

4/21/70

Dear Howard,

There is a potentially great value in your Nichols interview and, assuming you told him no more than you record, no less great danger of your having out him in a position to louse more up. You paid no attention to my appraisal of his character, avoided any recall of his established ego/greed/dishonesty, and I will explain what + mean below.

He handled you much better than you are aware, told you virtually nothing he hadn't told me (notable exception, seeing the Connally picture), and apparently I am well aware of the friendship and trust between us. His more recent exploits consist of interviewing witnesses relatives, in areas of the case of which, as you noted, he has no knowledge, to establish what he regards as my errors. John has begun to run some kind of campaign against me, for reasons I may never be able to isolate.

That his 399 base picture shows what I spotted in yours is important because, from what I recall of what you said, it was taken earlier than yours. I have dated it at about ~~May~~ E/68. When was yours taken? I think it is important to establish how soon after mine were taken it was doctored. This is important to do before I get this into court for reasons at this point I will not tell anyone.

People working on the same material in different ways all have their own rights to do what they would do, to believe what they will, etc. But when you knew what I was doing with the Archives on those tabs, I regard it as a serious breach to have gone into this with him. The original concept that the shirt was never touched by a bullet is mine. You have every right to follow this up as you please, but especially when you knew what John is and has been up to, you made a very serious blunder to tell him these things. You have his immediate reaction, that of an octopus at best. I am really disappointed in this, particularly because as soon as he starts crapping around with it he will immediately jeopardize the negotiations in which I am engaged and of which I have kept you au courant. I go into this not to give you hell, for at this point that would serve no purpose, but so that you can perhaps understand why I cautioned you in advance and got your promise you would tell him nothing. Howard, for your years you are fantastic, but as I believe I've told you before, you must learn that there is but so much you have been able to learn of your own experience, especially about the seamier parts of life and people and especially about deceptive people who design their deceptions. There is a proper tendency in all of us to communicate what we can to others who we always want to believe have the best intentions, identical with our own. Alas, too many are not this way, as you are learning.

When he says his Archives pictures cannot be copies, this is nonsense, which is the reason I extracted his promise to neither copy nor use before I showed him my work. If you want to see pictures stamped by the Archives and identified as his, come look at them. The Archives, and properly, makes all pictures accessible. I might prefer otherwise, but this is their concept. All he can copyright is what he didn't, and that is his use or interpretation. Where you refer to his theft of Dick's work, you say, as though it exonerates, that he took his own pictures. In a sense, this is even more dishonest and devious, as it is with 399. I now have two interests in his 399 base picture: to establish, for my own protection, since his verbal promise was later repeated in writing, that he cribbed, and to establish the date of alteration. I hope you did not mention alteration to him. Did you? Please describe his mm scale so I can help identify that negative at the Archives. If you can recall, any other deviations from mine. Jesus Christ, I now see "I regret I did not bring my own pictures for comparison"! Please try and recall what you did tell him and please be honest if you did blab.

May I also point out to you that you are aware of lawsuit I plan to file and for which I am preparing? Have I not also told you that their refusal to provide what they have can be more useful than its presentation? I agree it is important that we get this picture. You know for how long I have been trying. You know for how long I have been trying to get them to take a picture of it for me on a scale, etc. I have delayed asking to go over all their negatives for several reasons; one is to have a better idea of John's. Another is to give them a chance for more crookedness, which I'd welcome, especially because I think I have all the essential evidence on this. You have not yet seen the new picture I have had taken. I think it shows what you call the notch and I think it is more or less of a "v". The lighting and angle are different than yours, which I think helps. Have you yet tumbled to one of the obvious reasons there had to be alteration, or did I tell you?

I welcome the intelligence he did not stop with duplicating one of my pictures.

What he told you of the spectro is true. Also old. It is in NW. Isolation can be to the batch or run. I do not think he levelled with you on his reasons for suing for it because I think they also come from NW, but he never admits anything like that. His reasons are entirely too inadequate. One would be could they have been of the conjectured type at all. Another is are all but the Connally wrist fragment from the same batch, etc.

