

Memorandum

To: Dick Beznabel
From: Gary Schoener
Date: 5/12/69

Subject: Information received from Don Olson who is doing a PhD dissertation on the photographic evidence in the assassination of President Kennedy in his letter to me of May 10, 1969

From the letter:

There is one very minor point which I will mention only because no one has discussed it in any book. On pages 144 and 145 of Thompson, he displays a dented edge on case 543; you know his discussion and interpretation. This denting was known to the Warren Comm. lawyers; as I recall, one of them asked Day or some other Dallas official whether he had seen the denting before the case left Dallas. No other discussion was given, so far as I know, as the official didn't remember. Anyhow, you know how much detail Thompson goes into about the various marks and chambering marks. It is surprising that he does not mention that one of the two retained FBI test shells (CE 557, which Thompson misnumbers) bears the same creased dent in the same area of the lip of the cartridge. Whatever caused the dent on 543 very likely caused the dent on 557 also. Now an innocent soul would assume that the FBI just fired happily away, implying that such dents can be produced in "normal" firing (not "dry" firing); i.e. 543 could indeed have been fired on Nov. 22. A possible sequence could be: 543 is the third shot fired from the Carcano, the extraction and ejection is not perfect, the bolt closes on a crooked 543 and dents it, and 543 is finally ejected as the assassin is making his way back out of the boxes, several feet from the other two cartridges. This is a whole lot of words for a very little. I consider it an example more of Thompson's indiscretion with his readers. He had to see the dent of 557!

This material is based on Olson's observations in the Archives during the last term break. It brings to mind, among many other things, the factor critics often forget about that rifle—it was part of a defective shipment and there is no telling, without testing the original rifle, how variable its performance is and how variable are the marks which are made on cartridges and other such things, etc.