

Dear Roger,

6/17/93

I fear we all goofed in not being thoroughly prepared for Connally's death, I in particular. We should ~~have~~ have anticipated his impending death and have addressed ~~Reno~~ Reno as you ^{did} have in the statement you were going to issue after his death. That was a fine statement with the perfect lead. That I was preoccupied with many other matters does not excuse my not having given Connally's ^{thought} coming death and been prepared for it with people I know in the media and by writing Reno in advance.

Lardner did succeed in getting more, much more space than he'd told me he was getting. I realize the mistake when I awakened yesterday morning. I then phoned Lardner at his home well before the time he usually leaves for the paper. But yesterday he had to leave early and it was late in the day when he got to his office. When he phoned me (I'd left a message on his machine) he'd heard from Jim and had spoken to him and was awaiting a fax of that statement. From Lardner's story I fear that Jim and Cyril did not take the right approach in emphasizing that recovering the fragments from Connally's body would disprove the Report.

When Lardner indicated that ^{the} most he would get is about two inches I phoned a friend who is one of the editors of the local papers. I told him I was not interested in a local story but wanted a feed to AP. I believe they offered it but do not know. The reporter who interviewed me by phone took the lead I prefer, that the national interest requires the recovery of the evidence in Connally's body whatever it shows. I enclose it. I believe they remade the front page to place the story there.

My early-morning walking is near the local CBS affiliate. I went there before daylight. The night man substituted a couple of minutes of me for something scheduled and I used the DJ statement that it would let the Dallas FBI decide whether recovering that evidence is "important" ^{to} charge that the DJ was putting the fox to guard the chickenhouse and abdicated its own responsibilities. I said that if the evidence was not recovered it would create a new and unnecessary national scandal, that it would spawn new conspiracy theories, and as the paper quoted me, this time they would be justified.

I had told the people at the station that I was there hoping for a network feed. The person who decides that was not yet there but it is to be suggested. Whether or not CBS news accepts it is, of course, a separate matter. If they do they'll not use all I was able to air but I did say that the ~~mix~~ nurse who gave the fragments removed from Connally's body to the federales consistently described a greater volume than the FBI gave the Commission, that the Commission's fragments do not equal their official descriptions, which raises additional questions about the FBI given the authority to decide whether the fragments in Connally are "important," and a few other things like these.

As always the reporters were interested in the single-bullet theory. I did not volunteer any of that other than saying that the fragments should be recovered, weighed, measured and if necessary (which it is of for other reasons) tested by NAA. I tried to emphasize the nature of the crime vital evidence of which might be forever denied and the spawning of theories.

On the 10 a.m. news CBS quoted AARC only on the argument of the dependability of the Report.

Before then the managing editor of the local paper is considering a followup using the reporter ^(enclosed) who reports to work at 2 p.m. He has not ruled out a story showing the importance of those Connally fragments that, according to that CBS newscast is to be buried this afternoon. As I write this the nearest AP reporter, in Hagerstown, is writing her story based on that in the local paper plus what I suggested to her when I phoned her. She also is considering a ~~file~~ followup of the nature above. If she gets her story filed in time she is coming here for lunch with us. If not she'll phone and will come later. I have already gotten relevant pictures out for them, none ever used in the papers of on TV, plus a tabulation of the fragment weights ^{are} given by Frazier and as posted during the NAAS. The fragments grew larger! Of course I have no idea what they will file or whether/what they'll file will be carried. *(She came and I loaded her up.)*

Going along with this Lil is not ^{interview} copying Lardner's story on Guinn's HSCA post-testimony that the egomaniacal Lifton in his persistence in trying to make his theory he knew was a fraud seem reasonable interrupted. I'd asked Lardner to ask Guinn if he had validated the specimens he tested. Guinn said he could not validate them and that they did not match their official description. Lifton then interrupted on his own irrational agenda. I have a dub of the tape Lifton made. Or, his insane effort to make what he knew was false true, blocked the development of more significant information. He just talked over the press, into whose conference he brazenly intruded, as he had pretty much throughout the whole thing.

3:00

I'll add to this later. Or 3:10. Nothing on CBS net news and AP story to be filed in an hour, too close. We worked during lunch, too. And it left me tired. When the local reporter learned she was to do a followup and asked if ^{at a later} because she has so many stories started and needing to be finished I ^{readily} agree to next week. First I am tired and second the stage set ^{the} by the attention to the fragments disprove ^{INB} the Warren Report, without any proof, is not the setting I prefer. So, we'll see.

How I wish I had the appropriate part of the Bell transcript you said you's send me! I can use it very effectively next week, perhaps ^(at 10:30) ^{Monday} when the local reporter is here. AP gets all their stories and pix. The ^{AP} area reporter was working on it before I called her, but as a rewrite of what the local published only. I asked the ME if you could fax it to him for us ^{at} the paper and for me, and he agreed. 301/662-8299, to Mike Powell. PLEASE!

With more than four of five not believing the Report I wonder how much impact the AARC angle has on editors and people in general.

