8/22/69

Dear Dick,

Your mailings of the 18th and 19th are very helpful. Thanks. The names of those involved in the Haiti caper are those reported in the US. They are mostly from the Cuban mercenaries. It is rather surprising that Howard Davis, an experienced pilot, was not the pilot of the plane (if he were not), for he had such a function in earlier days. Hall, Howard and Hemming also told me he had been Raul Castro's pilot. Possibly he was being shielded from authorities, if he had some kind of existing problem.

Your point on the neck fragments (8/17) is excellent. Of course, all of us tend to think and argue in terms of the characteristics of the projectile the government postulates, and we know there is no proof any such was really used. I am, in general, familiar with the performance of the very light hollow-points, like 22s. Some time ago, an experienced man was telling me about more logical calibers. I did not then know they come so light. I am slightly familiar with the 22 Horney, but I had not known of the .247s, etc. Perhaps some time you will come accross an illustration for one of the projectiles you have in mind like that enclosed with your 8/18 to John. I think this would go well as an appendix in P, III.

No major part of a single 6.5 could be an appreciable part of a 22, for example. But this is, without explanation, enough to sustain a perjury charge against all three doctors. Can you imagine how I felt when I discovered that rottenness in their report to Clark?

The point about the blood on the short front is good and obvious. I do not recall whether I mentioned it in PMIII.

Lil has just begin retyping the COUP add. At the moment, I cannot afford to xerox any copies, though I do want to. She is making an extra copy, however, and I'll be able to mail that around, to fastest readers first, hoping also that each with make separate notes, by page number, of corrections, suggestions, etc. But you will there see how I handle Haig and the ballistics, etc. I don't recall whether I have the Sight-O-Line in. The local shop told me about it (without estimating its accuracy).

Either Paul or Gary, I think the former, raised the point we do not really know the weight of 399 when it reached Washington. Or was it you? I've been after the Archives ot take a picture on a scale and they refuse to, which is, perhaps, better than if they would - as they should, were they honest. I'll make no use of Roffman's stuff without his okay, but at some point I'd like to add it to PM, with the pix I have.

Your point about copper traces on the jacket: would this not be true regardless of direction projectile?

Correct presumption on Braden. Itek: I have a copy of one of their studies, Gary has a copy of the earlier one. The one I read hastily but fairly carefully is from Alice! I love it! I'll put it on paper when I get a chance.

Your point on the figure-8 fault is exciting. Even I can see it! Pretty sharp of you.

Sending Gary excerpt on neck fragments in 8/17. He has been "unbagged" on it but we all need to know more. Thanks again,

H

Brennan 11/7/65

Fragments in neck: I tend to think along lines of a small, light, fast bullet nothing at all like 399-- one of the so-called "varmint calibers"-- that burs on contact with the right front quadrant of the trachea. That's a guess, but a good one, I think, for such a bullet seems also to have struck JFK in the head. The Autopsy Report's reference to "no major part of a bullet" has no meaning. All those fragments in the neck may total the weight of a small bullet and constitute several minor parts which, put together, make a whole bullet. The varmint calibers range in weight from 50 to 100 grains. Notwithstanding Wecht's statement, bullets of this type can and usually do burst on contact merely with flesh-- they do not have to hit bones to fragment. A bullet like 399 must strike bone to fragment (it was designed to remain intact, in accordance with international agreements dealing with warfare), but the soft nose or hollow point varmint calibers do not have to strike bone to fragment (they are designed that way, and such ammo is illegal for warfare). So understand: fragments do not mean bones were hit (it could have that meaning only if it were known that the fragments were made by a bullet like 399-- with hardened lead and a full metal jacket). I'll dig up a photo to show you this. In spite of my admiration for Wecht as a forensic pathologist, I think

he does not understand this case very well. I think he would be exceedingly competent in listening to arguments and approving or disapproving them, but I don't think he has considered all the aspects of the evidence available.

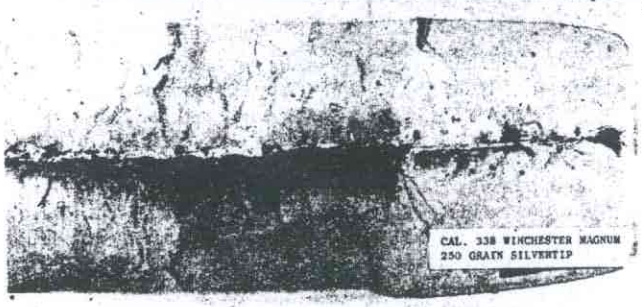
Evidence from traces on the tie and short would be definitive only if they showed traces of metal. The absence of metal tells absolutely nothing and I think it unwise to base any conclusion whatever on it. I would consider the absence of blood significant, however; if a projectile passed out of the neck and touched the shirt and tie, blood on the projectile would be wiped onto the surfaces contacted. The presence of blood would have no meaning, for it could have dripped from JFK's wounds. So if spectro shows no blood, that means no exiting projectile. That's what spectro can show.

