

5/18/70

Dick, Howard, re Dick's 5/12,13:

Hicks- Sprague can't even write straight. There is another, face-on clear picture of Hicks, who apparently knew nothing but was an eyewitness. If there were the remotest possibility of an aerial or radio, do you think JG would not have used it? This idea did originate with Harris, who happened to be there when Dick did wander in. As I recall, Hicks also got himself beaten up at the Fontainebleau, something with black males at 3 a.m. Maybe another "witness", I am not now certain.

389- Weight requests. Do you now see the point? If Howard would take the time to do what I did poorly, overlay tissue and crace cut for you, I think you'd see. Bullet so packed in cotton no chance abrasion, jiggling.. Residues: this escaped Nichols until he read test case POST MORTEM. Agreed on present status, but under the law, failure to make the test contemporaneously is enough for acquittal.

John: My guess is he plans a big thing to try and claim I violated copyright requirements by not letting him have, which is foolish, but I think like him. Fact is I did let him have, did offer again, but insisted as precondition, following his violation, of his own agreement to abide by law.

Other things noted, no time for response here.

To Howard: I've earlier suggested Wecht is too busy. Leave him alone except when urgent.

Grassy knoll: I've always considered both possible and have never, to my recollection, made reference to the north alone. It does present major problems, but it is as possible and has distinct advantages that, fortunately, escaped Sprague. I disagree that JFK movements indicate either knoll, certainly none at that location indicating a simultaneous movement to his left, which is expectable. They are discontinuous movements, back then over. An argument could be made from head pivoting only, slide by slide comparison, but I think it would be inconclusive. On not figuring straight trajectory after strike, wait until you see what I now have on King. Very true.

When you have time, no rush, and for my Featherstone file, not any special interest in Kent, I'd like more on Ewing and his allegation I didn't believe on other grounds, being seen this live on TV and then rerun several times.

As of now, if I add anything on Bieberdorff to what you initially suggested. I think it will be obly citation of testimony, got judgement his professional competence. This is the Commission's abdicated responsibility. I think I should just raise the question as clearly as possible, but try and provide my own answers now.

Best,

PS neither of you spend money copying Sprague. I'm in no hurry to read such stuff and someone may send me a copy. If I do not get, I'll ask.

12 May 1970

Dear Harold (cc Roffman):

A friend in Massachusetts sent me a copy of Sprague's article in Computers and Automation. There is nothing new in it, and the old stuff is handled very poorly. There are many claims that he can prove much, but in fact he proves little. Some things are very bad. His list of photos is worth having in published form, but I already have the list from him privately.

He makes much of the Dal-Tex second floor window in Altgens, so I wrote and informed him of recent correspondence that developed from observation of Roffman's version of the picture. It may make no difference to him. I believe that I had previously written to him and told him what proofs indicate that the Foley picture was taken a day or two after the shooting, and not in the morning before the shooting, but he lists Foley as being taken about 10 a.m. on 22 Nov.

If you want this copy, tell me. I wrote to the publisher and asked for the issue with the article. When I receive that, I can let you have this. Perhaps I'll route it through Roffman, since he might want to see it and make a copy of Sprague's list of photos.

He is still riding that errant nag, Farewell America; makes special mention of it as an "important reference book". God!

There is a bit on Jim Hicks that by itself makes Sprague (and others) seem a fool. Hicks "showed up voluntarily in Garrison's office. Garrison and one of the researchers, Jones Harris, suddenly realized that they had seen his picture before, as one of the persons in Dealey Plaza near the time of the fatal shooting (See Fig. 11)... The photograph Harris and Garrison had seen is a picture of Jim Hicks in Dealey Plaza just after the shots, with his radio in his left rear trouser pocket and antenna hanging down outside. (See the foreground of Figure 11.)" Figure 11, by the way is Willis' seventh slide that shows "Hicks" with his back to the camera. What amazing powers of recognition Garrison and Harris have! And what of Sprague's mentality, for thinking that any sane person is going to swallow that crap?

Skolnick: I am glad you are suing to stop him. There is really nothing good that can be done now, but your approach has certain virtues that others lack. Of course you will now be dubbed an Establishment hack for impeding the course of justice. Even now I can name your enemies among the critics-- Penn Jones' editorial on Skolnick is the harbinger of sentiment about the incident, I am sure. Others will feel as he does, believing what they want to believe, not what they must. Fuck 'em.

I hope that it won't cost you too much. Regretably, there is nothing that I can do to help in that.