Resumed 2:10 a.m. 6/18. I was so tired I decided to stop and take a nap. I was barely asleep when I was phoned by Jonathan Meyers, from the AARC. In Jim's absence he wanted to know if I'd make radio broadcasts by phone. I said I would until my present early bedtime. He also asked if I would tell Oliver Stone's unnamed assistant if I would tell him what to

do, etc. I said I doubted they would call but I'd help as best I could. They did not call. Nor did anyone for a radio broadcast. Perhaps that is because Connally was buried. And it remains to be seen whether that kills the AP story for which I had that reporter well prepared with fact, as about fragment weights and the fact of the disappearance of the actual fragments and their replacement, with which the government and HSCA got away.

Meyers told me that ABC-TV was interested and that on a night program Tink Thompson would appear. I rode the local "news" broadcasts and two Washington stations had items on the AARC letter. They were short, unexciting but not bad. Then I switched from one to another of the net newscasts. Not CBS, between NBC and ABC, I thus spotted the Ted Koppel item, not short and perhaps a bit lengthy on this AARC demand for the recovery of the fragments in Connally's body.

Derisively it referred to that who wrote the letter as "conspiracy theorists" and what it aired of Lesar and Wecht ^{were} ~~were~~ selected to support that angle. As I recall, neither was named. They also had dim supposed and really meaningless pictures of what were said to be fragments in Connally's thigh, I do not recall the second but do not recall it was of the one in his chest, from a book, perhaps Thompson's. What was used of Lesar was him saying that the fragments could prove by chemical tests that there had been a conspiracy. Cyril was seen saying with emotion that the demand for the recovery of those fragments is not some emotional exercise but the 'real game', the 'whole game'. As I said earlier, entirely the wrong approach.

It also showed the Dallas ^{FBI} SAC saying that he was all for the fragment recovery. As he certainly was safe in saying when he knew that the Connally family was strongly opposed to it. The brother was shown saying that firmly and with some emotion. So the way it was rigged, the FBI had the biggest ever Texas cowboy white hat on.

If the Howard statement from Dallas got any attention at all I am not aware of it. Coming from them I doubt it would outside perhaps of Dallas. They have no credibility at all and from my contacts with them deserve none.

There is no real point served in trying to assess why we failed. It is inevitable. In large part it ^{is} the corrupt media's attitude and in large part it is the justified contempt for "conspiracy theorists." Where this can be overcome, as I was able to with the AP reporter yesterday, who happens to have met me and to know me some ^{thing} ~~and~~ about me ~~more~~, there remains the desk problem and all the desks have been corrupted by the outpouring of all the zany conspiracy theories. I doubt if any has been as harmful as Liftons, with Livingstone's second. I think it will be a very unusual situation when the desk and top echelon prejudices will be overcome. It might have been yesterday with a different approach, like the excellent one you read to me before Connally's death was announced, or the one I took with the local papers. Whose reporting is coming Monday morning. What the prospects are or can be for exhumation we can't tell but the prospects are slighter than had we been prepared before death or with a different approach after it.

Howard

When Lardner did not return my earlier call yesterday I left a message on his machine in the afternoon suggesting that he consult his 9/9/78 story. That is the one in which Guinn said that the original JFK case bullet fragments had disappeared and had been replaced by those he could not account for. Ooops! wrong clipping. See over.

Connally

FRAGMENTS, From BI

cano rifle. The Warren Commission concluded that this bullet, called "the magic bullet" by some, hit both Kennedy and Connally almost simultaneously before Kennedy was hit by another, fatal bullet.

"The significance of what we're attempting to do is that these fragments must have come from that bullet according to the Warren Commission," said Cyril H. Wecht, the past president of the American Academy of Forensic Sciences and a vocal critic of the Warren Commission. "They cannot have come from anywhere else. It is the linchpin of the sole assassin conclusion. Everybody on both sides agrees."

If the fragments thought to be in the former Texas governor's body were proven to come from "399," then that "basically shows that the shot that hit Connally came from the Depository's sniper's nest," said Josiah Thompson, author of the 1967 book "Six Seconds

in Dallas." "Three-ninety-nine, the oddest bullet in history, did what the Warren Commission said it did."

If tests were to show that Connally was not hit by "399," or if the fragments turned out to have more mass than is missing from "399," then the logic becomes overwhelming that Oswald did not act alone.

George Christian, who was Connally's press secretary that day in November, was nonetheless outraged yesterday by those urging that the corpse be searched for evidence. Christian, who was serving as a Connally family spokesman, said: "I flat can't understand it. It's very offensive to come up on the day he dies and threaten to go to court. It really is outrageous. I think it ought to be dropped right now. It's just so bizarre to do something like this."

James H. Lesar, head of the nonprofit Assassination Archives and Research Center in Washington, urged Attorney General Janet Reno immediately after Connally's death to have the fragments removed.

However, even Mark Lane—who in 1966 wrote the best-selling "Rush to Judgment," a critique of the Warren Commission, and who says he hates be-

ing called a "conspiracy theorist," found the proceedings "macabre and ghoulish."