JBC chest X-rays: this may be significant. It is not new that the blow was glancing, but it is that no metal shows because there is no doubt it did. This makes me wonder if they also were substituted. Remember how I go into this in NW and PM, with Shires ordering and reading and with the deception by Hankin? I have, by the way, and though I'd showed you, the proof that Bell did handle the fragments. It is in the appendix to PM. I have what is as close as I expect to get to a complete tracing, to the cop, etc. Can you explain how she is the key, not any of the others? Re the first complete paragraph on your 4th page, Shaw's testimony corroborates. He said there was more metal missing in the wrist alone, etc.

Fisher-brain also not new. Answered my letters to government and Fisher. I asked Fisher this question, without specifying what he'd asked for but didn't get.

Whether or not radiological record was made, Navy wrote me they turned everything over. I do not believe this precludes their having kept any copies. It is utter nonsense to say they did not see the X-rays at the autopsy, that the radiologist turned the results over by phone. They were explained as they were shown to the four agents present, all of whom say this. However, this could be true of those of the extremities. Probing for bullet: he told me this long ago and asked me not to use it, so I didn't even though it was independently volunteered to me by a radiologist. However, there is this obvious possibility: the probing was done before the X-rays were dry. A tiny fragment of bullet is like a fluorescent light in an X-ray. Once the agents saw the "stars" they'd certainly have seen the bigger object and asked about it, had there been a bullet. John's point is that only a stupe would probe, because the X-rays would show a bullet.

That is John's ego again when he says Fischer has cancelled because of his suit. It is my correspondence and threat of a suit. John filed his suit a year ago. If it were that, Fischer would never have accepted. I do not regard this as material, for other things could also have caused it. but I cite it to give you an understanding of John. Fisher spoke to him and told him things after he filed his suit.

If you will now reread the third from your last paragraph two things will be clear, in addition to the reason for my opening complaint: despite your repeated assurances, you blabbed about things you were not supposed to talk about and this is a man of enormous ignorance and carelessness. He gave you a remarkable self-indictment of himself as a forensic expert, knowing this little of the basic evidence.

Now let me point out what you should have spotted for yourself: he went to you after going over my work at the copyright office.

Does this not open your eyes even more?

His telegram to me is dated the 15th. He saw you the 16th. The telegram says he has read PM and TM III.

All of this disturbs me no less than I have conveyed. I am more troubled by my own lack of judgement that at your transgressions, for I am old enough to know the limitations of 16-year experience and I now feel I placed too heavy a burden on it. I fear that at some point I'm going to get paranoid as hell, have nothing to do with anyone, go my own way, get my own writing done instead of spending an enormous amount of time trying to inform others and help them with their work, get no one to try and help me, and have much less of the aggravation that is no so burdensome to me.

Do you better understand why I wrote as I did about your Lifton correspondence? You just cannot cope with such people, and this is not from any lack of intelligence or any other fault on your part. It is just that you are honest and haven't yet been subjected to enough of the crookedness in the world, special aspects of which are typified by Nichols and Lifton, who I now suspect are and have been hand in hand for some time.

If I didn't ask you, how did you and John get in touch with each other? Did he initiate it with you? If so, when and how? Did he tell you what he was doing in the east, why a busy man spent this time and money to see a 16-year-old?

Howard, you simple must not do this or anything like it again. You may have done very much harm to what we seek in common and I know you have done what I also know you did not intend, harm to me. I know it puts you in a bad position, but I am already in a worse one, having trusted you with everything I have. I must insist you once you know those who have made themselves my enemies you have no intercourse whatever with any of them. I cannot very well ask you to return the knowledge I have trusted you with, can I?

Meanwhile, I'd like you to review your meeting in your own mind and report anything that you now might regard in any different kind of light, anything that might have what we might call a counter-intelligence value for me, tell me what he was trying to get from you that he hadn't gotten from the books. Also, did he say anything about me you didn't report, or ask any such questions? He may have been wily enough not to have been so obvious, but let me not overlook the obvious.

