

The G-man and the switchman: Two JFK microstudies by professional investigators

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From an Office Building with a High-powered Rifle

Don Adams

Trine Day Publishing (USA); 2012

ISBN 978-1-936296-86-6

Author Don Adams was already investigating the JFK assassination before it had even happened. On 13 November 1963 he was called at his home by an FBI superior and told to track down and interview one Joseph Milteer of Quitman, Georgia. Milteer was a prominent white supremacist and Klansman, whose activities and influence spanned the eastern side of the US South. In October that year, in neighbouring Florida, a Miami Police Department informant had reported that Milteer had been making ominous remarks about someone shooting Kennedy during a forthcoming motorcade in Miami.¹ Miami PD's intelligence unit duly passed this worrying information to the US Secret Service and, since Milteer lived in Georgia, to the Atlanta offices of the FBI. In the end, there was a bomb threat, probably unrelated to Milteer and his accomplices, but Kennedy's next visit to Miami on 20 November 1963 passed without an assassination attempt. Two days later, FBI Special Agent (S.A.) Adams, as the author Don Adams then was, was still trying to track down Milteer for questioning when President Kennedy was shot dead in Dallas instead. This memoir is the inside story of the Atlanta FBI investigation into Milteer and his justly-infamous 'prophetic' remarks about the Kennedy assassination. It is a personal narrative rather than a forensic deconstruction. That latter task falls to Mr Adams' readers, notwithstanding his admirable research to document his story from official records.² This review examines

¹ Milteer might not have had a specific motorcade in mind at this stage. President Kennedy visited Miami fairly often, for personal reasons: the Kennedy family had a compound overlooking Palm Beach.

² For example, the book's documentary appendices include a facsimile reproduction of the entire contents of the FBI's 'Racial Matters' file about Milteer, discussed further below.

only some of the most valuable parapolitical revelations to be found in Mr Adams' astonishing book.

Five hours after the assassination took place, S.A. Don Adams' FBI superior at the Atlanta office, Special Agent in Charge (S.A.C.) Jim McMahon, sent a teletype to FBI headquarters in Washington DC. He had what seemed to be somewhat reassuring news for J. Edgar Hoover, on an otherwise very grim day. Someone at the FBI (McMahon didn't say who) had traced Milteer, who was in his home town, Quitman, and had been there all day. This would have been news indeed to Adams, who was still travelling back and forth several times a day at McMahon's own behest, to apprehend and question Milteer. Adams was being kept on his toes, waiting and watching for the reappearance of Milteer's distinctive slogan-plastered VW camper van. The vehicle had disappeared some days earlier, along with Milteer himself. At around 5:30 pm on the evening of 27 November, the van reappeared outside the house of Milteer's girlfriend. Adams immediately pounced, found Milteer was at home there, and dragged him down to the nearest Federal Building for interview. But Adams' interrogation of Milteer was severely constrained by orders from McMahon. Adams was to stick to just five very basic questions, none of which related directly to the assassination itself;³ and – dutiful lawman that he was – that was exactly what Adams did. Even so, by applying creative thinking to those five anodyne questions, Adams somehow managed to make the encounter last into the early hours of the following morning. At which point, all avenues of inquiry having been exhausted, Adams had to let Milteer go. And that was the last time Don Adams ever saw Joseph Milteer in person.

Mr Adams didn't learn about McMahon's reassuring but untrue teletype until decades later, and comments:

Yet, documents say that *someone* told the Atlanta office that Milteer was in Quitman at the time of the assassination. By providing false information, someone essentially gave an alibi to a suspect known to have planned to kill the president. (p. 60) (Emphasis in the original.)

Another possibility, in fact the only other possibility, is that there was no 'someone', and McMahon had outright fabricated Milteer's alibi for him. If that interpretation seems unnecessarily suspicious, the reader will harbour no charitable illusions by the time they reach the end of Mr Adams' conversational but jaw-dropping account. I think it is safe to say that this book must constitute one of the most serious accusations of corruption ever levelled at

³ The closest that Adams got to that topic was the McMahon-dictated question about whether Milteer had ever made threats against President Kennedy. Unsurprisingly, Milteer said he had not.

what was at the time J. Edgar Hoover's personal fiefdom. It is an ironic tragedy that the subject matter (the Kennedy assassination) will prevent it from being recognised as such by any historian now alive who values their own reputation.

