7/23/70

Dear Dick, (cc Harold)

I received your letter of 7/17 just after mailing my last package of letters to you. Also got the various articles I requested. A million thanks for them and taking the trouble to send.

Your 7/17 was very well thought out and approached the "problem" very logically. I accept your assurance you did not set forth your argument as a belligerent challange, and that you really want to know if your reasoning can be faulted.

I cannot "fault" your reasoning. However, as with any theory based on a number of inter-related circumstances and facts, let any one of those facts be wrong, misleading, or open to question, and the entire progression of reasoning is faulted. This applies very much so to the assassination where so many things are open to suspicion for so many reasons. It is not that I wish to ignore the obvious or the apparent, or even to explain logical happenings with illogical circumstances; you take full credit for having swayed me from such foolishness (inadvertant as it was) last summer.

Take the first ~~KMX~~ Item~~X~~ in your progression of reasoning, "Item 1: JFK was wounded before Z202." It is fair to say that your reasoning hinges on this Item for starters. If JFK was not wounded prior to 202, then the explanation you offer looses substance. Now, I consider it incontrovertibly proven that before 202, a shot was fired. Furthermore, I am satisfied that this shot hit JFK, thus wounding him prior to 202. However, we cannot positively prove that this shot did in fact hit him. The films are not conclusive, as are not the witnesses on this aspect. So, I frankly agree with you that arguing JFK was not hit before 202 would get me "irretrievably bogged down in diversions and trivia." At the same time, I cannot prove he was--and here I mean prove beyond any shadow of doubt, to the point of being obvious as with a head shot at 313. I would tentatively reason around this assumption, but I could not call any conclusion based on it "compelling", "sound", and "irrefutable," as you seem to.

The same applies to the seconf Item, "SS agent Bennett saw a bullet enter JFK's back sometime after Z202." I would modify this to "thought he saw" or even "is confident he saw." Consider me booged down in diversions ~~and~~trivia,~~X~~ if you will, but I just refuse to say that because one man said he saw something happen--no matter how sincere he is and positive of his observation--it means that something really did happen. Suppose in the split second that Bennett was turning to look at JFK a shot rang out and his attnetion suddenly was drawn to the back which already had a wound there. He sees this for the first time, correlates it with the shot and subconciously associates the shot as having caused the wound he suddenly saw at that instant. It's possible. I personally am entirely willing to accept that Bennett actually did see the bullet enter and after 202. But I cannot base solid conclusions on it. Either can you, because in working with the recall of a human being we automatically work with something subject to the most inadvertant error.

I am persuaded toward the same "conclusions" as you. But knowing of the possible flaws owing to the nature of the evidence, I must consider other alternatives. There are so many things which could have happened with the upper thorax wounds, the major considerations being not so much the external wounds but the internal ones.

Here are some of the alternatives and the considerations on which they hinge, based just on the medical stuff:

Bullet could have entered back, penetrated few inches if it either worked its way out prior to autopsy (how? See p. 74 of Bastard bullet for interesting point), ~~XX~~ was removed at autopsy prior to X-rays and never reported by docs, or was shown in X-rays and lied about: Another bullet ~~entered~~ could have front of neck and did not exit, fragmenting if Morgan lied to me about X-rays.

Bullet could have entered front neck, gragmented, with piece exiting from back wound if all data about back wound is faked (abrasion ring, coagulation necrosis).

Bullet could have entered back, fragmented, tiny fragment going out front if front neck wound was not entrance.

Bullet could have entered back and continued to other side stopping under skin (Peters at Parkland saw hematoma in front which sometimes forms around bullet under skin) and been removed at autopsy or shown up on X-rays if removal of bullet was suppressed or X-rays lied about; Another bullet could have entered front neck, burst with fragment going to skin of other side and been removed at autopsy or show in X-ray if removal of fragment was suppressed or X-rays lied about.

For any one of these to be true, there has to have been dirty work on someone's part, no? There must be other alternatives, also. Suppose, for instance, that Morgan lied about the size and distribution of the fragments, that there were larger ones over a larger area. That would explain a lot. I'm convinced that Morgan provided false information. At the same time, I can't conclusively say what he's hiding until I see the X-rays myself or get a valid reading. Knowing that there was "dirty work" as we do is important. However, not knowing exactly what the dirty work covered up must be taken into account.

I am willing to accept these things about the upper thorax wounds:

1. There was an entrance wound in the upper back;
2. this wound had a penetration of 1 or 2 inches at the least;
3. At least one bullet in the neck fragmented;
4. The top of the lung was bruised at least, probably suffering more damage than reported;
5. A major vessel was probably struck;
6. There was exptensive contusion to a large area of tissue under the skin anteriorly, including muscles and larynx;
7. There was a laceration of the trachea;
8. There was extensive bleeding in the anterior region in the subcutaneous tissues;
9. There was a tiny wound anteriorly, most probably above the collar, having marginal tissue damage.

What I've listed could indicate any number of things. There might be and probably is something missing which is vital. There is no firm basis in any of this for drawing solid conclusions.

Our best bet is to ~~XXXXXXXXX~~ assert only the obvious. Such as:

1. All nine points in some way conflict with the autopsy report and the surgeons' testimony, thus making that testimony invalid(to quote Fillinger, "If you tell one lie, it makes

you a liar.")

2. In some instances, the conflicts may be attributable to sloppy work; others involve deliberate falsification. It is not possible to be able distinguish between the two all the time.
3. The presence of fragments in the neck, no matter what size means:
   a. 399 did not cause the neck wounds, invalidating the Warren Report.
   b. a whole bullet did not exit from the anterior neck.
   c. a bullet other than a military--full jacketed--bullet caused at least some of the neck wounds.

These are really the important things, as you know. They are subject to no doubt.

My theory about fragment exiting front was, as I said, just another possible alternative, inspired by the pictures I took. There can be no definate statement as to exactly what happened in this area. I suppose, in summary, we can only say what did not happen, and from this make important conclusions.

I hope you will not experience that exasperation which you so commonly get from me because of this letter. I get the feeling that you may now be pounding your fists because I refuse to accept the most likely. But it is not that I refuse to accept it, for I do personally accpet it; I just can't assert it as absolute fact when the evidence won't permit such absolutism.

I think you also know that, despite this, I have not lost sight of what we can know and what really is important.

It was you who taught me very effectively not to be married to theories. I have come to believe that the safest and surest approach to the assassination is to seize only what is certain, for that way you are guaranteed a really solid case. We have to face the fact that there are some aspects of the wounds limited to speculation, even if it be the damned surest speculation.

I don't spend too much time on such theorizing--no more than anyone else who is driven crazy by uncertainty and curiosity.

I am sure you will tkae this letter constructively, as it was intended. Understand, again, that all I refute is your seeming insistance on what is absolute fact, despite my own personal inclinations to accept as most probable that which you do. But we cannot inhibit ourselves by shutting out any other considerations.

Best,