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87 Cornell Drive  
Winnipeg, Manitoba  
CANADA R3T 002

10/17/90

Dear Mr. Van W.,

You ask how Morris Brownlee became David Ferrie's godson and whether or not there was any connection between Ferrie and Dr. Alton Ochsner.

About 22 years ago I could probably have given you clear answers but today I'm sorry I cannot. I just don't remember and I'm not clear on what I published in Oswald in New Orleans, today out of print. (I enclose a list of the other books in the event you have any interest.)

I did interview Brownlee 22 years ago and with his permission I taped the interview, but I did not transcribe it and today I don't recall where the tapes are.

My today's impression is that it was Morris' father and Ferrie who were friends, and that this is what led to Ferrie's being Morris' godfather.

I do think I heard some rumors about Ferrie having some connection with Ochsner but that it was just loose talk. I do not think that Ochsner would have had any association with Ferrie.

It is more likely that Ferrie had some relationships with Ochsner hospital employees. Far-right and anti-Castro Cubans were employed there.

I've had no occasion to think of Brownlee for years. Or his friend I also interviewed at the same time. John George Wyatt - who also used other names. My impression is that there were not good people and not dependable at all.

Both seemed to share Ferrie's extreme political views.

But I came to realize that although they knew Ferrie and were strange and unlovely types they had nothing to do with the JFK assassination and that is why they've been out of my mind for so long.

I did get the FBI's New Orleans records and if there was any mention of either in them it was so insignificant I had no reason to remember it.

Although there did seem to be possible relevance long ago, I think that today any time spent on them is wasted because it can yield nothing that is relevant.

Sincerely,

  
Harold Weisberg

87 Cornell Drive,  
Winnipeg, Manitoba,  
Canada R3T 3C2

October 12, 1990

Harold Weisberg  
7627 Old Receiver Road,  
Frederick, MD,  
21701 USA

Dear Mr. Weisberg:

Bernard Fensterwald, at the AARC, thought you might have the answer to a question that has been troubling me for some time. The question is simply this: how did Morris Brownlee become the godson of David Ferrie? I assume Brownlee's parents were friendly with Ferrie, but I can't find anything on their background.

While I'm at it, I may as well throw in a second query: are you aware of any connection, direct or indirect, between Ferrie and Dr. Alton Ochsner, the founder of the Ochsner medical conglomerate of New Orleans?

Sincerely,

*Scott Van Wynsberghe*

Scott Van Wynsberghe

ASSASSINATION

# Top 10 reasons for believing that Oswald acted alone

IF JOHN KENNEDY'S DEATH IS EXAMINED AS A  
STRAIGHTFORWARD MURDER CASE, THE  
VERDICT COMES DOWN AGAINST A CONSPIRACY

BY SCOTT VAN WYNSBERGHE  
SPECIAL TO THE GLOBE AND MAIL  
WINNIPEG

**N**O, the controversy about what happened in Dallas in 1963 probably will never cease, and this article surely will not end it. On the other hand, the tenacity of the debate often has less to do with a lack of conclusive evidence than with the furor of the opposing sides. Conspiracy theorists, in particular, have so extended the area of debate — to the CIA, the FBI, the Mafia, the Pentagon, Dallas oilmen and now, believe it or not, the Japanese — that the original dimensions of a murder case have been forgotten.

It is curious that such an oversight can take place today, when murder in both its fictional and non-fictional guises so dominates the book-publishing industry. Any number of amateur sleuths in Canada alone could inform the pro-conspiracy crowd that you just can't solve a case until you have the basic facts.

In this spirit, I have drawn on a decade's worth of research into the assassination of U.S. president John Kennedy to assemble a somewhat arbitrary but, I think, meaningful compilation of the salient points.

1. Lee Harvey Oswald went to work on the morning of Nov. 22, 1963, carrying a paper package. Even Sylvia Meagher, the author of the classic 1967 denunciation of the Warren Commission, *Accessories After the Fact*, does not deny that Oswald took with him a roughly cylindrical package not less than about two feet long. The best that Ms. Meagher can do is complain that the package was not long enough: "The bag that Oswald carried on the morning of Nov. 22 was entirely too short to hold the disassembled rifle." She thinks it may have contained curtain rods as Oswald had claimed. (Yeah, right.)

2. Oswald had no alibi for 12:30 p.m., the moment of the

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assassination. There are credible witnesses who saw Oswald in the Texas School Book Depository before the assassination and just minutes after, but there are none to vouch for him when it comes to the actual time of Kennedy's death.

3. The medical evidence indicates the president was hit just twice, both times from the rear. The autopsy performed at the Naval Hospital in Bethesda, Md., was a disaster. When the House of Representatives' select committee on assassinations reviewed the case in 1976-1979, one of the things its medical panel had to do was condemn the autopsy, which was performed by unqualified or underqualified personnel amid chaotic conditions.