Before noon on 28 November 1963, Adams had written up his own account of the Milteer interview, as an FBI 'Form FD-302',⁴ and had dictated it by telephone to an FBI stenographer. That was the last he heard of it, and later in life he discovered that his document is missing from the US National Archives. What survives of it is two falsified versions, attached to two different reports written separately by two Atlanta S.A.C.s, Charles Harding and Royal McGraw. These two superiors, Mr Adams notes, had 'cherry-picked' his FD 302 report and presented the information as their own. When Harding and McGraw submitted their plagiarised and embellished reports,⁵ each man attached a different version of something purporting to represent Adams' original FD 302. The two attachments should both have been exact duplicates of that original, but even at a glance Harding's and McGraw's forged FD 302s were different from each other in length, layout, and structure. Not only had Adams' report been cut to ribbons, heavily rewritten, and left full of glaring errors, it named another FBI man as the lead investigator, relegating Don Adams to an unspecified supporting role.

FBI Agents Charles Harding and Royal McGraw both submitted a fraudulent FD 302 of my interview [of Joseph Milteer] and included other data from my report in their respective reports. Had this matter ever gone to court in the prosecution of a subject or subjects, and the altering of my FD 302 surfaced, the case would have been thrown out. (p. 65)

And indeed, although Mr Adams doesn't just say so outright, getting those documents ruled inadmissible in court must have been the whole point of this conspicuously botched job. Any useful evidence that had made it into the reports from Harding and McGraw was being pre-emptively protected from the inquisitive eyes of judges and juries. Between them, Harding and McGraw had effectively prohibited external use of the information obtained by Adams. They had also written Adams out of his own story. If anyone had ever tried to work backwards from the Harding and McGraw reports to trace Adams' original, all they would have found is exactly what Mr Adams himself found many years later: a dead-end, in the form of an anonymous memorandum that both

⁴ <<https://tinyurl.com/3e96sw3a>> or <[https://content.next.westlaw.com/practical-law/document/I5a46ff877ecc11e8a5b3e3d9e23d7429/FBI-s-Interview-Report-Form-FD-302?transitionType=Default&contextData=\(sc.Default\)&firstPage=true&viewType=FullText](https://content.next.westlaw.com/practical-law/document/I5a46ff877ecc11e8a5b3e3d9e23d7429/FBI-s-Interview-Report-Form-FD-302?transitionType=Default&contextData=(sc.Default)&firstPage=true&viewType=FullText)>

⁵ On 1 December 1963 and 22 January 1964, respectively.

summarised and misrepresented Adams' findings without ever referring to him by name. This unattributed document bears the date 'November 29, 1963', having purportedly been created the day after Adams' FD 302. Not only had S.A.C. McMahon sabotaged Adams' interrogation of Milteer at the outset, S.A.C.s Harding and McGraw had then buried it without trace, in a two-man cover-up disguised as a bureaucratic cock-up.

On 22 January 1964, while the FBI was still officially investigating the assassination, Royal McGraw signed off on a new file about Joseph Milteer, to which he assigned the Bureau's internal indexing category 'Racial Matters'. This sequestered the Milteer case from the JFK assassination, virtually ensuring that no-one would connect the two. This new file was transmitted to several FBI offices around the country, including Dallas. As Mr Adams writes: 'Any Bureau office receiving the report would file it as stated. [. . .] No-one would look in the Racial Matters Section for evidence involving threats to assassinate JFK.' (p. 71) McGraw's misdirection had a degree of plausibility, because Milteer was heavily involved in white supremacist politics and had inside information about a number of terrorist incidents.⁶ However, McGraw's new 'Racial Matters' file on Milteer was another deliberate bit of copy-blotting, a means of downgrading, disguising, and distorting the information that Adams had obtained about the Kennedy assassination.