In a recent letter to Schoener I outlined what I regarded as the two possibilities regarding the back wound; both involve a front-neck entrance:

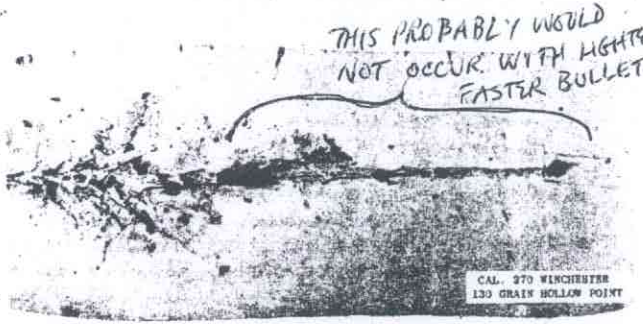
(a) JFK struck in the front neck by a bullet that burst and sent a large fragment out the back,

(b) JFK struck first in the front-neck by a small bullet that burst and did not exit, leaving several "minor" fragments. Struck second by a bullet in the back that did not penetrate deeply.

I favor (b) because of Frazier's testimony that hole in jacket showed copper traces and because Glen Bennett said he saw JFK hit in the back (Bennett was not looking at JFK when the first shot was fired.

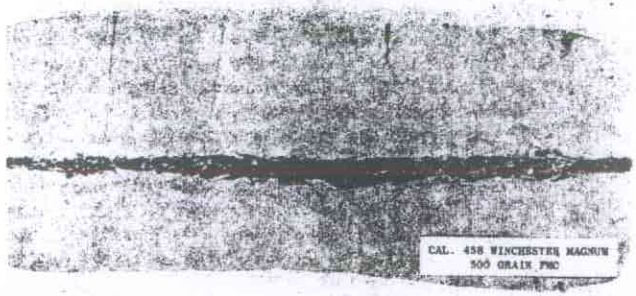


A CAL. 338 WINCHESTER MAGNUM 250-GRAIN SILVERTIP



B CAL. 270 WINCHESTER 130-GRAIN HOLLOW POINT

C CAL. 458 WINCHESTER MAGNUM 500-GRAIN FMC



frequently recovered from the brains of bull elephants or from deep in the vitals of rhinos in virtually perfect shape. Save for the rifling marks, many are perfect enough to be fired again. Professional hunters presently recognize the 500-grain 458 solid as the surest and finest solid obtainable.

The opposite type of bullet, for varminting use, has its own problems. The jacket of the varminter's bullet should be just strong enough to provide top accuracy consistent with holding the bullet together during its first burst of high-speed flight. Too thin or too weak a jacket will permit the projectile to burst from its own velocity and rotation and puff into smoke a few yards from the rifle muzzle. A marginally weak jacket may permit bullet distortion that is ruinous to the tight accuracy demanded by the varmint hunter.

The varminter's bullet must be made so that it will not expand in the ordinary sense but will smash up and fragment immediately after impact. It must create maximum tissue destruction for instant execution of such vermin as woodchucks, rockchucks, prairie dogs, crows, jack rabbits, and foxes. The breakup must be so sudden as to explode a crow and completely eliminate ricochet in partly settled areas. These are specialized bullets. The 110-grain pointed soft points loaded for the 30-06, to make that caliber an off-season varminter, for example, could hardly be expected to penetrate properly on a bull elk hit at an angle. This same bullet, meant for nothing larger than coyotes, might do very well indeed on an antelope hit squarely in the rib cage.

The bullet designer's real problem becomes complex in the wide middle range of game calibers, types, and bullet weights.

How bullets perform in tissue is dramatically illustrated by these three pictures. In photograph A, a bullet has penetrated a block of gelatin that approximates game tissue. Of medium-large caliber, the bullet has created a wide and long area of destruction. In photograph B, a bullet of smaller caliber and higher velocity has entered an identical gelatin block. After short penetration, it expanded rapidly and violently, as it would inside a small game animal. In photograph C, a heavy, slow bullet of the 458 Magnum, bluff-nosed and steel-jacketed, has bored far and deep enough to penetrate, for example, the bone-protected brain area of an elephant.