Cyanosis: This takes a while to set in. When Perry first saw LHO, he was "very blue". I don't think it's possible to "get" Bieberdorf for smothering LHO, since the cyanosis seems to have developed as the result of massive and rapid internal bleeding. But surely the blueness must have set in ~~while~~ while Bieber was pumping oxygen. That would be a sure indication of a lot of rapid bleeding, the very thing that Bieb. was aggravating during his ministrations. I would work on Bieb. from that angle. Since he knew LHO was getting pure oxygen in his lungs, the sure sign of lack of oxygen would indicate that he was not getting it from the blood. In spite of his inexperience, I cannot regard B as innocent of deliberate wrongdoing.

399 pictures(Ridge): I have now studied these as well as I can. I cannot decisively refute or support your opinion, for the pix are not clear enough to make definite assertion possible. You could be right, but in the present state of knowledge, I recommend caution and further search for a proper picture that will definitely confirm or refute.

*Weight
found -
trace, really
within*

Let's suppose, for the time being, that you are right. This new revelation does not necessarily imply illicit intent, and strongly suggests no intent at all to alter the evidence, no matter what the effect.

The area in question, the "ridge" is composed of very soft metal. The "ridge" is the topmost portion of a very thin wall of that very soft metal. The thinness and softness of this area renders it exceedingly vulnerable to the sort of changes that you see. A very slight brushing against even a soft object almost certainly would disrupt this fragile surface-- even a little bit of jiggling inside the container could easily do it.

It may be, too, that substance was not actually removed from the "ridge", but that the minutest bit of metal was displaced, or slightly worn down by the normal processes of attrition.

What I am saying is not merely that it is easy to disrupt such a thin, soft surface, but that it is very difficult to keep it from being disturbed in the way that the pictures indicate. If any substance is missing, it cannot be more than a small fraction of a grain. The surface of the latest picture, as far as I can tell, does not suggest that any substance was deliberately removed by cutting it off with a knife or similar instrument. A better picture may suggest otherwise, but presently I do not see anything illicit in the treatment of that area.

P M

399 residues: There is a hidden pitfall in Nichols' suggestion about tests for proteins, things that would belie the validity of such tests as they apply to the question whether 399 ever injured a human. For one thing, the bullet was found on a bloody stretcher, and it may have been slightly besmeared by that blood (though I doubt it, since Frazier said there were no residues visible. Think in terms of such a small quantity that it would not be readily visible). Then there is the possibility that the bullet could be deliberately smeared even now, so as to get positive results from such tests.

The tests would be valuable, but they can be evidentiary only if they prove negative. That is, if there is no evidence of blood, then the bullet hurt no one; if there is evidence of blood, then we know nothing more than before-- it would prove nothing. But negative results would prove plenty.

Nichols: There seems nothing more that you can do about this matter than you have already done. To the degree possible, I suggest that you take no further steps to contact him and decline any efforts he might subsequently make to contact you. You do not need him, but he needs you-- even though he may not now admit it.

I do not think that his activities recently are innocent, and considering his failure to respond to your reasonable queries, I see no reason why you should bother seeking an innocent explanation. I do not think he is out to injure you as much as to serve himself richly-- though it may well have an injurious effect.

As I indicated before, I did not mind being used by Nichols, and gladly provided him with helpful things that I then thought were for a good cause. I do mind now, however, for it seems not just

a question of being used for his benefit, but of being badly used to my detriment.

Composition of bullets: If certain sets of bullets are made from the same ~~met~~ batch of molten lead alloy, then any two bullets from ~~that~~ those sets will have identical metallic composition. If another batch of molten lead alloy were mixed in apparently the same proportion as the first batch, then bullets made from the second batch would not ~~xxxxxxx~~ have the same metallic comp as bullets made from the first. The differences would be minuscule, but they would be detectable-- especially by recently developed processes of analysis.

Trent Gough: A 10-person picket line around CBS? Good grief! In my view, Gough fits perfectly Agnew's designation as an effete, impudent snob. Imagine now, a whole 10-person corps of effete, impudent snobs. Right on, Spiro!

JE Ray: The new material is excellent news to have. In spite of your good and cogent arguments in Coup 2, I still ~~wonder~~ doubt the Huie was acting as his own agent. I think there were others pulling Huie's strings.

WLBJ*TV: I caught ~~this~~ LBJ's re-writing of history, as you call it. Some of it scares me. I'm thinking of his "international conspiracy" thing. It may be the harbinger of what I have long suspected will happen: when they know they can no longer sustain the no-conspiracy business, they will sure as hell try to make it look like a communist conspiracy, something which many people do now believe, or are more than willing to believe.

Mail of importance just came from Roffman, but I am out of time now and will have to answer later.

