

Dear Jim,

4/9/81

Great bay leaves in your letter of the 5th. Many thanks, Didn't know you had a bay tree.

The newest turn in the Reagan flackery is to make him put to be superman, with all the talk about his spectacular recovery, er, that is, the one that had been hoped for but he didn't really have.

Maybe his people are still dominated by their campaign fears of his 70 years, so they try to pretend his body is only 21. I think it is in bad taste and doesn't do him of anyone else any good.

There was a little more very little - in the WxPost for 4/4, and it raises still more questions. I'm to get a tape of the FBI's interview of last Friday and maybe I'll learn more from it.

A reporter friend who covered it and taped it says the FBI just lied, brazenly. He may have had in mind no more than its claim not to have any Devastator info.

In addition to the difficulties with the official story on which we both agree I'm now having some trouble accounting for all the known shooting with six shots, the limit of the pistol.

There is the window across the street and two direct hits on the limousine. I saw both the first day. (The door was open. One hit it, one the window.) This is three shots. One more for Brady, one for the SS man and one for the cop account for all six without Reagan. So they say he was hit by a ricochet. That appears not to be likely because the direct hit on the door was when the door was open or more or less at a 90 degree angle from him.

The FBI can do the necessary kinds of identification work fairly rapidly. They reported the spectro. info in the JFK case the same day they got the specimens. However, they are not always as fast as they can be. The work in the King case was not dated until the day they was charged in Birmingham or for about two weeks. Yet without any doubt at all it was done much earlier, probably the first day.

The story about the FBI knowing nothing about the Devastators is not easily believed. Even less easily believed is its account of the slowness in obtaining samples from the Georgia manufacturer. Not by mail or phone but by SA going there and putting what he got on a plane. They have been talking about days in getting the samples.

I'd not heard of people looking up and didn't notice that myself. I did try to listen for the character of the sounds as I saw and heard reruns. All the seven I heard - and I originally thought six only - were the same kinds of sounds and of the same amplitude. They were all light sounds, like .22s. None sounded like a rifle. They appeared also to be about equally spaced, in time, and pretty rapid firing.

If the FBI knew nothing about the Devastators, it did have all those specimens for testing and it has said nothing at all about its tests or their results. Instead it is hiding behind the gag order the government asked for and got re the search warrant while lustily leaking the most prejudicial information that was seized under that order. This may be the FBI's way, but why? Why now, in this case? Hard not to believe to cover itself and its shortcomings.

But are they really shortcomings and no more? The lingering questions about the facts of the crime do remain.

There is the separate spectacle of the undiligent press, which hasn't asked any questions about these matters and could have resolved some on its own. The number of shots from the videotapes, etc.

So little in the papers the last few days I've not clipped for Dave. Nothing of

any real value, unless one attributes historical value to Reagan's getting a new supply of jellybeans and some chocolates from the King of Morocco plus a goldfish from a little boy who named it after ~~him~~ Reagan. "naturally he swims around in a former jellybean bowl.

Not much new here. Yesterday I did more than any day since returning from the hospital. Not really much but for me, now, quite a bit. Today I feel a little tired but rain guarantees I'll not do any outside work. It started as I was about to start.

~~First~~ First I tried chopping wood- branches- while using the wheelchair. Works. So next I tried the tractor, with the trailer, to bring out firewood uphill and get it ready for stacking. I found that by parking the trailer a short distance from the food and thus having to walk some the foot did not swell prohibitively. And although I was careful not to load the trailer heavily when I'd be pulling uphill (so the tractor would not rare up and rare back) I did get a fair amount of year after next's wood up. I sold some poplars that needed harvesting, to get the man who would be taking them out to use his backhoe to fix the dam that feeds the pond) He can do it weekends only and each of the weekends since he cut the ~~stump~~ trees, it has rained. So he's not come for the logs and I have to get the wood up as best I can.

While I did very little there is a real feeling of satisfaction from it because I was able to do that much.

Actually, the grass could use mowing in some places, that is the kind of crazy season we've had.

Crocuses and draw iria have come and gone. Jonquils and narcissi coming on fine. It is getting beautiful.

And I'm satisfied that I did the right thing to cull those poplars (timp's, or really members of the magnolia family, which are brash and were damaged) because when the logs, firewood and brush are gone, it will look ever so much better. Of course it will mean a problem, that more will grow and require mowing, but somehow that'll get done.

Had to take Lil to the bank, so we decided to do some shopping for shoes, now that I require a much larger one on the left foot. We went to the largest local shopping center and after I'd seen what I can get Lil went off for some of her own shopping while I decided to use the center mall, where she'd see me easily, for walking. I was able to do about twice as much without stopping as in the past, since hospitalization. I guess in part because it is flat, no hill like in my lane. I'm pretty well adjusted to the pain, so it really felt good to be able to do that much. I believe that with warmer weather permitting it, I'll gradually be able to do more. . . .