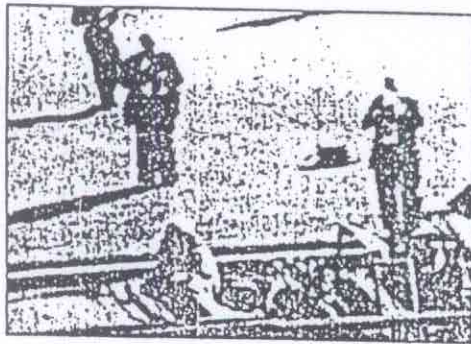
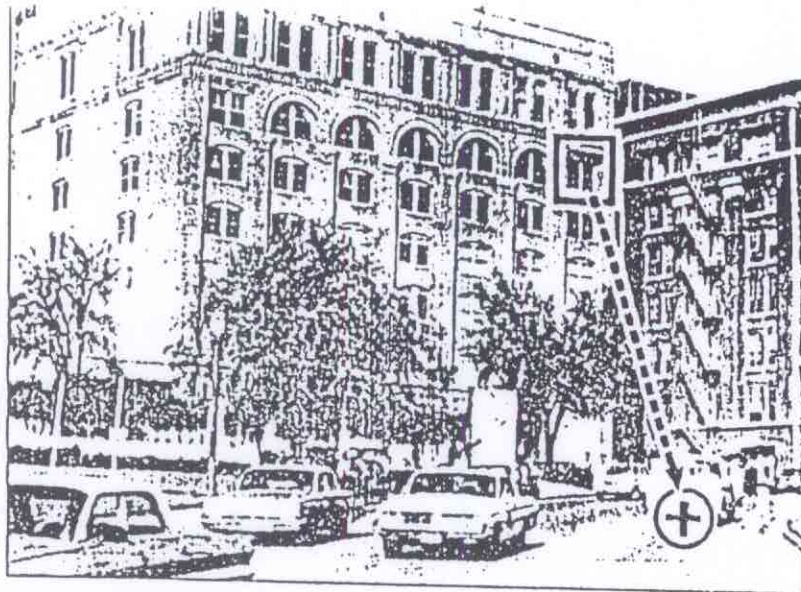
Conspiracy theorists such as David Lifton have preyed upon the uncertainty caused by the autopsy to advance the notion of a deliberate fraud orchestrated by conspirators. The trouble with this approach is that even incompetent autopsy physicians would have noticed prior tampering with the body or subsequent tampering with X-rays and photos. Their silence over such mischief, by definition, would mean they were accessories — yet Mr. Lifton has not the slightest intention of initiating any sort of legal action against them. So much for his "persuasive" evidence.

Making up for the shoddy autopsy were no less than three official reviews, conducted between 1968 and 1979, of the autopsy X-rays and photographs. (The process included an authentication of those items by the House committee.) Of the 17 prominent physicians and related experts consulted for these reviews, all but one agreed that Kennedy was hit only twice, once in the upper back and once in the head. Both shots came from behind. The lone dissenter, conspiracy theorist Cyril Wecht, admitted in his testimony before the House committee that signs of any additional shot were "very meagre."

4. Trajectory analysis shows that the shots came from the upper southeast corner of the depository. After determining the location of the wounds, the majority of the committee's medical panel turned this data over to a NASA trajectory specialist named Thomas Canning. Canning factored in the layouts of Dealey Plaza and the presidential limousine, plus the postures of Kennedy and Texas Governor John Connally as shown in photos. With all this information, he calculated the trajectories that would have caused: 1. Kennedy's wounds below the head; 2. those wounds plus all of Connally's wounds (this being the much-dreaded, single-bullet scenario); and 3. Kennedy's head injuries. Each time, the trajectories led back to the upper southeast corner of the depository.

In 1992, a firm called Failure Analysis Associates attempted another trajectory study, utilizing far more computer power. Again, the trajectories pointed to the upper southeast corner of the depository.

5. The rifle that Dallas police said they found in the depository was Oswald's rifle. The Mannlicher-Carcano had been mail-ordered by a person using the name of "A. Hidell," but the return address was a Dallas post-office box acquired by someone signing himself "Lee H. Oswald." Five handwriting experts consulted by the



Warren Commission and the House committee unanimously agreed that the latter signature was that of Lee Harvey Oswald.

In the famous "back-yard" photographs taken by Oswald's wife Marina, in which Oswald is depicted brandishing a rifle and far-left-wing literature, the same Mannlicher-Carcano is shown. These photos inspire claims of fraud to this day, but the photographic panel of the committee examined them right down to their grains and found no reason to declare them fakes.

6. *Ammunition specimens recovered after the assassination had been fired from Oswald's rifle.* Those specimens retrieved from the limousine large enough to bear rifling marks were checked by the FBI and found to have originated from Oswald's rifle. The FBI blamed the same rifle for the notorious "magic bullet," which was found on a stretcher at Parkland Memorial Hospital in Dallas, to which Kennedy and Connally had been rushed.