You know, Howard, when I was ill and had this enormous amount of my own work to do, I dropped everything and took the time writing a book would have taken to help his suit. This is not because of any great love I bear him. It is because his suit was that incompetent, his knowledge of the law and fact that deficient, I had to do this for all of us. I tell or repeat this so you will understand another aspect of the hazard involved in your blabbing. Sincerely,

4/21/70

Dear Dick,

writing the enclosed to Howard was not easy and I feel he may take it hard, as he should. That was perhaps he will learn. The temptation to show off to a man who to him is so expert and learned was, of course, great for one so young. My liking for Howard is undiminished, but I'd never have trusted him as I have if I'd know he would thereafter start communication with everyone in the world, including those who have made themselves my enemies and especially two who have set about systematically stealing whatever they could.

I take certain things I have not indicated from that part Howard has communicated and what I'd known, some of which is in my letter to him. Some of them can be very hurtful to us. Do not underestimate John's ego or its and his capabilities, especially when he is caught at his dishonesty, which he will not admit to himself is dishonesty. One clue I'll give you is the possibility he may have his own strange way of proving, especially to himself, that he is not dishonest.

Another can be reflected by the possibility he was not dissembling to Board when he indicated ignorance of the content of the books he allegedly read just the day before.

If I tell you no more, it is because I want you to reach your own conclusions, if any, and not to feed what I see as possibilities back to me. I have, I think, given you only hints.

Do you think John needed a hotel room to see Howard? Did he go to Phils for any reason other than to see Howard?

If he was not east for some scientific gathering or anyother similar thing, then I would read more into all of this. Did he, for example, take this time, spend this money, just to see my books, one of which he had read not less than twice by his own letters, and to see Howard? Of course, he may also have been at the Archives. I'll learn that, in time, if he was.

However, the chief reason for this letter is that I have to take my wife to town and I want to mail the letter to Howard immediately. This and Skolnick at the same time are not good. Because of his liking for and respect for you, he may write you about my letter. If he does, please assure him of what he may want to know, that I have told you my liking for him and my respect for him and what he has done are undiminished even though I am disappointed that he has made problems needlessly and after being forewarned. We just cannot isolate ourselves from each other and we can and must learn to respect the confidences of others and to learn not to trust those we know we cannot. You should realize that John was telling Howard nothing that wasn't known save that picture, but he impressed him with the impression he was sharing secrets and treating him as an equal. At 16, how could Howard not be overwhelmed? So, you see why I told him I thought it best he have no intercourse with Lifton, where he has an excellent prospect of doing the same wrong things. One of the problems bestowed by a high intelligence and an earned confidence in it is the concomitant overconfidence that often exists. But God, what an awful drain on my time and life for the recent years it has been trying to forestall so many of these things and then to try and minimize them!

Sincerely,

4/16/70

CONFIDENTIAL: to Harold and Dick  
re-meeting with John Nichols today

I met with Dr. Nichols today at 12:00 in his room at the Adelphia hotel in town. We spent about 2½ hours together which included lunch. Unfortunately, there was no way for me to tape our talk, but I think some valuable things may have come of it. Therefore, I record all of my recollections.

Dr. Nichols had with him a 5 x 7 loose leaf book which contained a good many of his pictures. He went through this page by page with me, explaining most of the pictures.

The first series were of the set up for his rifle tests with Mannlicher-Carcanos, of which he has or has had about 15. His test rifle is identical to CE 139 except 4 inches have been sawed off of the barrel to accommodate for the distances at which he must shoot. He has fired through wrists, pine boards and mattresses. He showed me one picture of the penetration of pine boards which would be the equivalent of 4 men plus. He indicated that the MC has fantastic penetrating abilities and a "single-bullet" as the WC postulates would not have stopped in the thigh. I mentioned the relatively modest penetration which CBS got in their tests but he couldn't explain the discrepancy.

He showed me a series of comparison photos of the bullets he has fired in his experiments. He pulls the bullets from the cases before firing them so he can weigh them. He said that based on comparisons of fired and non-fired bullets the weights of which he knew and could compare before and after, he has concluded that about 2/10 of a grain of metal come off in firing. Then he showed me pictures of his tests bullets fired into wrists and ribs. These were all severely mutilated. He said, however, that he has never obtained a bullet which has lost as much weight as 399 is alleged to have lost. I forgot to point out to him that it is possible that 399 lost no weight.