I've been telling Besar that there are time when a man must anger and that when on extremely rare occasions he has lost his temper he was very, very effective. He is naturally expressive and becomes more so without inhibition or restraint. Well, although I didn't counsel that he lose his temper in the King case calendar call on the 6th, he did, and with more than ample justification. He also raised his voice a bit. (I'm very sorry I wasn't there because of the potential of what he let loose that I would have undertaken to use and now must get back to doing in a different way.) He was disconsolate when he told me about it by phone that evening. The judge was vacillating again and was remaining indecisive. He lost himself over an incredible breach of FOIA. So he told the judge just to rule against us on everything and we'd go to the court of appeals and we'd be back with a memorable remand and we'd get the six-year case closer to an end after all that delay than it is now. She got up and walked out. Next day he had a call from her clerk, she'd like to see him that afternoon. I told him to be apologetic over raising his voice but to stand firm on all else. I told him that nothing would happen because nobody dared make issues of any part of the case. She showed him the last 4-5 pages of the transcript and he said, "You get better service than we do." She smiled and said that in some ways judges have a little influence. After he read those pages she told him he shouldn't have, said she liked him too much to refer the matter to the proper committee, and then they just chatted, with her dropping some things of great interest to us. Including that she wants us both to get paid.

5 April 1981

Dear Harold:

Thanks for your note of the 1st, and especially for the carbon of your letter to Dave listing your initial impressions. I was here at the house that day, and had just fixed a sandwich for lunch when I tuned in for the noon news and ran into Rather already beginning to recap events to that point. (Noon here was 3pm EST).

I stayed with CBS long enough to get the gist of it in mind, then began to switch. But like you I found NBC less informative and although ABC seemed good I have trouble bringing in the ABC station here and usually went back to CBS before too long.

The case against Hinckley appears much more clearcut than any previously and should establish for all time the myth that anyone who tries to assassinate a prominent political figure in this country and who isn't also a lone nut and a failure with women has got to be Un-American.

However slim they may be, there still are some questions that haven't been answered. During that first afternoon I ran into at least two references to people who, like you, thought they counted seven shots. Frankly, I didn't try to count them myself; there was so much other noise in the rerun tapes I heard that I felt any count I could emerge with would be untrustworthy.

~~XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX~~ Also on that first day I ran into a couple of references to people looking "up" because the noises seemed to indicate an elevated source. Nothing since then on either the seven shots or the possibility that some of them may have come from a higher elevation, such as a window in the hotel.

Since that first day I've found one printed reference to the fact that before leaving his hotel that day Hinckley made two telephone calls and asked at the desk if there were any messages for him. While both these may have concerned the girl, they also could have concerned someone else.

Ballistic information thus far is woefully scarce. We're told only that while Hinckley used Devastator bullets some did not explode on impact as they're supposed to. The one that hit Reagan did not, either on hitting the car door (from which it is supposed to have ricocheted) or his seventh rib. All that happened to it was that it was flattened, in contrast to the one that is said to have exploded in Brady's brain. I've seen nothing on whether the bullets that hit the cop and the SS agent exploded on impact.

This suggests the possibility that either Hinckley had his six-shooter only partially loaded with Devastators or that two guns were involved with one using Devastators and the other using ammo which did not explode on impact.

This takes us back to the matter of people hearing seven shots and the possibility of one gun being fired from an elevated position. If Reagan was hit from such a source, the fact that the shot that hit him missed his heart and impacted well to its left could support a theory that he was moving across the field of the marksman and that this movement caused the bullet to miss its intended target.

FYI I've discussed all this with DRW in a couple of phone conversations and, like you, am sending all the clippings I save to him. By today (the second Sunday after the incident) all stories were on page 2 of the Examiner or even farther back into the news section.

It seems to me that if the shooting sequences are rerun in the future it might be useful to try to listen for any difference in the firing sounds. The sound of a long-barrelled rifle (I assume any backup gun would probably be a rifle) should be different from that of a shortbarrelled Saturday night special.

From the first, I have been impressed, just as you have, by the lack of initiative in reporting this case in contrast with what went on in 1963 and the ~~earlier~~ assassination attempts since then. And, like you, I quickly inferred that this was because a rightwinger was involved. The fact that not even the National Socialist Party of America could accept Hinckley sort of nails that down, I suppose. At first I postulated that Hinckley might have been in rebellion against the conservatism of his parents and that this could be used to smear the left. Dave, Libby and I all were concerned about such a possibility, but since we've heard no more to support it it would seem that at least no one wants to try to exploit it.


That first weekend I watched mostly television, occasionally checking to see if the radio networks were doing what they did in 1963 et seq, : bringing in news items and sidebars from all over which the TV people passed up because they had no pictures to go with them. Nothing. Radio this time was as sterile as TV.

This weekend I watched the PBS panel "Washington Week in Review" and Haynes Johnson obliquely commented on the lack of stir this time -- that people are used to these things, have come to accept them. He neglected to go on, as you have, to point out that because a rightwinger is involved the media are just as happy to let the whole thing slide. Furthermore, I think a lot of the media wheels (who oftener are rightwingers than not) have no kidney for going further into the matter which could result in a lot of unscheduled airing of the right wing's dirty laundry.

I've completed taking what I need from our journal and have disposed of it. There is only one thing which possibly could interest DRW, and I've saved that.

Something very nice happened the other day. For the past 10 years we have used a tax consultant who did a superb job but who this year could not perform for personal reasons. So rather late in the game I located a CPA who would handle my case. He turned out to be young, bouncy and a great guy. I spent half an hour showing him the figures I'd had ready since Feb. 1, he checked them over, then said he'd put them through to the computer and have my returns ready this week. And, he said, I've seen from your deductions what you've been doing for Hospice and want to show my appreciation for anyone who supports the great work they do, so I'm charging you only half my usual fee. He added that he had lost both parents to cancer and understood the need for Hospice and how they go about meeting it.

A pleasant note on which to wind this up. Take care of yourselves, and all the best,

 jdw