Wayne Chastain
66 Monroe, # 804
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Rifle & ammo

4/15/93

Dear Wayne,

Wish I had more time for your 4/9. First a generality; not one of the experts you cite made a distinction between bullets of different design and intent. As I told you, the fatal bullet was a Remington Kore-Lokt. Check at your friendly gun shop and you will find that it is designed as I told you it is, to become the greatest "mushroom" of them all.

You said everyone agrees with something with which I do not agree: that the bullet left King's jaw and re-entered him in the neck. I believe the bullet exploded, pretty much as it was designed to do, and that metal and bone emerged. As of the time of the assassination there was no proof that the so-called Ray rifle had ever been fired. I believe it never had been. It therefore certainly would have yielded marks of distinction. Many would not have existed after that. The FBI did not test-fire that rifle, did not even test to see if it had been fired since last cleaned, because it knew the rifle was not used in the crime. It did test-fire the .243 he returned even though it could not be fired without the removal of encrusted cosmoline and thus it has never been fired.

Whatever all those people say was removed from King's body, the fragment I examined in Bubba Blackwell's office was far from an intact or relatively-intact bullet. It was largely the butt end. ...Lindsville is correct at least in stating that it was a good specimen for testing with a comparison bullet fired for testing. Our ballistics expert said that after examining it.

Re: King electronic surveillance there: could Smith have seen Army types rather than the FBI? The FBI required FBIHQ permission to wiretap him and I know of none not intended to develop information that could embarrass him only. Persoanl stuff.

Redditt:Bull ! There was no chance of doing anything to protect King from the fire house. Redditt and Richmaon reported the names of all who saw him. They were there for no other purpose.

There was no end to the portion of bullet removed from under King's shoulder. Most of that ~~apxx~~ part was gone. It was largely the butt end, with a portion of the thin jacket as I now recall all on one side, if there can be said to have been a side, as I think there then was with so much missing.

The only legitinate disagreements over what happens to bullets on impact. normally, varies from bullet type to bullet type. Between hardended and soft ammo, etc. The bullet used is designed to not remain intact on impact.

When Redditt showed up at the airport when King's plane landed the blacks raised so much hell he had to be withdrawn. And they had some top brass there for "security" and they were complained about and removed that evening. Thanks and excuse haste,

Harold

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left back & shoulder

Arpil 9, 1993

Harold Weisberg
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Dear Harold:

I got my TV days mixed up. I failed to record the Trial of James Earl Ray on Wednesday, thinking it was scheduled to be re-played Thursday. Robert Chapman, however, has promised to make duplicates of the tape I made Sunday night. When he does, I will send you one.

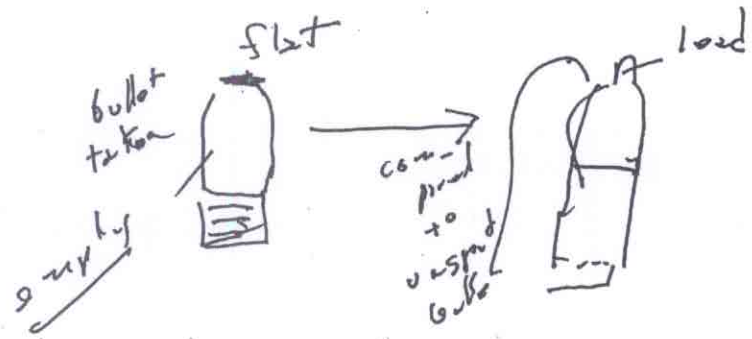
THE BALLISTICS ISSUE: Well, I think everyone agrees only one shot was fired. Also, I think everyone agrees that the shot struck Dr. King on the right side of the face, about an inch to the right of the mouth, one-half inch lower down. Everyone agrees the bullet struck the jawbone, then exited ate the bottom of the right jaw, re-entered just above the right collarbone, moved leftward, severing several crucial blood vessels, as well as 3 spinal bones which most likely made the shot fatal. The bullet came to rest by impinging on the ~~lower right~~ back. Photographs introduced at the TV trial demonstrates the fact. You also said you saw these photographs at sometime. From looking at the photographs, you can see a substantial bulge. Dr. Michael Baden testified that the bullet fragmented leaving tiny fragments in shoulder. Two detectives testified at the HBO trial: Barry Linville and Tommy Williams, Memphis homicide detectives. They were defense witnesses. The Prosecution used ballistics expert Donald Champagne. The gist of his testimony was: 1) the class characteristics showed that the bullet could have come from the rifle bought by Ray and left at the scene, but that he could not be able to determine if such could "conclusively show that the bullet came from the rifle found as to the exclusion to all other rifles. He tested the rifle 15 times, he said. He said he could not identify the bullet fragments from Dr. King's body with the test bullets that either he fired, or the FBI fired, The class characteristics, of course, were the same of all fired bullets including the death slug, he said. He said:"We could not find individual identifying features to say conclusively that this rifle fired the bullet fragments(death slug) On Cross-Examination, Attorney Bill Pepper elicited an affirmative answer to his question as to whether the class characteristics of the death slug were six lens, six grooves and a right twist. Champagn again stated that he could not state conclusively that the death slug came from the rifle in question to the exclusion of all othe Remington Gamemasters, with the same class characteristics.