What little remained of Adams' findings had been buried in the middle of McGraw's new file, along with a photograph of Milteer from an unknown source. The photo had an unidentified person's handwriting on the reverse, which dated the photograph as having been taken on '11/27/63' – the date on which Adams had apprehended and interviewed Milteer. It also gave false physical information about Milteer. The anonymous writer said that Milteer was five feet, four inches tall. Don Adams had met Milteer twice⁷ and viewed him at close range for a long period each time. Mr Adams knows that Milteer was approximately five feet, eight inches tall. Even bearing in mind Milteer's bizarre signature hairstyle, later observers trying to identify Milteer from the annotated photo would have been thrown off the scent. And some later observers were in fact thrown off the scent. Forensic anthropologists working for the House Select Committee on Assassinations (HSCA) in the 1970s ruled that a photo seeming to show Milteer present at Dealey Plaza during the

⁶ Including, for example, the bombing of the 16th Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, Alabama, on 15 September 1963.

⁷ The first occasion was when Adams identified Milteer in public, prior to the assassination, while he was handing out his far-right political leaflets. The second occasion was the FBI interrogation that commenced on the evening of 27 November.

assassination could not be him.⁸ The person in the photo wore the same pebble-thick spectacles as Milteer, and had a very similar-looking tidal-wave of white hair sitting askew atop his head, but (declared HSCA) he was the wrong height to be Milteer. HSCA's forensic anthropologists had based their calculations on the height falsely ascribed to Milteer by Adams' artful FBI superiors.

It wasn't until the 1970s that Mr Adams (still S.A. Adams at that time) began to understand what had been going on behind his back at the FBI. His discoveries began almost inadvertently, and were related to a compensation claim for injuries sustained during a car accident soon after his transfer to Lubbock in 1964. S.A. Adams had been assigned an FBI car, but before he could take possession, it was illegally borrowed from the FBI garage by another Agent. That Agent crashed the car and then (because it was Bureau policy that Agents had to pay for their own repairs) took it to a garage run by a friendly informant of his. S.A. Adams discovered to his alarm that the car's bonnet kept flying fully open whenever he drove at speed. He took the car to get it fixed, but one day the bonnet flew up again, flipped over the convertible's open compartment, and knocked him out cold. The impact and the resultant crash left S.A. Adams with permanent head and neck injuries, and he had been waging a years-long campaign to get the FBI to pay up ever since. Serendipitously, the breakthrough in his fight for compensation was the result of another JFK cover-up by the FBI being exposed.

Listening to the radio in mid-1975, S.A. Adams was appalled to hear the first news reports of the destruction of evidence relating to the 1963 Oswald-Hosty incident, which has since become well-known.⁹ The Dallas S.A.C. implicated in the Oswald-Hosty incident was the same S.A.C. with whom Adams had been waging written war in his fruitless fight for compensation: J. Gordon Shanklin. By the time he heard about the Oswald-Hosty incident, Adams had already come to the conclusion that Shanklin was destroying medical records 'to cover his rear end'. So now S.A. Adams promptly used the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) to request any and all FBI records relating

⁸ HSCA Report, Volume Six, Part IV.b.3, 'Forensic Anthropological Issues' paragraphs 611-659 ('Comparison of photographs of Joseph Milteer with that of an unidentified Dallas motorcade spectator'). See <<https://tinyurl.com/5s4f6fwr>> or <https://www.aarclibrary.org/publib/jfk/hasca/reportvols/vol6/pdf/HSCA_Vol6_4B3_Forensic.pdf>.

⁹ Briefly: Lee Harvey Oswald visited the Dallas FBI office prior to the assassination, and left a short handwritten letter. After the assassination, when Oswald's letter was rediscovered, Dallas FBI Agent James Hosty tore it up and flushed it down the toilet – acting, he said, on orders. No-one knows what Oswald had written in his note. Hosty later claimed that the letter was a threat to blow up the Dallas FBI office, which (if true) would actually make Hosty's destruction of evidence relating to a presidential assassination even worse.

to reports of Shanklin destroying evidence. Such records, Adams figured, would help buttress his compensation case. He got exactly what he wanted. The material Adams received as a result of his FOIA request included not only Shanklin's sworn statement that he hadn't ordered Hosty to destroy Oswald's letter, but numerous sworn statements from witnesses saying that he had. Shanklin had lied his way through the episode from start to finish, and magically come out unscathed. On page 60 of his book, Mr Adams states explicitly what nearly every other commentator has shied away from:

. . . [M]ost Bureau employees doing what Shanklin had done would have, at best, been terminated. At worst, that employee could have been prosecuted for destruction of documents in a murder investigation, i.e. the Oswald letter and its tie-in to the Kennedy assassination.

