

C/o Mary Farrell

7/20/69

Dear Don,

In writing you now, rather than awaiting your return home, I accomplish several objectives. First, I do not let mail accumulate, about which I have a thing. Then, if you like, you and Gary have something additional to discuss on your long miles. Glad to get your 7/16.

I am especially blessed by the Itek letter because it confirms several special things for me and the viability (long range) of my basic approach. If you recall, I went into some detail on the deliberate refusal to abide by the requirements of the law (not mandatory but desirable) of Willis, in my very first writing. Here you see one of the effects and it makes me, as increasingly I have become, less willing to assume that Liebler's departure from the standards of his calling merely carelessness. If you can get a complete set of everything Itek has done on any of the pictures for whatever request, I'd like to have it. I am too well-known and my positions too well argued to expect a friendly response. The exact language of their confirmation of the dark blob of Willis 5 as a man, for LIFE, would be particularly valuable. While you are in Dallas, please note how this man would have to have been and compare that with their statement. I know of it only what LIFE said.

Generally, I have a distaste for what on other subjects has attained a popularity in the academic community: examining one aspect, invariably out of context. You could not, in my belief, examine one aspect of the X film without keeping it in the context of the official use made of it. Everyone says "we are interested only in this and so" and thereby says what is not warranted and often winds up being misused by others.

If it is possible to postulate a 41-frame operation as a theoretical possibility for a master it is not remotely possible to postulate it for anyone else, and Oswald was a lousy shot. You do this in the context of an entirely unwarranted assumption, that all the shots came from the back. First of all, you do not have sufficient knowledge to make this presumption and next the evidence available to you and ignored by you does not warrant it. At the same time, you do the impermissible, ignore the wounding of Tague (and other things, such as the existing evidence of objects, undoubtedly bullets or fragments) striking surfaces. Of this there are numerous pictures to support the eyewitnesses. The 41-frame theory as an intellectual consideration lacks integrity and is unneeded for the basis of your study. I think it a serious error. And can you honestly separate it from the totality of the CBS dishonesty, where there was such a great percentage of misfires, wrong trajectories, uncomparable other things, like the target and situation? There are other things that enter, for which I haven't time. I've had genuine experts fire my M-c and I've heard their comments on the impossibility.

How can you assume a single hit to Connally?

What was Frazier's range? Not what you assume. 15 yards. And none of the timing allowed for the initial sighting—all rifle timing begins with the sound of the first shot. You also cannot separate the wind from the SS reconstruction. But if you are going to invoke it, do not invoke part only. Example: distance of target, which is different from FBI's. Pruning: Hudson. Also, consider road repaving as reflected (but not my first knowledge) of contradictory West plaza-road stripes.

If I assume with you no difficulty in 18.3 frame figure, I then have to ignore what they suppressed, that it is not possible to time from camera, which is of variable-speed potential. It is operated by a single slide control, and the tightening of a screw for a single instant causes 48-frame operation, for as long as the finger is tighter. It can be but a few frames. I wish you'd pursue your

Alvarez shift comment in this context. Sorry you didn't inspect camera at Archives. Timing can be only with background in film. I am persuaded by Ray's 237 by the physical reaction to the force of the shot, which would not have been delayed....There is nothing that is Thompson's that I will buy without checking for I know nothing he didn't steal that holds up, including his photography.

By all means, discuss this with Mary. She and Arch have made their own Z observations and have interesting theories they were able to mention only briefly to me. Especially on the number of frames and the possibility of run-down on the camera (it cuts off entirely at a certain point, when the spring is running down.

Wish I had time for more thought and explanation. In addition to my regular work load I have a batch of material I must finish with and return in two days, a large stack of clippings I need to examine closely and will have but once.

You fellows should find Dallas a fascinating experience.

One thing I forgot to mention to Gary: You might want to get on the tracks behind the post office on S. Houston and consider how you exit with prisoners. My own recollection is that you would via the Elm St. spur, which is what I think happened with the "tramps".

And I hope you do not, as some of the others seem to, find me to paternalistic. Sometimes I do feel this way with younger people for whom or whose work I have regard or good intentions, but not deprecatingly.

Best to you all,

July 16, 1969

Dear Mr. Weisberg:

Thank you for taking the time to send me your comments after reading my paper. Criticism such as yours and Gary's is very helpful. We will be going down to Dallas on Monday or Tuesday now, since Gary is still getting some work done on his car.

I am enclosing the letter from Itek in which they comment on the analysis in the 1967 Life. You may copy this or quote from it if you should ever wish to.

