his specialty is urology, he documented his own experimental data on the assassination bullets that rebuts some of the theories of the commission's detractors.

Speaking before 150 persons in the International College of Surgeons' Museum and Hall of Fame here, the tall, thin, professor and chairman of the department of urology at Colum-

bia's medical school said the bullet found on Connally's stretcher was, in fact, deformed. Opponents of the Commission's report have argued that it wasn't.

A Similar Deformation

Furthermore, he said, experimental tests with similar bullets have deformed them in similar ways and conclusively account for the missing 2.1 grains of lead in the projectile.

By Lattimer's account, accused assassin Lee Harvey Oswald's second shot (the first, he maintains, hit a tree branch and never reached the President's car), struck the back of President Kennedy's neck, went through his voice box and "came out at the knot of his tie."

Although it was slowed down,

he said, this "very powerful bullet" then passed through Gov. Connally's chest, turned sideways through his wrist and lodged "backwards in his leg."

The bullet was flattened on one side, not unmarked as critics have maintained, he said, and missing 2.1 grains of lead from the bottom.

"We undertook to deform similar bullets in the same way," he said. "What happens is that soft lead squeezes out of the brass cover" to the amount of 2.2 grains.

X-rays of Connally's wrist show small pieces of lead from the bullet that struck him.

He supported his contention that the bullet was powerful enough to do all he claimed, by stating that similar Carcano carbine ammunition penetrated four feet of wood and could easily pass through four—no, just two—persons.

Arguments have been offered that the ammunition was not reliable, but Lattimer maintained that "over 600 rounds of the [ammunition] used by Oswald were fired . . . with not a single failure to fire."

The bullet that killed Kennedy was the third one fired the day of the assassination, he said. It entered the back of the President's head and destroyed the right half of his brain when it exited at the front of the head.

The gun, which some have maintained is not accurate enough to account for the one-assassin theory, is indeed accurate, he said, adding:

"At 363 feet [the distance between the Book Depository window and the President's car], I placed three bullets in a target head in 6½ seconds. It's perfectly easy to do, even for an amateur."

Did Fate Step In?

Even if Oswald had not been a good shot, fate helped him, the surgeon implied.

"The telescope on the gun was affixed in such a way that it lined the shot upwards and to the right, and 'unfortunately' for the President, his car at that moment was turned a bit to the right and going up," Lattimer said.

"If it hadn't been mis-sighted in this way, the last bullet would have hit Mrs. Kennedy's head," he said.

He added that the lack of bullet wounds from a "lateral spiny theory," at least in the act of the murder itself.

Lattimer's theories probably won't end the arguments that have gone on for five years since President Kennedy's death, but they do add support to those who say that the Warren Commission reached the proper conclusion.

Chicago Daily News

3 Hearings Are Held In Toledo For President

SAN DIEGO, Cal. (AP) — A federal grand jury has indicted three Marine privates on charges of making threats against President Johnson.

Named in the indictments were Kenneth J. Neumann, 21, of La Crosse, Wis.; Ricky D. Lutz, 17, of Evansville, Ind.; and Aaron T. Hale, 17, of Des Moines, Iowa. The charges are based on letters written to the President.

24 October 1968

Professor John K. Lattimer
Department of Urology
College of Physicians and Surgeons
620 West 168 Street
New York 10032

Dear Dr. Lattimer,

In the light of our exchange of letters in February 1967, I read with particular interest the story in today's New York Post reporting your address at the International College of Surgeons' Museum and Hall of Fame at Chicago ("Doctor Says One Bullet Hit JFK and Connally").

I am hesitant to comment on the basis of a press report that may be inaccurate or incomplete on the arguments you have presented in support of the single-bullet theory and the conclusions set forth in the Warren Report. I should therefore be grateful to receive the full text of your speech at Chicago, if that is possible.

Meanwhile, I may perhaps mention some immediate reactions to the thesis you reportedly presented. You claim that the stretcher bullet was, in fact, deformed. The flattened side must have been turned away from the camera, then, for photographs of the stretcher bullet show it to be undeformed and indistinguishable from the test bullets fired into cotton (see Six Seconds in Dallas by J. D. Thompson, page 152).

You state that the first bullet fired hit a tree branch, but the news story does not indicate what evidence you presented in support of your conclusion. Perhaps I will find that in the text of your speech, so I leave the question aside for the moment. However, I must take issue with your assertion that the second shot struck the back of the President's neck and "came out at the knot of his tie." The bullet in question entered the back, not the back of the neck, about four inches below the top of the collar, as conclusively shown by the holes in the shirt and coat and by the autopsy surgeons' measurement of 5½ inches below the tip of the right mastoid process of the prone body. Since the President was erect when shot, the actual distance from the tip of the right mastoid process is greater by about 2 inches--this you can easily confirm by experiment. Therefore, the bullet in question could not exit at the knot of the tie unless it was on an upward path of flight.

