

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.

~~THESE REFERENCES TO PEOPLE~~ 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 ~~examiner~~ 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.

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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,