Next he showed me two pictures of 399 he had taken in the Archives. He prefaced what he told me about these by saying that all special photos he has the A prepare he has copyrighted so they cannot be copied. Now, the reason for the pictures he had made he asked me to keep confidential, so I cannot reveal them.

The first picture was of the 399 base. The set-up was similar to Harold's photo, except the angle is more like my own and John's own mm scale is used; there is no conceivable way it could be confused with Harold's. As soon as I looked at it, I knew it could be the most important of the base pictures--the "missing link." I could be wrong, and regret that I did not bring my own pictures for comparison. On the ridge which Harold and I think has been removed between the taking of our pictures, there is a very noticeable notch. I have seen nothing like on either of our photos, and do not think I am mistaken. I think it is imperative that we get a copy of this picture from the A. If what I saw is true, then we may have the reason for the A's failure to give us the real Nichols picture and producing "Harold's as Nichols".

The second 399 picture was almost identical to another Harold had taken--a side view. The lighting was not quite the same,

however, and certain other features are visible, or accented.

He added that the Archives had already made for him a color transparency of the 399 base. I asked if any residues were on it and he replied no. I noted the explicit testimony of Frazier in N<sup>o</sup> that nothing was on the bullet. John said that this is so, but that it could have been wiped clean. He said we now need to put 399 in a saline solution, test for proteins and then determine if the proteins are human or animal. Then we will know for sure.

At some point he interjected that he is suing for the spectro to determine if 399 left fragments in JBC's wrist. He said that once he found ~~abt~~ about fragments in JFK neck, he knew that 399 did not go through the neck. He says that the spectro cannot tell specifically if fragments came from the same bullet since two bullets could be made of the same batch of metal. As a control, he said we'd have to compare comp of 399 to metal fragment from head. He said however that any difference would be conclusive that the fragments did not come from 399. This applies to any and all comparisons. He said the thing to look for is percent of ~~XXXXX~~ trace metals, that the general comp of lead for bullets today is 98% lead, 1.5% antimony plus some bismuth and arsenic. The copper is about 92% copper and 8% zinc.

I think we next went on to his work with the trajectory through JFK neck, mostly illustrated with sketches plus photos of other bodies of same build as JFK. He showed the back of a man on who 14cm below mastoid was measure standing up. He showed a side view of same guy with the angle from 6th floor window projected from position of ant. neck wound. The location it defined posteriorly was significantly higher than the 14cm mark even when the body was standing up. I pointed out the difference in a prone position, and he cautioned that we do not know the exact position of body.

He said that bullet had to come at least 28 degrees from right in order to not hit bone. I then told him in strict confidence that the fragments were adjacent to tip of transverse process of 7th cervical and described their character. He thought for a moment and replied that this contradicted what Fisher had told him. Here he interjected that he used to be but is no longer friendly with Fisher. He said Fisher told him that the fragments were very, very fine which accords with what Morgan told me. However, Fisher told him that the fragments stretched out in a path across the neck. This is elliptically implied in Fisher's first to me, and could be a difference in readings by Fisher and Morgan.

I forget the exact details of his work on the neck shot, but he laughed very heartily whenever he came to things such as the autopsy doctors' drawings for their testimonies, as well as the various pictures illustrating SBT, saying that all were nonsense.

At some point here I interjected that I knew some generally unknown things about the head wounds. I told him that the panel reveals a 6.5mm fragment in the entrance wound in head. He was surprised to hear that and admitted he hadn't noticed it before. He said that it sounds impossible and shook his head. He said it would almost certainly mean a lead projectile, even a revolver bullet if he didn't know the circumstances of this shooting. He said that

this wouldn't come from the MC which travels too fast. He said that he has fired some 200 hundred rounds of it and all have gone off properly--nothing wrong.