"It's not necessary to gather more evidence to prove either that more than three shots were fired that day or that the world is round," Lane said. But he added: "I think we all understand that millions of Americans believe the government of the United States at the highest possible level has not been truthful about the murder of President Kennedy. While doubt exists, it is appropriate to look at all the evidence."

Oliver Stone, director of the movie "JFK," issued a statement that said: "If the Warren Commission defenders . . . are as sure of themselves as they profess to be, they should be spearheading this effort to obtain these fragments. This is their golden opportunity to prove their case. How come we haven't heard from them?"

The reason investigators had not urged that the tiny fragments be removed before Connally's death, Wecht said, was that the surgery involved could have crippled Connally's wrist.

Thompson, meanwhile, was still upset yesterday that Connally had died; Thompson had a few last questions he had wanted to ask.

Body of Evidence: Clues Buried With John Connally

JFK Assassination Theorists Sought Bullet Fragments

6/18/93
By Joel Garreau and Jason Vest
Washington Post Staff Writers

Even as John Connally was being laid to rest yesterday, the controversy over who shot JFK wasn't.

Assassination investigators of all persuasions embraced the idea of removing one or more tiny bullet fragments from Connally's body even as that body was being interred in the State Cemetery in Austin, Tex.

"This is science as opposed to speculation," said Ron Rosenbaum, a frequent writer about the Kennedy assassination.

"It is one of the finest opportunities we've ever had," said a former staffer on the U.S. House Select Committee on Assassinations who, in the time-encrusted tradition of conspiracy theorists, insisted on anonymity. "It is the one piece of physical evidence the chain of custody of which is not questioned. It has always been in Connally's body."

Connally was riding with President Kennedy when he was killed in Dallas on Nov. 22, 1963. A bullet called "Warren Commission Exhibit 399" has been identified as coming out of Lee Harvey Oswald's Car-



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A trooper salutes as the body of former Texas governor John B. Connally is carried to lie in state at the capitol in Austin.

Connally Takes Bullet Pieces to Grave

6/18/93 By George Lardner Jr.
Washington Post Staff Writer

Former Texas governor John B. Connally was buried in an east Austin cemetery yesterday after a frantic and unsuccessful effort to get family permission to extract bullet fragments left in his body almost 30 years ago.

FBI officials in Dallas had recommended that an attempt be made to recover the evidence and settle a long-standing controversy about whether Connally was hit by the same bullet that wounded President John F. Kennedy on Nov. 22, 1963, just before Kennedy was killed by another bullet that tore into his skull.

Dallas FBI agent Oliver B. Revell said he feared that a barrage of lawsuits would be discomfiting to the Connally family in the years ahead unless the fragments were recovered. "We hate to intrude into the family's grief," Revell said a few hours before the final graveside ceremonies, "but it's going to happen sooner or later. I'm afraid the family is going to be harassed on this until it's resolved."

The "single bullet" or "magic bullet" theory was crucial to the Warren Commission's findings that Lee Harvey Oswald, acting alone, killed the president and wounded Connally as the two men rode together in a motorcade through downtown Dallas.

Connally's family and friends were upset and angry about the last-minute hubbub over the bullet fragments, which began Wednesday with requests from Kennedy assassination researchers urging the Justice Department to step in. A spokesman at Justice said officials attempted to contact the family yesterday morning after receiving the FBI recommendation but were unsuccessful.

"It's really offensive," said George Christian, a long-time Connally friend and once his press secretary. "Nobody in the Connally family that I know of ever heard of these fragments."

Revell said there was a fragment in one of Connally's thighs and perhaps some traces in a wrist. The nonprofit Assassination Archives and Research Center urged Attorney General Janet Reno on Wednesday to secure the fragments and compare them, using neutron activation analysis and other sophisticated tests, with the nearly intact bullet the Warren Commission said the pieces came from. The bullet was found on a hospital stretcher and was believed to have dropped out of Connally's thigh.

"If the family would agree and we can examine those under current technology," Revell said, "we could do one of two things. We could say, 'Yes, indeed, this was the bullet [that hit both men] and there is no basis for saying there were additional shots. But if the mass and metallurgy don't match, we've got a different ballgame.'"

Some bullet fragments were extracted from Connally's wrist at Parkland Hospital in 1963. Tests in 1977 for the House assassinations committee matched several bits with the "pristine bullet," but questions about the authenticity of the pieces arose because they did not have the same weight as fragments tested years earlier—and inconclusively—by the FBI. The FBI's fragments disappeared.

Connally's body lay in state in the state capitol for two hours yesterday morning and then was carried across the street to First United Methodist Church, where he and his wife, Nellie, were married 52 years ago.

Among those at the funeral service were former president Richard M. Nixon, Treasury Secretary Lloyd Bentsen, and Texas Gov. Ann Richards. Lady Bird Johnson delivered a eulogy, remembering that "John was always the 'can do' man, as Lyndon would say." Twenty years ago, Connally delivered a eulogy for her husband, former president Lyndon B. Johnson.

Special correspondent Elizabeth Hudson in Austin contributed to this report.