

Oswald, Paraffin Tests

- 11/23/63** Dallas -- Lee Harvey Oswald, charged with murdering President Kennedy, insisted he is not the assassin, but an officer said today, "I think we got some good results from the paraffin test on both Oswald's hands."
- With his jaw thrust out and his eyes intent and piercing, Oswald kept telling newsmen: "I did not kill President Kennedy. I did not kill anyone. I don't know what this is all about."
- City detective Charles Brown said he believed the hand tests were positive but was not certain about results of a paraffin test on Oswald's face.
- ... Brown said he has great faith in paraffin tests. *AP*, 9:42 a.m. CST, Raymond Holbrook and Peggy Simpson.
- 11/23/63** Dallas -- 1st add 2nd lead Oswald. Oswald, charged last night with murdering the President, insisted he is not the assassin. But an officer said today, "I think we got some good results from the paraffin test on both Oswald's hands."
- ...There was no immediate explanation from police as to what the paraffin tests would have shown since Oswald fired at least one shot in the slaying of a patrolman and attempted a second shot when arrested. A rifle was used to slay the President. *AP*, 10:20 a.m. Peggy Simpson
- 11/23/63** Dallas - Curry said ... paraffin tests, made to determine from powder residue whether Oswald had fired a gun, were positive. This meant Oswald had fired a weapon within a short time before he was arrested. Apparently it could have been either a rifle or a pistol - or both. They wouldn't say. *AP*, 1:50 pm CST Peggy Simpson
- 11/23/63** Washington - Dallas detective Charles Brown told of paraffin poured onto Oswald's face and hands to try to pick up tiny particles of burned gunpowder. He said "I think we got some good results from the paraffin test on both Oswald's hands." *AP*, 3:10 pm EST
- 11/23/63** Dallas - Police said paraffin test results on both Oswald's hands were "positive." Gunpowder marks were found, they said.
- No results were available on the test made on Oswald's face. These would come only from rifle fire. *News CB, UPI and AP*, p. 2
- 11/24/63** Dallas - Curry said paraffin tests on Oswald's hands and cheek showed he had fired a gun recently. *AP*, 7:58 pm CST, Simpson
- 11/24/63** Dallas - But a Dallas detective, Charles Brown, said a paraffin test of Oswald's face and hands for gunpowder particles got "good results." The paraffin tests, he said, indicated Oswald recently had fired a rifle - the type of weapon used to kill the President. The gunpowder on the face would come from cradling a rifle against the right cheek while the marksman took aim.

Oswald, Paraffin Tests

It was pointed out that Oswald was also accused of killing Dallas patrolman J. D. Tippitt with a pistol while allegedly trying to flee the assassination scene.

"Wouldn't this also leave gunpowder traces on the suspect's hands?" was one question.

But Dallas police indicated that their tests were able to distinguish between gunpowder from a pistol and rifle. *San Francisco Examiner*, p. 1 col. 8, Bob Considine, *Hearst Headline Service*

- 11/25/63** Dallas, Nov. 24 - A paraffin test, used to determine whether a person has fired a weapon recently, was administered to Oswald shortly after he was apprehended Friday, one hour after the assassination. It showed that particles of gunpowder from a weapon, probably a rifle, remained on Oswald's cheek and hands. *New York Times*, Fred Powledge
- 11/26/63** Washington - ... criminologists say [paraffin tests] can sometimes reveal the type of weapon, because pistol powder is of a finer grain than that of a rifle. *San Francisco Examiner*, "our correspondent"
- 11/26/63** Washington - (Paraffin tests) are not admissible as evidence. ... *San Francisco Examiner*, "our correspondent"
- 12/19/63** From Lane 's brief for Oswald: (p. 4) Wade's answers, while truthful, were a study in understatement. The district attorney neglected to state the additional facts that tests had been conducted on Oswald's face and that the tests revealed that there were no traces of gunpowder on Oswald's face (*Washington Star*, Nov. 24). One fact emerges here with clarity. The paraffin test did not prove Oswald fired a rifle recently. The test tended to prove Oswald had not fired a rifle recently. This fact alone raises that reasonable doubt that a jury might utilize in finding the defendant not guilty. *National Guardian*
- 1/3/64** Nitrate traces would not be found if you wore gloves and a face mask. Wade said tests showed Oswald had recently fired a gun; traces on both hands. But he neglected to mention that tests had been made on both cheeks, which showed that he had not fired a rifle. No indication that clip, gloves or face mask found. *KPFA*: Mark Lane interview, *WBAI*
- 2/18/64** New York - [At an airport news conference, Mark Lane] asserted that the photographic copies he had of District Attorney Henry Wade's documents showed:
- Paraffin tests that Mr. Lane argued "indicate rather plainly that Lee Harvey Oswald did not fire a rifle Nov. 22, 1963." This report said "no nitrates" were found on Oswald's face but nitrate patterns "typical of the patterns produced in firing a revolver" were on both hands.
- Mr. Lane argued that chemicals other than gunpowder could have produced the latter. *New York Times*, Peter Kihss

Oswald, Paraffin Tests

- 9/64** The Director of the F.B.I. in the Dallas-Fort Worth area in charge of the investigation stated: "I have seen the paraffin test. The paraffin test proves that Oswald had nitrates and gunpowder on his hands and face. It proves he fired a rifle on November 22." Not only does this unreliable test not prove any such thing, it was later discovered that the test on Oswald's face was in fact negative, suggesting that it was unlikely he fired a rifle that day. *The Minority of One*, p. 8, *Questions on the Assassination*, Bertrand Russell
- 9/64** ... The Dallas FBI chief said the paraffin test proved Oswald had gunpowder on his hands and face, but the test (which can only reveal the presence of nitrates) actually showed that Oswald did NOT have nitrates on his face, only on his hands. There were traces of nitrate on both hands of many employees of the *Texas School Book Depository* because they had been moving inventory on freshly painted plywood boards. ... *The Realist*, Paul Krassner attributing to Mark Lane speaking at the *Cafe AuGoGo* in NY "this month."
- 9/30/64** San Diego - Contamination of casts taken from Lee Harvey Oswald prevented tests which could have helped link him to the assassination of President Kennedy, a San Diego scientist said today.
- Dr. Vincent P. Guinn, a chemist for General Atomic Division of General Dynamics Corporation, said he suggested an atomic test after chemical analysis of the paraffin casts was discredited.
- Guinn said elements released in the firing of a rifle were found on the skin side of the cast taken from Oswald's cheek, but the same chemicals also were found on the other side. [He] said the casts probably were contaminated during handling.
- The test suggested by Dr. Guinn, called neutron activation analysis, was conducted at the Oak Ridge National Laboratory but also was inconclusive because of the contamination, he said.
- In the activation method, neutrons from a reactor make elements in a substance radioactive and they are then measured by a radiation counting method and identified.
- The tests, if valid, would have proved that Oswald had fired a rifle and would have provided a solid clue linking him to the slaying, Guinn said. *AP* 1000 ppd
- 5/25/68** *Nuclear 'prints' used as evidence.* Story on Dr. Vincent P. Guinn, *New York Times*, clipped to story above.