

3/31/68

Dear Joel,

Your letter arrived after your call. Sorry it was delayed, for I'd liked to have straightened you out about Penn. He does not put anyone on, not on this subject. He is incorruptable, brave as few men, and quite sincere. He wants all the help we can get, as I do.

However, if you noticed it, my reaction was identical with his. You asked me about the gun and I immediately termed it a "pump gun". I do not know what the weapon is. I am not sufficiently familiar with modern weapons to make a determination from a hazy print. Penn and I are of the same generation, we both served in WWII. Based on weapons I then used, my instinctive identification was a pump shotgun, with which the weapon in the picture seems identical. I have no doubt that in the service as perhaps in private life, Penn is familiar with that kind of shotgun and is not familiar with any rifle that resembles the weapon in the print.

You tell me it is an automatic rifle and I take your word for it. Unless you tell me it is that, based on my own experience, I tell you it is a pump shotgun. Ditto for Penn.

Were I to read significance into the picture, I'd find more with a rifle than a shotgun, but I'd not be certain unless I could date the picture. From internal contents, I'd guess that it is one of the earlier ones, and during the earlier period I'd be surprised that the search was by an ununiformed officer. I'd not have expected them to ~~be~~ be on the scene that soon. Nor would I expect men to be searching and carrying weapons except at the very beginning. Before very long it would be known that the place was clear of people.

Spregue should be able to date each sequence fairly closely. He might be able to identify the officer. If he identified this footage to me, I have now forgotten what he said. I know from my own work that there was a spliced roll of Alyce film, which this could be, as well as the original footage, dubs of most of which Spregue located outside of Dallas.

Poor as the print is, I think it is good enough to make positive identification of the sight. When we were speaking, I suggested that you get a good print of one of the official photographs of the rifle for comparison. Since then another idea occurs. You may want to compare the rifle itself with identified versions of the M-C, of which there were many. I do not know whether there was enough difference, if any, in the works of the various models for this, but I have seen a standard work on rifles with clear pictures of the various M-Cs. My impression is that this sight seems to be different than pictures I have seen of last on the "Oswald" rifle.

If you have not returned the roll by the time you get this, I think it would be useful to have a few shots of the locating of the rifle, as you described it. The official pictures fail to make clear what your words do and what I'd presumed, how carefully the rifle was hidden. It would be useful to show the movements required in putting it where it was and how the rifle could not have been just tossed in there. You see, not a single print on any of the boxes. This is consistent with the hiding of the rifle before the shooting, not after.

I think it is interesting that the man in the prints disappears and is not seen during the search. Perhaps Dick has checked it out. It is not usual, though it may be entirely innocent.

If you do not know before I do, I'll let you know when I hear from Gordon.

Sincerely,

March 27, 1968

Joel Palmer
1751 Havana Ave. S.W.
Wyoming, Mich.

Mr. Harold Weisberg
Rt. 7
Frederick, Md.

Dear Harold,

I am very disconcerted. You asked me about the pictures I sent you, especially in regard to the gentleman with the rifle. I was concerned about him while viewing the film because there was something quite sinister and not kosher about him. Since Penn Jones is located in that area, I checked with him as to the type of weapons Texas law officers carry and whether any of them were carrying rifles at the time of the assassination. I was told that no one was carrying a rifle. I then sent him of picture ~~of what I~~ similar to the ones I sent you and asked him to confirm whether these are used down there. He told me that the weapon in the picture is a shotgun, a not uncommon weapon for Dallas policemen to have. He advised me that there was nothing out of the ordinary in the picture.

Now I don't know whom is putting who on but I have had a weapons expert confirm the fact that that weapon is an automatic rifle, probably a Browning high-power. I realize that Penn is concerned about security leaks but I don't feel that that kind of thing furthers anything. I have gone to considerable expense, time and trouble to help in my small way and do not like being put on. There is always the possibility that his people misread the gun type. If I am wrong please tell me and if there is no room for fresh blood in this investigation I would like to know that too. I am under the impression that cooperation is the key to this thing.

Getting back to more specific info on the film, I appraised it this way: The opening sequence shows the camera advancing toward what appears to be the grassy knoll area. It then cuts to Parkland Hospital for several frames. Then we are inside of the Book Depository and in the opening shots we see the man whom I have mentioned, carrying the rifle. I don't know the time lapse between the assassination and the photographer's entrance into the building. If the film has not been edited, we must assume that it was at least fifteen minutes, due to his trip to Parkland. At any rate, the man disappears from the scene and we next see the search and finally the recovery of the alleged assassination weapon. The man who was in the original frames does not appear in any of the search frames. I assume that he has left the building. Incidentally, the alleged murder weapon seemed to be very carefully hidden between the boxes where it was found. There was only a small opening there, rather difficult to throw anything into. Looked as if it were laid there carefully.

Looking forward to seeing you in Detroit when you do Lou Gordon show.

Best,

Joel