From this we got into a discussion of the cartridge case bases, and he asked me if Dick had informed me of the mistakes Frazier made with these. He said that he has included this in his suit only to further embarrass the gov't by making Frazier look bad. He said he really has no need for the cases. He added that Frazier made another mistake which renders almost all of his testimony invalid--as if he did not know what he were talking about. He said that Frazier testified before WC that the MC cocks itself (pulls the firing pin back) when the bolt is closed. However, he said that all of his MC's, which are identical to the 139, cock themselves when the bolt is open. He has the one used at the Shaw trial which Frazier said was mechanically identical to 139 and that cocks itself upon opening.

One of his sketches of the neck wounding showed that, had the bullet gone on through as the WC says, it could not have bruised the lung. He added something which confirmed my original thinking, and which I seriously mistook from Fillinger. I intend to clarify this in correspondence for it could be important. He said that it is common for the pleura to be contused from the passage of a missile which did not actually penetrate it. However, he said that it is next to impossible for this to have happened to the lung unless the lung itself was penetrated by a bullet. He explained, and this is what I want to get details on, that the pleura and the lung are two entirely different tissues and are fed blood by entirely different arteries. I reminded him that there was not only a bruise to the pleura but also to the lung. He seemed positive that the lung was penetrated then.

We got to talking about Connally's wound when we came to his photos of the JBC X-rays. He said that he examined the chest ones and found no metal fragments on it. He also said that the X-ray proved that the rib wasn't directly hit by the bullet, that is it wasn't hit head on. He said it was without a doubt a tangential strike. He showed me that there is a fracturing where the bullet first contacted the rib. Had this been head on, an even hole would have been produced like that which is illustrated on CE 400, Finck's chart. He said that tangential striking deforms a bullet much more than head on striking.

When he brought up Finck's chart, he added that this was nonsense, and did not at all apply to the President's head wounds. The chart has a level area being hit straight on. Yet, on JFK, a curved area was hit tangentially. He said that with a "399", the head would have just exploded at that point, and no even entrance would have been produced. He said this can happen with slower stuff--revolvers and 22's but not what the WC alleges.

He has a fantastic picture of the fragments removed from JBC wrist. He has no doubt that they are authentic but has every doubt that others are missing--that something is suspicious. He says the key to these fragments is nurse Audrey Bell, who Harold took interest in in Bishop's book. He points out that while Bell is mentioned on the envelop in CE 842, her name is not on the operative record of the wrist job. There is something else

he mentioned which involved turning the fragments over to the police, but I forget the details. He has talked to Curry about the misidentification in his book but got little response.

His photo of the wrist fragments (CE 842) shows what I have always suspected--there are three fragments, not two. The A made a photo of them for Tink which shows only 2 (Six Secs, p. 147). The one missing from the picture Tink prints is slightly bigger and more jagged than the smaller one in the Tink photo. I pointed out to John what shows up quite well in his picture--the very straight and clean edge of the larger fragment. I said that this did not seem possible on such an irregular fragment. He agreed and said he would not be surprised if Frazier just sliced a piece off for analysis. He has written the A for an explanation of why only 2 fragments appear in Tink's photo. I suspect Tink was duped.

We then came to the cartridge case pictures which both Harold and Dick have and which Dick used in his abortive article. John told me that these were photos of a test he had done which proved that the shoulder dents were made after the cases were fired. He also said that the mouth dent in CE 543 was from dry run firing, that he produces them all the time.

He said that one of the things he is suing for is the structure from the brain, not the brain or slides for the court could rule that personal property. He laughed on this matter. I gave my suggestion of a tag. He said it could be a piece of paper towel or even the unrolled jacket of a bullet. A jacket, however, would show up on X-rays.

We discussed the brain here a little and this must be kept absolutely confidential. He told me that Fisher told him that he had asked that the Panel be allowed to see the brain but was turned down. He also told me that the Armed Forces Institute of Pathology (AFIP) told him that the brain and tissue slides were turned over to them shortly after the autopsy and they in turn turned them over to the Archives. He said, however, that the Archives has told him that the brain and the slides are not there. He seems confident that they are in the A, but nevertheless is satisfied that one of the two is caught in a lie.