Of Shanklin, Mr Adams notes: 'The man was scared of his own shadow'. (p. 46) This is a first-hand observation, as Adams had worked with Shanklin during a brief posting to the Dallas office which commenced in June 1964. Mr Adams remarks: 'As I saw it, Shanklin's greatest weakness was his fear of doing anything that could create problems for him with the top administration in Washington.' (p. 45) That in itself tells you a great deal about what the Dallas FBI was like. Of course, we should bear in mind that Mr Adams' personal encounters with Shanklin all took place in the aftermath of the assassination. Shanklin's fear seems to have been contagious, as Mr Adams records (pp. 46 and 47) two separate incidents in 1964 when he was warned by other FBI agents to keep his mouth shut about his scepticism concerning the official version of the assassination. Perhaps significantly, S.A. Adams was inexplicably transferred away to Lubbock just 'a few months' after arriving in Dallas. Of the Dallas FBI in general during the Summer of 1964, Mr Adams remarks: 'To a man, they were all very cautious about discussing the worst crime we had ever known.' (pp. 47-48) Perhaps if Adams had had a similar level of experience, he would have exercised a similar degree of caution, but Adams had only joined the FBI in September 1962.

The final insult to Adams was that he was never told there was a tape-recording of Milteer revealing his apparent foreknowledge of the JFK assassination. The conversation that had set Adams' investigation in motion on 13 November 1963 was flagged up by an oral report from October that year. Don Adams didn't know about the tape-recording of a separate conversation on 9 November 1963 until he read Robert Groden's *High Treason* in February 1993. A Miami police informant named William Somerset was the source of both the October oral report and the November tape-recording. Somerset's oral report was made after he had heard Milteer's thinly-veiled threats during

conversation in an Indianapolis hotel room, where both men were staying in order to attend a convention of the far-right Constitution Party. When word of Somerset's report reached the right people at Miami police, Somerset agreed to have a police tape-recorder covertly installed in his kitchen, and the stage was set when Milteer visited and repeated his sinister boastings.

The fact that the FBI withheld the 9 November tape recording from Adams is what practically proves that his investigation was deliberately set up to fail from the start. The contents of the tape had been summarised by the Miami FBI and communicated to J. Edgar Hoover himself (p. 89), in an airtel entitled 'Threat to Kill President Kennedy by J.A. Milteer, Miami Fla, 11/9/63'. That airtel was sent on 13 November 1963. On the same day, Jim McMahon called Adams at home, regarding Milteer's remarks about shooting JFK during a Miami motorcade. But McMahon only told Adams about the oral report which had been submitted by William Somerset in October. At some point after Washington DC had been informed, someone high up in the FBI had decided to keep the most damning evidence against Milteer out of the hands of the agent who would be assigned to investigate him as a suspect.

There is other material in this book that is undoubtedly just as valuable as the information that has been discussed above. There is also material that, while interesting, is not as rewarding from a researcher's point of view, but which enables the reader to form a better idea of what sort of an FBI Agent Don Adams was. What comes across very strongly indeed is that Mr Adams, who had wanted to join the FBI since the age of 14 and finally made it at the age of 34, is still reluctant to abandon his idealistic perceptions of the Bureau that betrayed him. For example, he doesn't explain or even remark upon the supposed coincidence of being transferred from Atlanta to Dallas in June 1964, which took him from the fringe of the ongoing JFK investigation to its very heart. Nor does he seem to find anything suspicious about being transferred out of Dallas within months of arriving, after expressing doubts about the official assassination story.

Nor, if we zoom in for a close-up, does it seem that Adams expressed any curiosity about the information shared between the Atlanta office he had just left behind and the Dallas office he had been transferred to. This is hardly a case of being wise after the event: the fall-out from the Kennedy assassination was thick in the air around him at all times. Adams had investigated a suspected assassination plotter in Atlanta, filed his findings, and had then been moved into the very office tasked with investigating the assassination itself, uprooting his family who had to move to Texas with him. When Adams arrived in Texas, the bogus reports by Atlanta SACs Harding and McGraw were already sitting in filing cabinets in the offices he now occupied. Is there any reason to

assume that Adams was being watched and manipulated by unseen superiors in Washington? Yes, as a matter of fact there is.

