

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

To the editor: Whatever the validity of Hal Verb's remarks concerning James Fetzer's Assassination Science which he reviews in the January TFD, his swipe at Mr. Fetzer, for including the three-tramp controversy in his book, is singularly unwarranted. This issue is nowhere near resolution, and though the LaFontaines undoubtedly found some documents pertaining to some of those detained following the assassination, the Dallas police archives are by no means definitive; remember, when Congress tried to get to the bottom of the matter in 1975, the DPD reported that it had no arrest records dating from 11-22-63 (J. Marrs, Crossfire, p.332).

Among the problems with the identification of the photographed tramps with the Abrams-Doyle-Gedney troika unearthed by the LaFontaines, the latter men were arrested by Officer W.S. Chambers at 4:00 while, conversely, Sergeant D.V. Harkness arrested the photographed tramps at either 1:00 pm (according to Harkness himself) or an hour later at 2:00 pm (according to Washington Post reporter George Lardner). Also, the oldest photographed tramp (who would be Abrams, in the LaFontaine scenario) is holding a paper bag; however, the Abrams arrest report is blank in the space for "Property Placed in Property Room."

The HSCA determined that a total of "six to eight persons" identified as "derelicts" were apprehended by authorities after the shooting. It was also stated that all these derelicts were "released without being booked"—probably because not one of the men had ever been to Russia (HSCA vol. 6, p. 257). At 1:12 pm, a DPD officer at the "dead end of Laurels" arrested a "petty drunk" 42-year-old man in a light-colored jacket found "walking down these railroad tracks" (DPD Radio Traffic, 11-22-63, DMARC, p. 32) This individual, it is certain, is unrelated to either the LaFontaine or suspicious-tramp configurations.

None of the above is to suggest that I think the tramps were involved in the assassination—or that they were harmless transients, either. Simply put, I don't know who these men were, nor does anyone else. It is to be regretted that researchers such as Mr. Verb are taking their cue from J. Lee Rankin ("At this stage, we are supposed to be closing doors...") Three cheers for Mr. Fetzer and

the other researchers who struggle to shed light on the twistier side streets of Dealey Plaza. -Timothy W. Fattig, Route 1 Box 1660, Couch, MO 65690

To the editor: I am writing in response to Hal Verb's book reviews of Bloody Treason and Assassination Science (January 1998 issue). Although I consider myself a casual researcher, I vehemently disagree with several of the opinions expressed by Mr. Verb. Mr. Verb states early in his article that it is his position that the Zapruder film was not altered and that the autopsy photos and x-rays have not proven to be faked or altered. Since I do not possess the technical knowledge to discuss the Zapruder films or the x-rays, I will only argue about the authenticity of the autopsy photos. After reviewing 80 pages of Robert Groden's The Killing of the President, to assure myself I hadn't overlooked information related to the topic, I was amazed to believe that Mr. Verb had made such a deduction of the purportedly faked photographs which appear on pages 81 and 83 of Mr. Groden's book.

If one observes the photographs of the eighteen doctors, nurses, and other eyewitnesses who viewed the President's head at close range after the assassination, one sees that they are all grasping or pointing to the right rear portion of their heads to show the location of the most notable portion of the President's head wound. You will also notice in their photographs that they are using their entire hand as an indication of the size of that wound—none of these witnesses is pointing with his finger to the right rear portion which one might expect if the witness was pointing to an entrance bullet wound in this general area as the Warren Commission was able to find in these faked photographs. On page 83 readers will also see the location of the 2.5 inch wide skull fragment found by Billy Harper on the grass in the Plaza. How would you reconcile the genuineness of these two autopsy photographs with the fact that this large skull fragment should be shown as missing in these photographs?

