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1 May 2001

Mr. Harold Weisberg
7627 Old Receiver Road
Frederick, Maryland 21702

Dear Mr. Weisberg,

Thank you for writing. I own copies of most of your books and count myself among your many admirers. I will try to answer your questions based on my knowledge of the acoustic evidence.

First is that, of necessity, the testing had to presume that shots were fired from either the Book Depository or the Grassy Knoll. As I am sure you are aware, test shots were fired only from those two locations. The necessity for this limitation arose from the fact that acoustic testing was based on echo location and uses the principle of triangulation. In order to find a third point, one must know the other two. The source of the echoes, the buildings and monuments, each form one point of the triangle. The shooter location forms a second point. The unknown point was the location of the microphone. It is not generally appreciated that the tests were designed to pinpoint the location of the motorcycle with the open microphone, not the shooter location. The use of the grassy knoll in the testing was a tacit admission that this was a likely shooter position.

Secondly, as I point out in my article (I am sending a copy), although I did not elaborate, there was a fifth shot captured on the police recording. It did match to a test shot from the Book Depository, but most likely originated with a building next to the Depository. The match was achieved because of the slack in the matching procedure which was designed to detect any likely shot from that direction. In fact, there was so much slack in the detection method that any rifle shot from anywhere in the plaza would likely have been detected. I am personally skeptical of assertions that there were more than five shots, but reasonably certain that there was in fact five. There is a sixth pattern on the recordings but it was attenuated. I believe the witnesses in Dealey Plaza were correct in identifying it as a backfire.

Using a different caliber rifle in the tests would not have made any difference for the echo matching procedure. A different velocity bullet would have changed the position of the shock wave. In fact, I used the shock wave precedence to show that the grassy knoll shot came from a rifle with the same muzzle velocity as a .30-30.

The testing procedure would not have detected shots from a pistol, a rifle with a silencer, or a relatively low noise rifle such as a .22. This is because the motorcycle motor drowns out all but the very loudest noises.

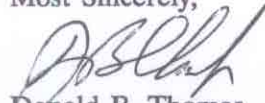
More testing could be done. There are those (Gerald Posner) who still doubt the acoustic evidence. The analytic sonar method used by Weiss & Aschkenasy to establish the validity of the Grassy Knoll shot detection could be applied to the three shots identified as coming from the Book Depository. Because it would involve three dimensions instead of the two used to confirm the Grassy Knoll shot, a computer would have to be employed with soundings of Dealey Plaza. I would think any doctoral student in acoustic engineering could accomplish the test with a minimum of funding.

Actually identifying the origin of the fifth shot would be dubious because the large number of possibilities would render the statistical confidence in the results quite low.

With regard to suppressed documents. I would be interested in seeing anything you would care to send. It is clear to me that there was an effort to suppress the evidence for the detection of the fifth shot and I believe that Chief Counsel G. Robert Blakey was the culprit behind that effort. I also believe that the NRC report was a deliberate hatchet job meant to discredit the acoustic evidence in the eyes of the public and not an objective evaluation of the evidence.

I will close now and offer you my best wishes for good health and continued efforts to set history straight.

Most Sincerely,



Donald B. Thomas