Don Adams' father was a personal friend of Cartha 'Deke' DeLoach, the third most senior figure in the Bureau after J. Edgar Hoover and deputy director Clyde Tolson. Immediately after his successful application to join the FBI, as Mr Adams recounts in the first chapter of this book, DeLoach telephoned Mr Adams Sr to inquire about Mr Adams Jr's new job. The phone was passed from the father to the son, and DeLoach personally instructed the newly-recruited Adams to visit him at the Department of Justice in Washington DC when he arrived for his training. Adams wanted to succeed on his own merits and disobeyed this instruction, fearing that DeLoach might be about to try to steer things for him. This stand-off eventually led to a summons from DeLoach, whose patience had run out, and a strange and very tense meeting ensued. Mr Adams observes (on p. 23) that after that meeting:

'I knew there was no friendship between us but, with my career ahead of me, believed I could expect no interference from Deke DeLoach. As I look back on my 20 years of service with the FBI, I am grateful that this proved to be true.'

Looking back on Mr Adams's own retelling of the strange coincidences and the bureaucratic misconduct that dogged him throughout the 1960s, this reviewer would like to know how Mr Adams could have been so confident that he wasn't manipulated at any stage. He does not seem to have exhumed from the National Archives any records that might help explain his brief transfer to Dallas in 1964. For whatever reason, Mr Adams clearly has far more faith in the goodwill of his superiors than he can justify to his readers.

Taking this rather dark speculation an inevitable step further, the sequence of transfers in 1964 could so easily have run like this: Atlanta (where the Milteer investigation had been kyboshed); a brief detour to Dallas (where S.A. Adams proved not to be a good fit with the official JFK investigators); from there, to the rather less impressive Lubbock (which, following so soon after the transfer from Atlanta to Dallas, was arguably a demotion); and soon after arriving in Lubbock . . . a place on a mortuary slab, thanks to a mysterious one-car accident. As it turned out, Adams survived the consequences of a colleague's illegal use of his car and that colleague's subsequent employment of a non-approved mechanic. If any FBI records still exist about that suspicious sub-sequence of events, Mr Adams has not mentioned them. This seems remarkable, in light of the fact that Mr Adams' journey into the assassination paper-trail began in order to pursue a personal quest to wring compensation out of his employers for the injuries he sustained in that car-crash.

Had he died in the car accident, the late Don Adams would be just another of those mysterious small-time deaths rumoured to be connected somehow to the JFK assassination. The alteration, obfuscation, and disappearance of Adams' work on the Milteer case would have succeeded beyond hope of ever recovering the truth, by finally subtracting Don Adams himself.

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JFK Assassination Eyewitness: Rush to Conspiracy

The Real Facts of Lee Bowers' Death

Anita Dickason

Archway Publishing (USA); 2013

ISBN 1480803359

Lee Bowers will need little introduction to students of JFK's assassination. He was the railway signalman who was on duty just behind Dealey Plaza, Dallas, when President Kennedy was assassinated. Despite the assassination being obscured from his position by buildings and trees, he nevertheless became a key witness by virtue of having observed three separate unidentified cars drive into the parking lot behind the grassy knoll in the 20 minutes or so before the shooting took place. All three cars drove around as though looking for something, then left the way they had come and disappeared from the historical record. The reason Bowers paid attention to this seemingly-normal occurrence is that the Dealey Plaza area had already been sealed off by Dallas Police in preparation for the imminent arrival of the presidential motorcade. Shortly after the last of the three cars had left, Bowers observed a 'flash of light' or 'something' that made him feel that 'something out of the ordinary' had occurred – which it had. Three years after the assassination, Bowers (by then 41 years old) was killed in an apparent one-car crash in Midlothian, Texas, having driven at considerable speed straight into a concrete buttress at the foot of a highway bridge. His death has been regarded as suspicious ever since, although with the proviso that the suspicion is confined to people who don't believe the official version of the Kennedy assassination.

Anita Dickason definitely does need an introduction, and she provides it at the very outset of her book, by summarising her career. The first and most concise paragraph of that summary can serve as her introduction for the purposes of this review.