There is considerable evidence against your conclusion that one bullet inflicted all of Connally's wounds. Connally's physicians at Parkland Hospital, after viewing the stretcher bullet, expressed serious doubt that it had produced all his wounds. Drs. Light and Dolco of the U.S. Army Edgewood Arsenal "expressed themselves as being very strongly of the opinion that Connally had been hit by two different bullets" (WHD, page 206). The CBS-TV News Inquiry on the Warren Report (June 1967) conducted wound penetration tests using gelatin and masonite to simulate the path ascribed to the stretcher bullet by the Warren Commission. Although the CBS tests omitted simulation of the rib, not one of their test bullets completed all the penetrations. Some failed to penetrate the simulated wrist; not one penetrated the simulated thigh. CBS failed to display any of the test bullets, and denied my request for photographs or detailed descriptions from which I might compare their condition with that of the stretcher bullet.

Your contention that the bullet in question could penetrate four feet of wood is certainly arresting, when it could not penetrate masonite in the CBS tests, or just managed to do so and drop out on the other side completely spent. The press report does not mention the condition in which your test bullet(s) emerged from four feet of wood; it is perhaps safe to assume they did not resemble the stretcher bullet.

Dr. John K. Lattimer

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24 October 1968

In discussing the fatal head shot, you seem not to have acknowledged or discussed the incontrovertible evidence that the bullet that struck the head thrust the President very forcefully backward and to the left (see SSD, Chapter 5; The Case for Three Assassins by Lifton and Welsh, Ramparts, January 1967; or Accessories After the Fact, pp. 159-165). No one has yet been able to refute my colleagues' and my conclusion that this shot came from the front and right of the car, although the evidence and arguments have been on record for at least a year. I would find it incomprehensible if any serious scholar discussed the fatal head shot without addressing himself to the widely-published evidence that the bullet came from the right front and not from the Depository.

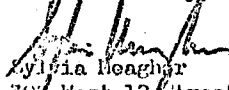
If I was nonplused by your four feet of wood, I am really awed by your experience as a rifleman. You got three hits in a target head (moving target?) in $6\frac{1}{2}$ seconds, although you are an amateur or believe that any amateur could do as well. That casts a most mortifying reflection on the Commission's three master riflemen and on CBS-TV's eleven expert marksmen.

The Commission's three master riflemen fired six series of three shots, five of which failed to match your accuracy or speed. CBS-TV's eleven experts fired 37 series of three shots, with an over-all average of less than one hit per series. Of the 20 series fired within the constraint of 7.5 seconds, the average was 1.2 hits for each three shots fired.

If you, a non-professional, succeeded where so many rifle champions failed, I can only hope that you were nowhere near Dallas on November 22nd five years ago!

I look forward to an opportunity of seeing your paper in its entirety and will of course withdraw any comments based on the newspaper story which may be unwarranted in terms of the full text.

Yours sincerely,


Sylvia Beagher
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New York, N.Y. 10014

College of Physicians & Surgeons of Columbia University | New York, N.Y. 10032

DEPARTMENT OF UROLOGY

620 West 168th Street

November 19, 1968

Mrs. Sylvia Meagher
302 West 12th Street
New York, New York 10014

Dear Mrs. Meagher:

My apologies for the long delay in replying to your letter of 24 October. It seems that there are as many scientific meetings in the Fall as in the Spring, and my correspondence is terribly behind.

I am afraid you will be very disappointed in the manuscript which is about to appear in the publication of the INTERNATIONAL COLLEGE OF SURGEONS. It is strictly factual, and limits itself to our own observations, fairly carefully. It is primarily a feasibility study which we did on the bullets and ammunition to try to find out for ourselves whether it was possible for a single bullet to do all the things attributed to 399.

Unfortunately, the newspaper report is a mixture of speculative conversation, intermingled with factual material from the article.

I cannot explain any discrepancies between our findings and those of others, since I am not familiar with their research methods and did not even see the motion picture to which you refer. You will be interested that a letter from Professor Thompson and another one from his book publisher arrived in the same mail as yours. They are buried in a pile of unfinished correspondence before me, and since the specific gravity of your notepaper is obviously better than theirs, your letter has surfaced first, and I am replying to it at once.

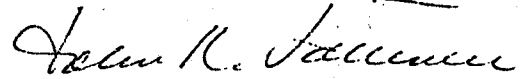
I will send you a reprint as soon as they arrive, which will probably be a few more weeks, judging from past experience.

Mrs. Sylvia Meagher

With regard to the capability of the rifle, in the hands of amateur marksman, I can only say that we tried to simulate Mr. Oswald's situation by undertaking deliberate and repetitive "dry-firing" practice until we were thoroughly familiar with the operation of the rifle, and then took advantage of the near-perfect arrangements which he had made for himself in his shooting position. It was as surprising to us, as it was to you, how quickly we learned to do what was necessary.

Glad to learn of your continued interest.

Sincerely,



John K. Lattimer, M.D., Sc.D.
Professor of Urology
Chairman, Department of Urology

JKL:jm