

3/8/78

Dear Charles Nelson,

Thanks for the reassurances of your letter of 3/4. It might surprise you to know how many of the college assassination courses are irresponsible.

Glad you have been in touch with Dave Wrona.

The name Richard Lester did not register. The story does. I think you will hear no more of it. You should not, in any event because there is nothing to it.

Some years ago I loaned the FBI a perfect bullet a friend of mine had found in a Dealey Plaza planter. On its return the agent read me a statement saying no more than what I had told the FBI, that it could not have been fired during the assassination.

People do these ghoulish things. The bullet my friend found had been fired into a water tank or cotton wadding. It was unblemished.

Assume Lester's story to be true. It still can't have any connection with the assassination.

My recollection of the accounts this bring back to mind is that he is quoted as saying he found the bullet near the tracks. Not exactly the same as this but take this account" railroad property along Elm Street. There is no way for that bullet to have gotten there during assassination firing without leaving other traces, like a hole in the fence or damage to the concrete structures. I doubt if it was possible even then without the rifleman being up on one of the taller buildings to the east. The sheriff's building? The courts building - and not seen leaving? With a rifle?

The area in which he says he found it is pretty well shielded. That day cars also were parked close by if not between the place he found it and the places from which a shot could have come.

If Lester is straight the most likely explanation is that somebody was playing a practical joke.

In addition to the story you quote there were wire stories. I have a shorter AP version and probably more I'm not taking time to search out.

Of course I'd like to be wrong and for there to be some way of connecting another shot with the crime that will be believed, the solid proof of it to now not having been believed.

The FBI won't do it. They'll limit or have limited to the markings on 399 because they work not from fact but from assumptions. In this case the assumption the Oswald rifle fired all the shots. With that bullet it would have been physically impossible, if that rifle had been used in the crime. The FBI knew this. It was playing games.

Best wishes,

DRAKE UNIVERSITY

DES MOINES, IOWA 50311

Department of History

March 4, 1978

Mr. Harold Weisberg
Route 12
Old Receiver Rd.
Frederick, Maryland 21701

Dear Mr. Weisberg:

Thank you for the prompt shipment of the books I ordered. They arrived in excellent condition. I will zerox OINO in the next few days and return the book and a zerox copy as soon as possible.

From my questions you inferred that I go in for "wild theorizing" in my JFK Assassination course. The inference was justified by my queries, but I wish to assure you that my presentation to my students (over 350 in three years) carefully avoids such "wild theorizing." I've designed the course to focus upon the historical development of the controversy since that is my academic interest in the subject. I've been in correspondence with David Wrone at Stevens Point and hope to chat with him at the annual convention of the Organization of American Historians next month in New York City. Thanks for the name of Gerald McKnight at Hood College. I intend to contact him soon.

My question about the Richard Lester bullet is based upon a news report in the Des Moines Register on January 6, 1977. The report came from a copyrighted story by Jeremiah O'Leary in the Washington Star. Following is the relevant part:

The FBI said Wednesday that it needs the test bullets from Oswald's rifle to make comparisons with the new bullet that was found by a Dallas man in November, 1974, but was not disclosed by him until last month.

Richard Lester of Dallas Wednesday said he found the mangled bullet with the aid of a metal detector in the ground about 61 steps from the Texas School Book Depository --the building from which Oswald was accused of firing the shots that killed Kennedy. Asked why he did not come forward until now, Lester said: "Because it was on railroad property and I didn't want them to get it from me. But when I

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-2-

heard the investigation was being reopened I decided to make it known."

Lester's first disclosure about the bullet was made on a talk show on Dallas radio station KRLD on Nov. 22, 1976. The discovery was then published by the Times-Herald and it was then that Lester went to the Dallas FBI office with the bullet.

Sources said the bullet is so badly mangled that it is not possible to determine the caliber. The FBI laboratory has made exhaustive examinations of the Lester bullet and now is in the position where it cannot determine whether it is pertinent to the Kennedy case without making physical comparison to the Oswald bullets in custody of the National Archives.

Lester--a semiretired security guard in Dallas-- said he discovered the bullet near the spot where Kennedy was shot by going to the railroad overpass and walking over the ground toward the building from which Oswald fired the shots on a line of sight. He said his detector indicated metal in the ground about 61 steps in front of and to the left of the book building. The bullet was buried in about three inches of earth and appeared to have been mashed as if it had glanced off something.

Since O'Neill has refused to give the FBI the original bullets and Sprague is protesting the request, the FBI is now expected to place the custody controversy before the attorney general for resolution.

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COLLEGE OF LIBERAL ARTS

-3-

Since reading that report I've seen no other reference to the outcome of ^{the}dispute associated with FBI efforts to compare the Lester bullet with the bullets in the National Archives. -

Professor Wrone was kind enough to send me a copy of his "The Tools of the Historian and the Assassination of John F. Kennedy, The Evidentiary Base: A Critical Evaluation of the Basic Findings of 200 Investigators over the Last 14 Years." I fully agree with his assertion that you have "a magisterial command of the documentary base" and have made an "enormous contribution." And I agree with you and Wrone about the value of Roffman's Presumed Guilty.

I learned the other day that David Belin (who last year spoke to my class and of course defended himself, particularly with regard to the Givens testimony) will present the Commencement Address to Roosevelt High School here in DSM.

Wishing to you success in your continuing efforts on behalf of the American people, I remain

Sincerely Yours,



Charles A. Nelson