I am uniquely qualified to conduct cold case accident reviews. I have a

total of twenty-seven years law enforcement experience with twenty-two years with the Dallas Police Department. My field experience, combined with my involvement with the department's accident report system, provides an in-depth level of knowledge and experience of accident investigation, the Texas accident report system and Texas traffic law. (p. 2)

So you know what you're dealing with. Unless someone invents a time machine, Anita Dickason represents probably the best hope we'll ever have of understanding what happened to Lee Bowers in August 1966. The problem some readers will have is in understanding Ms Dickason and her methods, which are very procedure-oriented. They are also very evidence-led, which is obviously a good thing in most respects but can leave the reader frustrated at what appear to be missed opportunities and unanswered questions. And it would be fair to say that accident reconstruction is a poor relation of crime scene investigation, without most of the forensic bells and laboratory whistles that command a reader's attention. You might also think that investigating a car-crash with the presumption that it was an accident is a recipe for a foregone conclusion; and there might be some truth in that thought.

Ms Dickason's description of her groundwork is meticulous. It is also laborious for the reader, but it means that any point in her narrative it is possible to turn around and retrace one's steps back through her procedures. This is a well-disguised blessing.

First, Ms Dickason has to identify the bridge that Bowers crashed into. This involves sorting out which bits of road were laid in what year, and by a convoluted process of elimination narrowing the candidate bridges to just three. Ms Dickason then has to change course to eliminate two of them, which gives insight into the perhaps excessive caution with which she approached the case. (pp. 31 to 41) She recounts how the farmer who was the only known eyewitness to the crash watched it happen from the vantage point of his tractor, which he was driving in one of his fields. Ms Dickason then sets about identifying that farmer (one Roy Edwards), and extracting from historical documentation exactly where his farm was and what area it covered (265 acres, in case you were wondering). Despite the fact that in 1966 there was only one candidate highway bridge abutting the witness's land, Ms Dickason will only say that this connection provides 'an extremely high probability' that the bridge in question was the one where the crash took place. One struggles to imagine how low the remaining improbability might be.

Having identified the bridge, Ms Dickason moves on to examine the car Bowers was driving when he crashed into it, a 1965 Pontiac Catalina

convertible. Suffice it to say that the safety of the car's occupants was not the foremost consideration in the minds of its designers, and Ms Dickason's matter-of-fact deconstruction of the car's interior will make modern readers' toes clench with vicarious anxiety. Bowers couldn't say he wasn't warned: Ralph Nader's *Unsafe at Any Speed* had been published in November 1965, and the resultant National Traffic and Motor Vehicle Safety Act was working its way through Congress with a blaze of media publicity when Bowers died.¹⁰

As for Bowers himself, the eerie phrase 'strange shock' has frequently been applied to his state at the time he was eventually cut free and lifted clumsily into a rural mid-1960s ambulance (i.e. a van with a stretcher in the back and a first-aid kit beside it on the floor). As Ms Dickason shows, the 'strange shock' description originated with the legendary assassination researcher Penn Jones Jr (b. 1914; d. 1998). Jones claimed that 'strange shock' was the description provided by the clinician who attended Bowers. But the clinician is on the record as denying (on two separate occasions) that he said anything like that when he spoke to Jones. The clinician's denial has a ring of truth, not least because the only strange thing about shock in a seriously-injured car crash victim would be its absence. The clinician says that he told Jones that Bowers was 'wringing wet' with perspiration, to an extent that he evidently felt was remarkable even given typical August temperatures in Texas. Excessive perspiration is the number one symptom of a heart attack, and that was what the clinician diagnosed at the time.

It looks as though Penn Jones did a bad job of his note-taking, which is quite surprising given his keen interest in the JFK assassination. You might be tempted to dismiss the spurious 'strange shock' claim as just one of life's misunderstandings. But there is worse to come. Ms Dickason launches a quietly devastating attack on Jones' integrity, pointing out that Jones was the editor of Texan newspaper the *Midlothian Mirror* at the time, and the Bowers crash occurred just two miles from the *Mirror's* editorial offices.¹¹ Yet the *Midlothian Mirror's* coverage of Bowers' crash comprised a brief and uncontroversial mention of his death and (if this counts as coverage) one paid-for public notice announcing his funeral. No further stories about Lee Bowers ever appeared. Ms Dickason thinks this clinches the case in favour of Jones being a cynical conspiracy huckster, who either couldn't find anything remarkable about Lee Bowers' death, or didn't even go looking for it and just stirred up suspicions instead. Ms Dickason has a strong case, but – and

¹⁰ The legislation was entering its final week of debate in the House of Representatives, and would be signed into law by President Lyndon Johnson the following month.

