

1/10/72

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Dear Dr. Lattimer,

Your great coup in getting to see with withheld evidence of the Kennedy assassination and the various reports attributed to you interest me so greatly I write you immediately although I should not be using the typewriter, having suffered a painful accident Saturday, in which I almost lost a thumb. As you may recall, I have done a considerable amount of work with other unrelated evidence, have written more extensively on the subject than any other and plan more writing. In this writing I would like, of course, to quote you accurately. One of the reasons for haste in writing is because I am now writing on just this evidence. I hope you will be able to respond promptly.

First of all, I am fascinated that a urologist rather than a forensic pathologist was given such a clean sweep in access when the contract, with which you may not be familiar, specifies pathologists. Can this be attributed to personal friendships? It can't be to priority in application, for I did that the day the transfer was announced. Have you any explanation for your selection to be the first, if not the only one? I think you can see an added relevance in this question when you understand that you alone among those who applied have agreed publicly with the conclusions of the Commission.

I am familiar with your writing on the single-bullet theory, although it has been some time since I read it. Therefore, first I address what I recall of your last night's appearance on CBS-TV. There you said that the rear, non-fatal wound was higher. How can you account for your placing it higher than both the Commission and its numerous medical witnesses, all those used as observers, and the Clark panel, with whose work I presume you are familiar. If, indeed, it was higher, and the Warren Commission was correct in its Report, does not locating it higher discredit the Commission? Can both of you be correct in talking about the flight of a single bullet?

You said you found a path through the body for this bullet. I'd like to know how, in what pictures or X-rays. I have the identifications itemized by the panel and will be able to identify from this inventory. It is my impression that no track was ever actually traced by dissection, hence I cannot understand the existence of any film showing it. Moreover, you referred to several bullet fragments in the body. From my understanding, with all the medical experts without any exception having sworn that the fragments they saw exceeded what can be accounted as missing from Bullet 399 without reference to these fragments, I am, naturally, wondering how you find this authenticates the Report and how you can say these fragments came from that bullet and no other.

Your references to the wrist wound were slight, but if you plan any writing, may I suggest that you consult the testimony of the Dallas doctors who saw and debrided it? Unless they have told you other than they swore to, it is their testimony that in the wrist alone more fragments were deposited than can be account as missing from 399. You referred to having interviewed these doctors. I think all of us writing in this field would welcome any new information from them.

You said it was 399, not any other bullet or fragment of bullet that caused the wound in Governor Connally's thigh. If you can establish this you have indeed made a significant contribution. However, all the considerable evidence I have gathered is uniform in establishing this as an impossibility. I would therefore particularly welcome proof of this. I also have interviewed Dallas doctors, not one of whom said this. And, naturally, I am interested in how you determined this from that of which you were talking, the evidence to which you had just been granted access.

You seem to have made no reference to the so-called fatal wound. There are differences in location and measurement relating to both this wound and the other rear one. If you may find these differences slight, my interest is in the most exact location and description possible, so I would be interested if you were able to reconcile the differences between the autopsy/Commission descriptions and those of the panel.

Your pinpointing of what you describe as the exit wound in the front of the neck, on CBS and to Fred Graham, lead to these questions: how could you identify it as an exit wound rather, say, than one of entrance after the tracheostomy, and on what picture or pictures did you see it? I found no single reference to any picture of the front of the neck.

With reference to the head, were you able to prove that all the damage was done by a single bullet and were you able to establish that it was a full-jacketed military bullet? Did you find an evidence inconsistent with either a single shot or this ammo? You seem to have done considerable work with ammo. Putting this another way, did you find anything to indicate that perhaps a different kind of ammo may have been used? I presume that if there is such evidence, it would be in the X-rays. Which reminds me, were you able to establish that these are all the X-rays taken and that all remain in perfect condition? I believe you did not see all the X-rays taken. Had you the knowledge or means to check this, to establish it either way? Please do not infer what I do not intend, the suggestion that you deliberately suppressed. I am aware that what you said may not have been used or quoted, particularly when TV permits such short excerpting. Even in a long news story, the reporter can't possibly include everything. However, I hope you can understand that others than you have an interest in this, and I would be hesitant to believe you were given access to this evidence, public information, on an exclusive basis, that it becomes your property and that of no others. On the other hand, if you so understood it or if this was the situation, I think it should be clear.

Did you find any evidence of any other wounds or any reason to suspect any? I have in my possession certain evidence that while not beyond reasonable question can be so interpreted. So, this is not an idle question.

What Mr. Graham quotes of the brace and bandage interests as because I have had a back injury since 1939. I have, intermittently, worn a variety of such braces. I have never worn or seen one that would permit sitting and preclude falling over. Moreover, I have never seen or heard of one not equipped with straps to prevent riding up, hence I can't follow the alleged use of the bandage for this purpose. I can conceive that the bandage was used to comfort an area not protected by the brace, below it, but not that this also could preclude falling over. I realize this is consistent with what you have written earlier, that the President was prevented from falling, but did you find any proof of this in what you saw? If you understand that I have fallen when so braced you can, perhaps, better understand this question. Nor was I ever prevented from sitting.