In addition to the disagreements I have with Mr. Verb, I am disappointed that he did not mention some of the other salient points of new information that were disclosed in the Assassination Science publication. I was delighted to see the article, "Commentary of an Eyewit-

ness" written by Richard Dudman for the December 21, 1963 issue of *The New Republic*. As cited by Mark Lane in his bestseller *Plausible Denial*, Mr. Dudman had raised many pertinent questions regarding the direction of the throat wound shot, the number of shots, the damage to the windshield in the Presidential limousine, and the number of shots striking the President's head as early as December 1, 1963, in a front page news article he wrote for the *St. Louis Post Dispatch*. This brilliant Washington correspondent journalist, who had witnessed the assassination from the press bus that followed several limousines carrying the President and other Texas politicians, also later witnessed Ruby's murder of Oswald. Mr. Dudman's next door neighbor in Washington was none other than one of the CIA's "very best men," Richard Bissell. Perhaps Mr. Dudman will divulge some of his current thoughts on the assassination for the casual researcher who read this publication. -Thomas O. Fohne, 406 W. Kunz, Columbia IL 62236

To the editor: Regarding the article, "The Pitzer File" (January 1998 issue): Are we to believe that William Pitzer had to be murdered in order to prevent his opinion on the JFK autopsy from becoming public? Why would anyone care what his views on anything were? Even if he were actually at the autopsy (and I have never seen the slightest shred of evidence that he actually was there), then so what? Dozens of others were there, and they were not murdered. Even if he took some pictures at the autopsy, so what? There is no need from a conspirator's standpoint to worry about those: there is no reason to think that the (supposed) Pitzer pictures would show anything other than what the actual autopsy pictures did show.

I am bothered by the lack of any credible evidence that Pitzer was murdered. This article provides almost none. The fact that Pitzer's hand tested negative for nitrates in a paraffin cast is of dubious value: to this day the FBI hotly contests the integrity and merit of such tests. The fact that Pitzer's head was partly under a step-ladder is meaningless. That is no more indicative of murder than it is of suicide. The authors would have us believe that an unknown, unseen murderer repositioned the body under the ladder or, better yet, left the body on the floor and then deliberately moved the ladder partly

over the head. This is absurd. To argue that the position of the body is somehow proof of murder means that the authors have some real knowledge of the exact position of the body. No such proof is offered in the article. As a matter of fact, no one even alleges that they have seen pictures of the Pitzer suicide/murder scene. No one has asserted that any such pictures exist today, or were ever taken. In other words, no one writing articles today has even the slightest idea what that scene looked like in 1966, or even that they have set foot in the Naval Hospital ever since. What kind of research is this?

As to the lack of identification on some of the fingerprints at the scene (on beer cans, no less), again my question is "so what?" Maybe the prints checked at the scene were indeed of the only eight people who could have had innocent access to the scene that afternoon. The article, however does not allege that, and indeed there is no reason to think that from the evidence. In other words, there is no hint that there is something unusual about finding unidentified prints at the scene. Speaking of beer cans, what was his blood alcohol level, researchers? Finally, are we really to believe that his marital difficulties and affair were all just a sham? Was he really in perfect mental health, and just before spilling the (crucial) beans he was bumped off in the middle of an afternoon at a public place using his own weapon? Was there really a plot to kill Pitzer in such a manner as to make it look like suicide, but in order to torment future JFK researchers, the murderers stuck the head of the body under a ladder?

Adults are free to spend their own time however they want, but as for me, I will not be spending any more time reading or thinking about the way Pitzer died. - Paul Joliffe, 1300 Southampton #188, Benica, CA 94510.

Rose responds: As one of the co-authors of the Pitzer article, I am again going to assert my editorial privilege to respond herewith to Mr Joliffe's letter, rather than waiting to write myself a Letter to the Editor. Colonel Marvin may wish to respond as well in a future issue. Actually the division of labor there was that Marvin was responsible for accumulating all of the items in this file. I was almost exclusively responsible for the analysis thereof, so that I am the chief "culprit" as defined by Mr. Joliffe.

To respond fully to Mr. Joliffe's criticisms would re-