He also told me of something for which he is suing but has to add to the suit. This too must be absolutely silent. He said that it is Navy regulations that a radiologist must write down his observations immediately on a special form. He told me the number of the form but I forget. The form is made in triplicate, and should still be around today if it was ever filled out. The A says it does not have it so he is suing for it. This would tell for sure if the neck fragments were seen. X

In this connection, he believes Finck's NO test that they did not see the body X-rays--just head. He also thinks that Humes' testimony here is false. He says that the radiologist studied the X-rays and phoned the results in. Otherwise, they would never have probed for a bullet. If you have X-rays there, then it is a matter of seconds before you know if there is or is not a bullet in body--just look at the film. After that you just cut the bullet out.



At one point he mentioned something about Con being hit at 236 to 238--I think this was after he mentioned having spoke with Connally two weeks ago. I told him that I was certain he had been hit at 226 and explained a) the total incongruity of a 236-238 hit and b) the indicators of a 226 hit. I pointed out that cheek puff was definate sign of impact and had to occur after impact; he agreed. Yet, I said, the cheek beings puff in 237 and shoulder sumps in 238--it should slupm immediatly with impact, momentum transfer--instantaneous. He was a little taken back but agreed with me. I also pointed out that a bullet hitting JBC at 237 would have knocked him forward yet he continues his rearward turn.

We talked about Fisher a little. He siad that Fisher is very reluctant to speak about this at all. Fisher was supposed to speak to some forensic men about it but when he learned Nichols was suing, he cancelled. Moritz may speak. I asked if he thought Fisher regretted having seen the material but he thinks not.

I mentioned that I had corresponded with Fisher and although I had difficulties, I wanted answers to certain questions. He told me that if he winds bid to see pix and X-rays, to tell him the questions and he will answer them. He seems confident of victory, being slowed down much now by red tape. He hopes to re-file within a month.

I was struck by the fact that his knowledge of the minutia of the case is deficient, and thus handicaps him. He admits that he cannot conceive how Weisberg and Lane can go into so much, that he is confined almost solely to the autopsy and medical, mainly in the non-fatal wounds. He plans to write a book in 2 or 3 years and will write about only this.

I asked him what he made of the shirt slits. Here he knows suprisingly little. At first, he was doubtful that a bullet could have gone in above the level of the shirt. I pointed out that the tie was where the slits are, yet it only has a tiny nick. This shocked him for he had always assumed the tie had a whole, through and through bullet hole in it. I also referred to my tests which produced similar slits. He said that if he can get the shirt through his suit, he will examine the slits under a microscopoe and tell me if it was out. He was also suprised when I said that it had been X-rayed and no metal found.

He thinks that we will never know how JFK was wounded/killed because everything is so bungled up. He has no idea of what went on in the neck/thorax and will not theorize. He used to think that a .22 had entered the front and stopped at the spine. Panel dispelled this, so he does not know.

No other details can come to me now. However, it was hard to distinguish what he wanted kept quiet unless he specified. Even so, I don't want to take any chances. So, please keep this 100% among ourselves.

Howard Hoffman

Here are some things which just came to mind re Nichols:

I told him that Morgan felt the neck bullet grazed the transverse process. He asked me if I knew that the process could be broken off without even touching it. Just the contraction of muscles is enough to break it.

I mentioned what the panel says about locating the wounds below the transverse fold in JFK neck. He said that neither he, nor I, nor anybody in the world has such a fold. It is a strictly individual characteristic which depends on position of head and shoulders. He said that the panel was inventing its own anatomy, that it was foolishness, and that no one who had not seen the photographs could ever know what the panel spoke of.

He also mentioned, or cautioned me that there were five panel members, he counting Bromley as a member since he was there throughout the whole thing. He also told me very confidently that Bromley wrote the panel report, and seemed to think that only Bromley wrote the report. Based on independent knowledge, I doubt this. However, I do not consider it beyond reason that, considering his confidence in this assertion, he might have been told such a fallacy by one who wanted him to believe it--like Fisher.

HR