Fred Graham quotes you as saying that what you have now seen and it alone "eliminates completely any doubt completely that Oswald alone fired all the shots that struck the President." I ask what you saw that can in any way prove who fired what shots and with what. I can understand that other evidence can lead to this belief, but this is not how you are quoted, nor is it the way I think you were on CBS last night. Nor, presumably, the reason you were permitted to see this evidence. My bewilderment is compounded by the interview I have just seen on the CBS TV morning news, in which you conceded that 399

could have struck Kennedy alone. Do you not realize that this, in itself, is total refutation of the Warren Report? On this, you say you could not see how a bullet like this 399 could have been recovered in such perfect condition. With what you have earlier written about your own extensive work with bullets, frankly, this astounds me. If you would like to see not one but more, please be my guest. One was done for me by a rank amateur. It is identical same. And I have still another, found in Dealey Plaza. Further on this, Graham quotes you as saying that only one whole bullet was recovered. Did you not see or ask to see the second? Did you not know of it? Did you see the spectrographic analyses of the bullets and various fragments? If you asked, were you denied? If you did not see this, how can you validate any single one of your comments? And if you did not ask to or did not know of it, does this not characterize all of your effort?

Graham quotes you as having seen a total of 65 pieces of various film. Is this the accurate total, of all or both kinds? His only reference is to color transparencies. Did you see any color prints?

Graham quotes you as saying nobody on the Commission ever saw any of the film? Is this accurate? If so, what is your source. My information is to the contrary. If you are not prepared to challenge or disprove my statement, how does this influence what you said, if it does? Let me be frank and tell you that such statements make me doubt the extent of your scholarship and research, so I ask the extent to which you have studied the published and unpublished evidence, my point being that since you were selected to be the single one to see this evidence, and Mr. Marshall is quoted as saying that your known position in support of the official explanation had nothing to do with your selection, do you, in fact, qualify as a genuine expert, especially when compared with others.

In a way this leads to your comment on the drawing and your statement that it makes it seem that the bullet was travelling almost parallel with the ground. Can it be that you are this unfamiliar with what the Commission really said? My handicap precludes getting you the precise reference, but when the decline in the street, which you seem to have ignored, was added, I think the Commission gave the angle as about 17 degrees, which is hardly parallel with the ground. Or, are you unfamiliar with the published reconstruction pictures, with the car, where again parallel would appear to be one of the less applicable descriptions?

You are quoted as saying that anyone firing from the front would have had to have been squatting in the car. How did you eliminate the possibility of front entrance? You said on CBS this morning that you actually saw the track of a single bullet, something no other expert has said and all who have been directly quoted have denied, including those who did the autopsy. How have you eliminated the possibility of, say, a bullet entering the front and being deflected to elsewhere in the body? Did you see full body X-rays? You do have fragments to account for, and the Commission did say, as did the autopsy, that 399 struck no bone in the President's body. Do you dispute this? If you do, how can you be interpreted as validating the Report?

From what you say, you have to have seen a picture of the anterior neck wound. The inventory I have lists not one. Did you? Does it show the presence or absence of "a circular bruise" such as you describe on the back? If you did not see such a picture, head on, how can you justify the quotes as a scientific observation, the presumed purpose of your access?

Your denial of any firing from the fronts prompts the question, how did you establish no more than a single head wound, as a matter of science, based on what you saw, as distinguished from your well-known opinion? Especially with an explosion there? And is what you saw of the head wounds exactly as the Commission said, what the autopsy says?

Graham says you examined the clothing. Does it shed any light on the other evidence? Does it dispute any of it? Is it in pristine condition? Is your scholarship such that you feel you can have an opinion on these things? Did you have any reason to believe it has or can have any meaning other than attributed to it by the various official reports?

Do you feel that penetration of 47 inches of pines, which I presume comes from your personal work, is a fair equivalent of the history attributed to 399? Are you aware that when CBS duplicated this history, and then eliminated anything to replace the Connally rib, they found no single bullet capable of that penetration?

Returning to the Graham quotes and your today's appearance on CBS, I ask again how anything you saw could in any way address Oswald as either an assassin or the only one? You are, of course, entitled to your opinion. But what you have done is go farther, ~~that~~ to give a pre-existing opinion. You have now said that you have seen evidence proving this. I therefore ask what this evidence is and how it proves what you have said, on the basis of this evidence only, not preconception, the latter being your right, but not in the present context without support in the evidence you have been shown.

How did this evidence permit you to establish that Bullet 399 had, in fact, been in any human tissue, the President's or the governor's? You said this and at the same time today you said you were your own devil's advocate. You also said you had the poor folks at the Archives run things back and forth for you. Are you saying that you are a) an expert and b) have not seen the Zapfider and other film until now? What else is there that they could run back and forth for you?

In asking for and getting access to this public information, and some of it is official evidence, you have undertaken a considerable obligation I hope you will meet squarely. This does not and cannot legally become your exclusive property. You therefore have, as I see it, the obligation to make response to questions asked of you about it and your comment on it. Otherwise, you are no better than a propagandist. I do not think you consider this of yourself and I certainly do not want to. I will be writing of this and the very last thing I would want to say is that you were given this exclusive access while lacking the proper qualifications, would not say what you saw when asked, would not describe or list what you saw, would not face challenge on your interpretations of what you saw or separate this from your preconceptions, ~~and~~ that there is any reasonable question about your being given exclusive access or what you said thereafter. In other words, this is not an unfriendly letter unless you abdicate the very considerable obligations you undertook, unless you answer evasively or do not answer at all. What you have said is currently getting enormous attention throughout the world. I think it is, therefore, incumbent upon you to make immediate response. If writing presents a problem, could you please use a tape recorder? I will then get the tape transcribed and provide you with a copy.

Sincerely,

Harold Weisberg