

6/14/69

Dear Dick,

Read the carbon of your letter of the 10th to John just before retiring and as I awakened, the sun not yet up to blind me, it is clear you have penned a great if unintended kindness to Lettiner, deriving, no doubt, from not having read his first piece. All of what you say is true, and more, but it is worse because he either knew better or he knew enough to know his inadequacies yet he did these things. If one might be inclined to pardon it in, let us say, a literary whore, like an Epsteink, one cannot in a car from a scientific discipline, trained as he is and must be.

For some strange reason (and I do not take offense at it) the eminent urologist has broken off correspondence with me. And do you know, all I had done was offer a commentary when he had indicated he'd like to hear from me. I don't think I sent John the first article when I got it. I had sent him the second on the chance Lettiner might surface as a witness or the author of an affidavit, or his work might be misused, etc.

I was not aware of the weight difference you postulate coming from just the firing. I'd be interested in the results of tests on that.

I can save you money on the shots of the base of 800 by taking them to my local camera shop where they will make a 5x7, which is, I think, adequate (and I'll get a negative that way so we can make more) for about half of the ~~xxxxxx~~ cost of a print from the Archives. I'll get two prints and send one to John, if you think or he thinks he'd like it. He saw those going on two years ago, when he saw the ms of POST MORTEM. This reminds me, your point on Lettiner-Connally A-rays is not only well taken, but if you recall EM, Lettiner also had to be overlooking the size of the thick fragment, which I have. It outlaws his slicing and establishes that he was slicing language only. John can use pictures only through witnesses. If he wants to use this, he'll have to use the archives or me or perhaps, he'll be able to order his own from them and testify to it. But, the central point I made with that base shot, which I had taken with millimeter scales in it is that it was not possible to attribute the thick fragment alone to this bullet. I'd be only too happy to take that, step by step, from the stand and really lay them out. For, it is such worse that this. Apparently you forgot that part of EM, with the subsequent letters, etc. I also think I have a duplicate set. If I can find them I can send one to John, who can see if he wants it and make his own copies, including for you. And the second shot, rather, perspective, is from the sides, flatwise and broadways, to show the imperfections of the lands and grooves and the absence of anything that could account for the "squeezing".

By now you know I did nudge Tom about sending the Archives pictures to you. I regret the delay. I believed it would be potentially valuable for him to have a set. It is before daylight, so I cannot phone him now, but I'll try later and see if I can learn the status. He knows he is not holding you up. I hope he is not away for the weekend.

CC: John Nichols

Best,

Herold Weisberg

6/14/69

Dear Dick,

While I appreciate the fine motive that inspires it, I am not happy with the effect of reminding John of the unpublished material he is already forcing out of me despite his contrary word winter before last, when he alone had access to all of this. Perhaps you have begun to glean from the letters what is afoot.

Now I told him when we first met and I first showed him the documents and loaned him a copy of the MS of POST MORTEM that I would sue when I could get a lawyer. When he told me he was going to sue, on a number of occasions I asked him to make a joint suit of it, pointing out he'd need me and my material. He never responded...

Thereafter, I think I helped him persuade his lawyer, for he had me stop off there one night and address a small group, including lawyers, doctors and a judge or so. This was a year and a month ago.

I have already been forced to do an enormous amount of work to merely backstop him, and he'll be using my work for his gain, denying me even the initial use and quite likely the chance of using the value of the material as a means of achieving its publication. In short, what I might have gotten from this rather large investment of time and money will be used for his personal benefit and denied me if it continues this way. Yet it is not possible to avoid helping him if the alternative is his losing his suit, which would damage everything. This is not the first time I have been put in this position and I do not relish it. There was a very simple alternative John had and I offered it. You know his attitude on LOOK, which is his right, but is not the other side of this coin.

When I read Lettimer's second piece and the reference to John in it, I sent John a copy and a few comments. He then indicated no awareness of those things you note and did agree partial agreement with Lettimer, as I now recall it. I find this disturbing for, as I told John long ago, he does not know enough about the material to carry this off alone. When I realized that he was simply going to take what he wanted of my material by his own duplication of it, I suggested he hold this off for court (which he should do for selfish reasons anyway). He has not yet responded....What prompted your comment on Lettimer? He indicated no interest to me when I sent these things to him.

From what I have sent you and from what I pr

the better of me, for can't stand experts who behave like nincompoops.

If you want to smash Lattimer, then do this: Select ten cartridges at random. Pull the bullets of five of them by the inertia method and weigh each. Then fire the other five into a rolled mattress and weigh them; also get a good look at their bases. I won't predict the results, except to say that they will give you something to write about. What the hell, let me predict. I think that you will find that the fired bullets weigh 1 to 3 grains less than the unfired bullets.

If you get usable results, then take good photos of your tests and compare them with 399. I think too that you will find some flattening along a longitudinal ~~xx~~ axis, as with 399.

At the same time, get photos of Frazier's two test bullets and compare them with what you already have. In the few photos that I have seen of the test bullets, I note some lead protruding from the base (as in 399); I attribute that to the bullets being squeezed in the same way that 399 was squeezed.

These are things that I had hoped to do myself when I got the time and proper equipment, but if it bears on what you are doing, go ahead and fire the test, weigh the bullets, collect the photos, and write it up.

I resisted bringing up this matter not because I wanted to do it myself, but because I am not absolutely certain of the results and didn't want to recommend that anyone else take the trouble to find out. But if I had the equipment, the first thing I would do is try to reproduce the general characteristics of 399, and I think that a rolled mattress will do it.

If you do any work on this, you can claim it as your own.

Harold has a good photo of the base of 399. I saw it, but did not "study" it. Even so, I remember some features well. I cannot recall any aspect of the exposed lead which suggested that it was "scooped out", and I don't remember any striations on the lead which might indicate that it had rubbed against anything hard enough to scrape off the metal. The "scooped out" business seems another piece of fakery. Although I have not seen the bases on unfired .30 bullets, I suspect that they are concave, just like other ~~xx~~ full metal case bullets. If the base of 399 is concave, I suspect that it is not because it was "scooped out", but because it was made that way.

I'll get a copy of Harold's picture of the 399 base later from the archives, for now I would like to see it again. Possibly also ~~xx~~ I'll get pictures of the bases of Frazier's tests, for I think they will tell much more than Lattimer's vice-squeezed bullets.

I just got your letter about the package that didn't arrive. I knew nothing about it, for Customs did not inform me that one was being held. Apparently this is the first one that didn't make it through.

I still don't have the archives photos from Harold, so I can't comment on the cartridge cases yet.

Still,

cc. Weisberg

Dick

BERNABEI