

Dear Mr. Tatro,

9/7/80

It is impossible for me to respond fully to your 8/29 and enclosures because in a week I'll be hospitalized for arterial surgery. I do not ~~ix~~ know how long it will be before I'll be able to work fully at what keeps me more than busy.

You ask about Exhibits 133A and B. I've had doubts about them and I do not trust the HSCA's experts, so I don't really know.

On the "tramp" sketch: that is not the one prepared in Memphis. It was prepared a little later in Mexico City, by an artist, so it is not "the Martin Luther King composite drawing." There also are several others prepared by the FBI from witness descriptions of various people.

The pages from the Grassy Knoll Gazette of 7/4/80 refer to and quote Guinn. On p. 9 he is quoted as having said in 8/64 that "I cannot say what we found out about Oswald..." (emphasis added) until the WH was out. If you can provide a copy of that story I'd appreciate it because it does indicate that he was in on the HAA's and all my information, from many records and deposing Gallagher and others, is that he not only was not in on them but was not trusted by the FBI.

If you have spare copies of the Nichols photos to which you refer I'd appreciate copies on the possibility of using them in litigation. Guinn's speculations about the custodians are not valid. Byantone as it may appear, there is little doubt that it was patched before the FBI dug it up and "tested" it.

The Springfield FBI stonewalled you. If you want to follow that further I suggest that you ask them to respond from their records, your request, not what was released by FBIHQ and that if the response is not satisfactory to appeal that to Ahea again, with copies of the request(s) and response(s).

If you want to butt against the CIA stonewall again you might tell them that they, supposedly, are processing all JFK assassination records and that what you asked for should be included in them, that those requests are at least 5 years old, etc., and that there is considerable public interest in knowing whether the ammo was made for the CIA, as the FBI hints, or whether the FBI was up to its usual trick of trying to put the nat on the CIA. (It did this with other matters, as I have turned over to a reporter, and I'll provide him with copies, asking him to withhold your name.) Tell them you are not asking them to do research but to either provide existing records or notify you that no pertinent record exist after a search made in good faith and with due diligence.

Flanders is no longer FBI FOIPA chief and the SA who wrote that letter, Martin Wood, has been reassigned, but the replacements are experienced stonewallers. What they sent you is from FBIHQ records only. However, I don't know what else can be in Springfield unless you do not trust the "Lin letters."

Thanks and best wishes,

NEUTRON ACTIVATION ANALYSIS UPDATE by Edgar F. Tatro

The House Select Committee on Assassinations' most convincing scientific evidence to substantiate the single-bullet theory was developed by means of neutron activation analysis, conducted by a leading authority in this field, Dr. Vincent P. Guinn, professor of chemistry at the University of California. Dr. Guinn's dramatic, expert testimony revealed that his new NAA tests did indicate that there was evidence of only two bullets in the assassination of President Kennedy, and that fragments from Governor Connally's wrist originated from CE 399, the "magic bullet". The jaws of many a Warren Commission critic must have nearly hit the floor. But this testimony, apparently compelling, tends to pale considerably upon closer inspection, as is so often the case....

Because of the complexity and relative scarcity of JFK assassination NAA data, a brief history would perhaps be in order. On November 23, 1963, the FBI conducted spectrographic tests on selected bullet fragments and specimens collected that same day, but the boys of Efrem Zimbalist Jr. fame would only state that the metallic remnants were "similar" in composition.... Such evasive wording led most critics to suspect that different bullets had been detected.

The Atomic Energy Commission became the next place of business. In May 1964, the AEC conducted NAA tests on these bullet fragments, with three specimens inexplicably excluded: one large fragment recovered from the limousine; windshield scrapings; and the Tague curb scar. For years, the fact that such tests had been conducted was a guarded secret. Still more years passed before the discovery of a suspicious little Hoover document indicating that "minor variations" did exist. Finally, through the diligent efforts of Harold Weisberg, the 57 pages of NAA handwritten notes were released, but the "grapevine" whispered that the results were "inconclusive".

Enter my friend and colleague, Emory Brown, who had the determination, foresight (foresight? - Ed.), intelligence and fortitude to muddle through the data and make sense of it all. Mr. Brown wrote a superb article about his findings in the November 1976 issue of The Continuing Inquiry. Ironically, he had contacted Dr. Guinn to obtain the necessary data for his research. Dr. Guinn sent Brown reports of his own research findings, which opened a massive can of worms. One of Dr. Guinn's reports, entitled "Forensic Neutron Activation Analysis of Bullet Lead Specimens", stated that antimony concentrations are very uniform in bullet lead specimens within individual bullets (?? - Ed.), within individual boxes of bullets, and within individual lots of bullets; that antimony was the chief focus of his work; and that bullet lead specimens with antimony standard deviations greater than 3% clearly indicate that those bullets or fragments in question originated from different lots.

For years critics have reasonably questioned where Oswald could have obtained only four bullets. What if the NAA results indicated that the fragments came from at least different lots, and perhaps completely different types of commercial ammunition altogether? Well, my friend Emory Brown toiled over the data, and the NAA results seemed to confirm his suspicions: CE 399 and the alleged Connally wrist fragments did not

exactly equate, but were within the allowed 3% differential for antimony. Brown deduced that CE 399 and the wrist fragments may have originated from similar type bullets, but not the same bullet. A similar 3% equating was determined to exist between one large limousine fragment, the three small limousine fragments, and two fragments removed from the President's head. However, the two groups did not match each other; in one instance the distinction in antimony concentration differed as much as 17%! Thus, a second gunman seemed a certainty.