Still,

rick

13 May 1970

to Roffman (cc Weisberg)

Howard:

Enclosed is the picture that you sent. I have seen it before, and many others of a similar nature. Thanks for sending it, though.

I have your 9 Feb letter to Wecht and his reply. Your letter is excellent, but Wecht's is hardly a reply at all. The letter is so clearly phrased and suggests such relevant matters that I would have expected something that would either help you advance your thinking a little, or to refute it. It does neither. I imagine he is suggesting that there is nothing more to be said than you say, and it's encouraging to know that you have made no serious blunder, but a more detailed response on specifics would have been helpful.

I had not previously considered that "south grassy knoll" meant the knoll on Commerce St. For reasons which I cannot explain I regarded Harold's references to this as meaning the area of the (Elm) grassy knoll near the underpass. The thought of a shot emanating from the south knoll never entered my mind.

I think it extremely unlikely, and that a case for it cannot be made on the basis of how you interpret the head wound. There are too many things that tend to refute what you think the head wounds may show. The fact, for example, that no one suggested that a sound from that direction was heard. Tague was the nearest witness to that place, and he surely would have noticed a considerable difference in the volume of sound. I believe that he did indicate that one of the shots did sound different from others, but nothing to suggest that that shot came from anywhere but in front of him.

Besides, the movement of JFK suggest a shot emanating from his right-front-- more front than right. The Elm knoll, perhaps near the underpass. But based on the movement alone it's not possible to be specific; one can only indicate a broad area. But I do not think that the Commerce knoll is part of that area.

I have suggested to you before, and again I recommend that you consider that you cannot presume a straight trajectory once a bullet strikes an object. It is quite possible for a bullet ~~to~~ and fragments thereof to be sharply diverted from a straight trajectory once ~~it~~ in comes in contact with a body.

Cast bullets: As long as you are thinking in terms of cast bullets these days, let me tell you a bit about them.

Cast bullets are sold commercially only for revolver cartridges. Commercial bullets for cartridges used in ~~xxx~~ auto-loading pistols are full metal case.

There are no commercially produced cast bullets for rifles, and not many people cast their own rifle bullets. The reasons are chiefly that they are enormously troublesome to cast, and are enormously less efficient than jacketed bullets (I am talking now about jackets that leave a bit of lead exposed at the bullet nose.

For one thing, rifle bullets have to be cast from a relatively hard lead alloy, with a high percentage of ingredients that harden the lead. Soft lead fouls the barrel after a shot or two and the rifle becomes grossly inaccurate.

The hard lead, too, resists expansion and deformation, which makes it a less efficient killer.

And cast bullets cannot be fired at ~~very~~ the very high velocities that are necessary for efficient kills. High velocity needs great heat and pressure in the chamber and barrel; this tends to melt the lead and foul the bore. One can get somewhat higher velocities by using a gas-check, a little cup that encloses the base of a cast bullet, but the velocities are not comparable to those that can easily be achieved by jacketed bullets.

In comparison with readily available and fairly cheap ~~hunting~~ mushrooming ammo, cast bullets are so inefficient that a serious shooter would not even consider using them for hunting. They have no advantage whatever over commercially available rounds, and many serious disadvantages. A person who does a lot of plinking might wish to cast his own rifle ammo to save money - I mean a lot of plinking, for otherwise the savings would be small-- might prefer cast bullets, but if he wants accuracy and killing power he buys soft-nose or hollow-point jacketed rounds and loads them into his cartridge cases. If he is shooting for "business", he would not use cast bullets.

A cast bullet would fragment quite readily if it hit a hard bone at fairly high velocity. They tend to be more brittle than regular bullets.

Do not interpret this as indicating that I encourage you to stop thinking in terms of cast bullets. On the contrary, I urge you to consider it. But at the same time try to learn more about them than you know, for they have very different ballistic properties from other bullets that you might read about. If you have questions, ask them. I may have a book or two to send you, though offhand I think what I have may not answer the sort of questions you have in mind.

I have to stop now.

Still,

P.S. to Harold: If you are interested, I give you my assurance that allegations that a non-military small caliber steel-jacketed bullet wounded one of the students at the Kent State massacre are phony. This info comes from Dr. Joseph W. Ewing, who is either very stupid or a conscious liar. His qualifications indicate that he is not stupid. I think it's a cheap trick to get people to believe that there might have been a sniper.

6 May 1970

Roffman (cc. Fishery)

Dear [Name]:

... and the ... address is ... for the ... copies. ... approval, ...

... of ... different ... that you ... off, but ... back ... and ... models! ... opinion.

... in ... something, ...

... was ... severely ...

... but ... now ...