Both you and Gary have commented strongly on two or three statements which I wish that I had worded very much differently from what I did. I should have said something like: "Thus it can be concluded that the Warren Commission was working from an inaccurate base of photographic analysis in its construction of the single-bullet theory. While the Commission believed both Kennedy and Connally struck between frames 210 and about 240, this report has presented evidence...". (etc.) It was by no means my intention to seem to support the lone-assassin theory by "eliminating" a single-bullet theory. I mentioned the difficulties of the shot through the tree, including the Commission's own quote, but I did not stress enough the relation to the lone-assassin theory. I thought that this would be implicit in the evidence I present to show that the first shot not only went through the tree (if fired from the alleged position) but also did hit the President and was an accurate shot (wherever it came from) -- contrary to the missed-shot of CBS and others. I realize that my wording was inexcusably obtuse, if not downright contradictory. My paper will be greatly improved by your comments and by Gary's.

To clarify for you, I did "advance my own beliefs of the actual firing" with regard to the frames; namely, about 193 and 234; I believe the Connally shot to have come from Oswald's rifle in the alleged position (whoever fired it), while I tend to think that the first shot may have come from the west end of the sixth floor, through the large opening between the trees. As you know, there is reason to believe two people may have been on the sixth floor; Hickey (and many others) are turning to the right rear; Dillard pictures show two windows cracked open at the west end of the sixth floor; Walther; Carr; Rowland; the men on the fifth floor hearing the first shot from somewhere else and the second over their heads; etc; etc. I could have gone into all those things in detail, but it was beyond the limited purpose of my paper -- merely to show how the evidence can be used to place the timing of the shots. Beyond the rifle speed, camera speed, and tree blocking, I tried to restrict myself to what could be observed in photographs and related to testimony. I did not mean to be evasive in not giving some conclusion on the location of the assassin(s), other than "right rear." Perhaps a sentence or two could be added to clarify this (or at least explain why I don't mention it.).

Your other main criticism was related to the 42-frame figure; Gary, George Rennar, and I have argued this a bit and no one agrees with me at all. While you now see that I do not believe the first two shots to have come from the Mannlicher-Carcano in 41 frames, for the sake of argument, I would concede to a Commission defender that such a rapid feat is possible (ignoring the tree-caused inaccuracy on the first shot, which he would dismiss, of course), for the following reasons:

(1) On page 82 of Stephen White's book, he goes into more detail than the FBI did and gives very good reason to believe that 4.6 cannot be simply halved to 2.3 and 42 frames. His CBS shooters often beat two seconds, while the fastest full time was 4.1, I believe. The series were "rarely equally spaced", and it is possible that the same could obtain with Oswald's rifle.

I do not mean to compare the well-oiled CBS rifle with Oswald's except in the sense of unequal spacing implying lower minimum times than 42.

(2) The Connally shot was, in fact, not an "accurate, aimed shot"; it may have missed JFK's head by as much as 10 to 12 inches, as the President was slumping left and the bullet hit Connally near the right arm-pit.

(3) Frazier was at least getting the sights back onto a still target rather well in his 4.6 and 4.8 series -- perhaps a hurried lead would throw the assassination shot to Connally. At least, the assassin may have had time to get the sights back very near the President in 41 frames; near enough for him to make the decision to fire.

In short, while I convince nobody, I would accept the possibility of two shots from the Carcano in 41 frames as a theoretical possibility, on the basis of the timing. I would not quibble about a frame or two in the analysis, anyhow, for my 193 could very well be as early as 190 or 188, since there is some blurring there, of course. I based my estimate on observation in the Archives slides of the President's arm, head, and shoulders.

Your other more minor criticisms were also very valuable: the wind; the "selected" frames published by Life; etc.

Regarding the gap in the tree, I am not relying on the May 1964 photos, but rather the Dec 5 1963 Secret Service photos of volume 17, which show the gap quite well. Do you have information of a pruning operation prior to the December date, which I had assumed would conform well to the November 22 date?

Regarding the camera speed, I see no difficulty with the 18.3 figure. The camera obviously didn't run down until long after the head shot, thus the "slow time" at the end of the spring can be ignored. From what I know and from the FBI test, the deviations from 18.3 should not be too significant. I will talk to Gary about this. At frames near 290, Alvarez' abrupt shift from a constant 12 mph to a constant 8 mph would compare well with a shift from ~~18~~ about 18 to about 24 frames per second, but I thought that the camera couldn't do 24. Gary may have mis-stated himself in an earlier letter to me, when he mentioned that a small flick of the finger could shift camera speeds.

For what it is worth, Ray Marcus and I have written back and forth and he now agrees with me that 234 is better than 237-238. The only real significance of quibbling over two or three frames is that Thompson's shaded area on his map for the second shot angle must be shifted around a good deal counter-clockwise -- so far that it goes right to the heart of the Depository.

I am not familiar with Mary Farrell's observations; I hope that Gary will explain them when I see him.

Before I close, I suppose that I should mention (if I haven't before) that I am not a police science major, but rather a physics major and psychology minor from Michigan State University; I will be a physics graduate student at Berkeley next year. The work under Professor Turner of Police Administration was an honors directed study lasting about a year.

Thank you again for your many helpful criticisms.

Sincerely,

*Don Olson*  
Don Olson