Three detectives were present at the time Dr. Jerry Francisco dug out the remaining bullet fragments that impinged against the skin in left back of Dr. King. Besides Williams and Linville, Lt. James Hamby was present. Lt. Hamby made out the report. Linville said he felt the bulge before Dr. Francisco cut it out with a scalpel. Williams, now a Captain, said he did so also. He said he could take his finger and move the bullet around under the skin before it was removed. Linville said when the bullet was removed, almost the entire copper jacket was intact; end of the bullet was flattened out; that such a bullet had a quarter of inch of lead and that it was flattened out; and copper jacket showed excellent lens and grooves. He testified for defense. Said he had witnessed

"thousands" of ballistics analysis and examinations.

When asked to described on a scale of 1 to 10 the condition of the bullet he saw removed from King's lower left back under the shoulder, Linville said he would rate it as a "Nine".

On cross-examination, Prosecutor Hickman Ewing attempted to impeach Linville's testimony by having him draw on a large chart the shape of the bullet he saw excised from Dr. King's skin. Linville drew the following:



Ewing had Mr. Linville read the ballistic report made by Lt. Hamby which described the extracted bullet as: "three inch in diameter, weighed 4.7 grams ..." The report went on to say that the bullet appeared to be a soft point lead, etc..."that the steel jacket had distinct lens and grooves"

Ewing, who is an excellent cross-examiner, suddenly stopped the cross-examination.

Attorney Pepper followed up with the testimony of Capt. Tommy Williams, now head of the Memhis Police Department's Homicide Division. Williams said he was the attorney who took the photographs of King's back, apparently the same photographs you said you saw with bulge under the skin.He said he pinched the skin and rolled the bullet around inside. He was thankful the bullet was intact. (Williams was honest enough to testify on direct examination that he talked to Charlie Stephens but that Charlie was "so intoxicated that he could not talk intelligently"...)

It became apparent that Williams' testimony visibily upset Ewing. On cross-examination, he went after him about the state of sobriety of Charlie Stephens. Williams was emphatic: "Mr. Stephens was intoxicated to the point that he had to lean on the door to talk to me." Capt. Williams imitated the manner in which Stephens leaned on the door. "He was very incoherent," Williams said.

As far as the ballistics, Ewing asked if he thought Lt. Hamby was a "honorable man.' Williams responded by saying Hamby was a honorable man and a good investigator. Apparently relying on Hamby's report, Ewing asked Williams if Hamby gave a description and weight of the bullet, would it have been correct. Williams said: "I don't know about that...he was a good investigator". Without developing this line of cross-examination testimony, Ewing was apparently relying on the weight recorded on Hamby's report that coincided with the weight reported by Champagne.

Camp

So really, Harold, doesn't the totality of testimony show the following?

1. The fragments removed from Dr. King's body, even if Linville's recollection is faulty, had distinct lens and grooves.

2. The fragments could be tested under the state of technology that existed in 1968-1969, that could have conclusively established the the death slug came from Ray's rifle, IF the slug had been fired from Ray's rifle.

3. The fragments were either so tested and determined that said fragments did not come from Ray's rifle, thereby causing the FBI to lie to the American Public that the fragments could not be so tested because of the insufficient quantity and the indistinct lens and grooves, etc...

I had the opportunity to have lunch yesterday with Kenneth Herman, a Memphis private investigator who worked full-time on the HBO movie. He traced almost all of the old witnesses still living. In fact, I have never had the time to sit down and determine how extensive his investigation was. He discussed some of the difficulties of getting certain key witnesses to come forth in the absence of compulsory process.

Herman disagrees with you concerning the tendency of the outside jackets to fragment. Herman said he considers himself a pretty good expert on rifles, but did not rely on his expertise. He interviewed several. He said there is a lack of unanimity about the extent to which bullets, especially 30.06, fragment and the extent of said fragmentation. Herman happened to see a lawyer walk into the restaurant, who Herman said was a real expert. He called him over and asked him to ask the percentage of time that the outside metal jacket would fragment ...this so-called expert said it would not fragment but a tiny fraction of times tested. This lawyer I once knew, but I cannot recall his name. He has been retired for many years. I will obtain his name. I was embarrassed that I did not remember..

ENOUGH ON BALLISTICS...A former Memphis police intelligence officer, James Smith, now retired but now double-dipping as an investigator for the Shelby County Attorney-General's office destroyed the credibility of FBI agent James Hester, the case officer charged with investigating the King murder. Hester, who testified as a prosecution witness, said there was no electronic surveillance of King by the FBI on March 28, or when he returned on April 3. Smith said, however, that in 1968, it was his job to accommodate federal officers in setting up facilities for those officers to conduct electronic surveillance, such as monitoring his telephone, his rooms at the Rivermont through bugging material. Smith was very taciturn. Pepper had to evoke his statements as a dentist extracting teeth. But his terse responses were devastating. He admitted he saw "federal officers" --he avoided identifying them as FBI agents--conducting this surveillance, with head-phones and transcribing recorded conversations...

I cannot understand the hostility of the HSCA, McTaxson, and yourself toward Ed Redditt. To say that Redditt was not there to protect King but to spy on him, and to accuse him of misrepresentation as the HSCA did, strikes me as not only unfair, but inaccurate. To conduct surveillance on a person is not necessarily to say he was not there to protect him. Surveillance is one way to protect a party. It is true that the comprehensive security techniques would require more than having one person observe the party surveilled

but as long as the party conducting the surveillance of the party to be protected had radio contact with other security team members, the officer conducting the surveillance is playing a role in protecting the party.

Redditt said he worked with the security team the day before, but something happened on April 4. The officers he had worked with the day before and radio contact with were not working security the next day. It was this fact along with his removal that convinced him that someone was "stripping security of King" on April 4.
THIS IS ALL I HAVE TIME FOR TONIGHT...I TOUCH ON A COUPLE OF MATTERS LATER