Of course, most of Brown's theorizing was based on the assumption that Dr. Guinn's research paper was accurate and all-inclusive; that is, all bullet lead specimens, including Carcano bullets, had been considered.

In 1978 I received a Guinn research document from Dr. John Nichols, forensic pathologist from the University of Kansas Medical Center, which emphatically stated that Mannlicher-Carcano bullets had tremendous heterogeneous concentrations of antimony. (This document can be found in HSCA Volume 1, Appendix C, page 543.) Such is the irony of life that the exception to the rule would be these bullets! Although I have reasons to question the veracity of Dr. Guinn (which are? Ed.), who conducted this work with materials provided by Dr. Nichols, I have no reason to doubt the integrity of Dr. Nichols, who deserves only praise (What? No raise? - Ed.) for his contributions to unravelling this fiasco. At any rate, if Mannlicher-Carcano bullets do not possess homogenous strains of antimony, Guinn's 1970 research is grossly invalid and, unfortunately, so is much of Emory Brown's dedicated effort as a result of Dr. Guinn's mistake. One can only wonder if Guinn made any other errors as a consultant for the HSCA.

Dr. Guinn's NAA testimony confirmed the data Dr. Nichols had sent to me months before, on the heterogeneous nature of antimony in Carcano bullet lead specimens. Dr. Guinn then announced his findings to the panel. His new NAA statistics do correspond with the 1964 Atomic Energy Commission tests, but some serious problems have surfaced.

First, Dr. Guinn denied any previous connection with the Warren Commission. Perhaps, technically, this is true. However, Guinn did perform an NAA test on the paraffin casts of Oswald's cheeks to determine if any nitrates, not found by the routine paraffin test, could be detected. Guinn's ability to examine such crucial physical evidence in the "mystery of the century", though, was obviously not a low-level decision. Common sense dictates that, at the very least, high-level FBI administrators with close ties to Warren Commission personnel allowed this examination to take place. In August 1964, Guinn said, "I cannot say what we found out about Oswald because it is secret until the publication of the Warren Commission Report." Besides the fact that his findings were not published in the Warren Report, which is fishy itself, does the above quote (cited from the New York World-Telegram and Sun of August 28, 1964) sound like a man totally disassociated from the Warren Commission?

Secondly, Guinn explained that he was unable to perform any analysis on the same three specimens which had been excluded by the AEC in 1964. Guinn claimed that the case enclosing the windshield scrapings was simply devoid

of metal; that CE 569, a large limousine fragment, was merely a bullet's copper jacket; and, finally, that the scrapings from the Tague curb scar were worthless cement particles. He deduced that the FBI's spectrographic tests had consumed the valuable metal from the windshield and the curb. Why didn't the AEC cite these explanations in 1964 if such was the case?

In the January 1979 issue of JFK Assassination Forum, I questioned whether the absence of metal from the Tague curb was the truth, or a governmental convenience, since the lack of copper allowed only two possible explanations -- one, a head shot fragment which - improbably - flew 280 feet off course, or two, a non copper-jacketed bullet which missed its target completely. And that would spell conspiracy. The answer to the mystery is lost without neutron activation analysis, and the HSCA had no idea how James Tague came to be hit.

Another oddity, which Guinn admitted to reporters (regrettably, after his testimony), was why the 1978 test fragments do not match the 1964 test fragments in either weight, size, or number. Frankly, how the hell can that be? Of particular interest is the discrepancy in the number of fragments removed from Governor Connally's wrist. Several years ago, Dr. Nichols published three separate photos of CE 342, the wrist fragments, one taken in 1964, one in 1967, and one in 1968. The difference in fragments of the same exhibit is spelled out in sinister photographic black and white.

Finally, Guinn testified that the wrist fragments came from CE 399. He was told that the wrist fragments were the wrist fragments, but could he be the unwitting victim of a switch? In 1964, metal was removed from the nose and base of CE 399 for tests. In fact Dr. Nichols has published articles indicating that CE 399 was weighed prior to the removal of these pieces; that the weights of these amounts were not divulged; that a flake fell off CE 399 in January 1967; and that the National Archives had refused to weigh the flake or reweigh CE 399 for him. However, the key point is the fact that the metal recovered from CE 399's base has never been accounted for. Maybe the wrist fragments aren't the wrist fragments after all; maybe they're CE 399 fragments hidden away for sixteen years. Even the chain of transfer of CE 399 is totally unreliable; a few fragments would be simple enough to put aside. Frankly, at this point, anything is possible. (Sigh... - Ed.)

One last addendum was recently sent to me by Peter Erbe, who corresponded with Nurse Audrey Bell, who drew for him the approximate number and size of the fragments she claims were removed from Governor Connally's wrist. In her own words, Nurse Bell wrote, "...the fragments we removed in surgery were more than was needed to support the 'one-bullet' theory." If her perceptions are honest and accurate, my head swirls with the possible deceptions that have been perpetrated upon all of us all these years. No matter how dramatic, compelling, or convincing the "hard" scientific evidence appears to be, I have learned in life to assume nothing, except that the government cannot investigate the government.

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