7. *Tiny bullet fragments removed from the bodies of Kennedy and Connally were linked to the large ammunition specimens.* The select committee had all bullets and fragments subjected to neutron-activation analysis, a forensic process used to identify unknown substances. A "highly probable" match was obtained between fragments removed from Kennedy's head and the nose of a bullet found in the front interior of the limousine. In other words, they were probably from the same bullet. (Along with the stretcher bullet, the

nose portion was ballistically connected to Oswald's rifle.) Another "highly probable" match was found between fragments removed from Connally's right wrist and the stretcher bullet, meaning that the stretcher bullet was not so magical, after all — it apparently did go through people. The neutron-activation testing implied the presence of only two bullets, which accorded with the medical consensus.

8. *Oswald's fingerprints were found at the window from which the shots presumably were fired.* Due to a blunder, fingerprint evidence in the assassination does not have a good reputation. On the evening of the assassination day, a fingerprint specialist of the Dallas police found Oswald's palm print on the rifle and he made a "lifting" of it using tape. He was interrupted when the FBI moved to take over the case and he relinquished the rifle, with his work on it unfinished. When the FBI finally examined the rifle, the palm print was no longer there.

Assassination researchers have long been delighted by the vanishing rifle palm print, contending it never existed in the first place. Overlooked is the inevitable confusion caused when one police force assumes control of a case from another. Perhaps (as the Warren Commission suggested) the lifting of the print by the Dallas officer destroyed it, and he never realized what he had done. A conspiracy so maladroit as to be that obvious is a conspiracy that would have been rooted out long ago. Nobody has ever been able to prove

criminal intent.

An even better argument against conspiracy over the palm print is the relative unimportance of the print. The rifle was Oswald's rifle beyond doubt, and all the print meant was that he had touched it prior to the assassination.

Also, prints of greater significance

The possible trajectory of an early shot from the Texas School Book Depository (above) into the street. A still from a home-movie camera shows John Kennedy after he was struck by the fatal bullet.

were found elsewhere, and these prints came through without any trouble. Someone had deliberately placed boxes up against the window on the sixth floor of the depository from which the shots are supposed to have been fired. These particular boxes did not belong in that part of the building, and the assumption is that they were used to prop up the rifle during shooting. The only identifiable prints found on the boxes were those of Oswald.

9. *Oswald fled from the depository.* When he was arrested not long after the assassination, Oswald was in possession of a token for a bus transfer. This item was dated Nov. 22, 1963, it was a "p.m." transfer (as opposed to an "a.m." one), it bore the name of the route in question, and the driver's punch-mark was, in accordance with Dallas bus practice, specific to only one driver. This was laughably simple and police located the driver in a few hours.

The driver told the Warren Commission he paid little attention to the passengers that day, and thus he was of minimal use in identifying Oswald, but he did remember that he issued only two transfers on the entire route, and he gave both to frustrated passengers who got off amid the traffic jam that developed around the depository after the assassination.

Consulting his schedule, the driver reckoned he issued the transfers no later than 12:45 p.m. The assassination was at 12:30. Walking to a bus stop, waiting for a bus, and then riding a bus for a short time would have consumed several minutes, meaning that Oswald was out of the depository very soon after the shots were fired.

10. *There is no convincing evidence of additional gun-*

*men.* For years, conspiracy theorists have pointed to such things as minute blobs in photographs to support their claims of gunmen on the grassy knoll. The House select committee's photographic panel scrutinized a number of alleged images of gunmen and was unable to confirm a single sniper.

One eyewitness, Jean Hill, has won some fame by claiming she saw a rifleman on the knoll, but a Canadian assassination researcher named Peter Whitney has assembled a devastating survey of the number of times Ms. Hill has altered her story.

None of this is surprising, because the grassy knoll is a ridiculous location for an assassin. Any detailed map of Dealey Plaza shows that the only place of concealment on the knoll was a picket fence at the crest. Behind that fence was a wide-open expanse of a parking lot and a railroad yard. Anyone wishing to shoot from the fence was begging to be seen from the rear.

There are those who still bring up the matter of Kennedy's unusual head movement in the Abraham Zapruder film. (The head jerks to the rear and left after officially being blasted from the rear.) As far back as 1976, Nobel Prize-winning physicist Luis Alvarez pointed out in the *American Journal of Physics* that it was possible for an object pierced right through by a bullet to resist moving in the same direction as the bullet.

The ghoulish trick here is that there has to be matter within the object that can be transformed into a "jet" spraying out the exit hole. Such a jet can be strong enough to counter the forward momentum imparted to the object by the bullet.

The irony here is that the only reason Dr. Alvarez looked at the head movement was because of the urging of one of his graduate students, Paul Hoch. Today, Mr. Hoch is one of the most respected assassination researchers, and his name regularly turns up in the acknowledgement sections of conspiracy books. He accepts the Alvarez finding and does not view the head movement as significant.

Scott Van Wynsberghe is a Winnipeg writer who joined the JFK conspiracy-theory field in 1983 but became doubtful and discarded it late last year.

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The famous 'back-yard' photographs in which Oswald is depicted brandishing a rifle and left-wing literature inspired claims of fraud, but a photographic panel examined them right down to their grains and found no reason to declare them fakes

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