¹¹ *The Midlothian Mirror* is still going. See <<https://www.midlothianmirror.com/>>.

especially in view of her extreme caution about identifying inanimate objects like bridges – her attack on Penn Jones’ reputation seems over-enthusiastic.

So on balance, and without going into all the evidence disclosed in Ms Dickason’s book, it seems that Lee Bowers suffered a heart attack while driving his car fairly fast, and momentum carried him straight into a nearby concrete pillar. If the heart attack didn’t finish him, the pillar did. But Ms Dickason does find that something odd took place immediately after Bowers’ death.

Bowers’ crash took place at or around 9:30 am and he was pronounced dead at 12:50 pm the same day. His death was recorded on the death certificate entry as ‘Instant’, meaning that he was dead at the scene of the crash and it wasn’t until three hours and twenty minutes later that it was officially ‘written up’. That, in itself, is not unusual. However, after the death certificate was issued, it was recalled and altered – ‘falsified’ may not be too strong a word – to state that Bowers had actually died at 12:50 pm. What was the effect of that change? Between 9.30 am and 12:50 pm, Bowers had been transported to hospital, a journey which Ms Dickason estimated took 15-20 minutes. But at some point after his arrival at that hospital, Bowers was removed, put back in an empty ambulance, and driven to another hospital, a drive of some 40-45 minutes. The first hospital was in Ellis County, which was where the crash had happened. But the second hospital was in Dallas County, and thus a separate jurisdiction for local justice and law enforcement. By moving the time of Bowers’ death to nearly four hours after the crash had occurred, the place of his death had been fabricated for some reason.

This is where Ms Dickason’s narrative begins to get a bit tatty around the edges. By altering the place of death, the Lee Bowers case fell into the purview of one particular Justice of the Peace (JP). It was this official who would oversee Bowers’ inquest, which returned a verdict of accidental death. The same person signed off on all the legal paperwork, which included a conscious act of perjury committed by signing an affidavit stating that Bowers had died in Dallas County. The JP for Dallas County was William E. Richburg,¹² who had quite a storied career, and not all of those stories were exactly testaments to his good character. Ms Dickason seems loath to go into all this, noting only that lawmen in the US South could behave in questionable ways.

During my research on the Justice of the Peace system in Texas, I came across an obituary blog that allowed comments to be left regarding the deceased. In this instance, the deceased was a JP in Texas from the 1940s through the 1960s. The comment noted that the judge was known for signing blank death certificates and giving them to funeral

¹² <<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/21373248/william-e-richburg>>

directors to avoid getting called out in the middle of the night to make pronouncements. I have no doubt that this was a common practice and would have been applicable to many cases throughout that time period. (p. 68)

That's as may be. However, what Ms Dickason omitted in the above passage is the fact that the 'deceased' in 'this instance' was Dallas County JP William E. Richburg himself. The full comment she is referring to¹³ goes on to add that

though he was only a JP, [Richburg] was basically The Law West of the Trinity.¹⁴ Nearly all of the death pronouncement he did . . . all of the decedents died of the same cause, 'Heart Attack'. . . and he had a simple way of justifying this diagnosis . . . even if a person had a bullet hole in them, for sure, they still died of heart failure. (Sic throughout.)

So it seems that Ms Dickason might have cherry-picked this message-board posting and misrepresented it in a bizarre way. The posting was about Richburg himself, but Ms Dickason obfuscated that fact and instead gave it a sweeping generality – in effect, using incriminating evidence to implicate everyone except the wrongdoer. The remainder of the posting (which Ms Dickason chose not to quote) could be seen as casting doubt upon the reliability of the claim that Bowers died of a heart attack while driving, or from injuries sustained in the crash that immediately followed it. If Richburg really was brazen enough to sign off gunshot fatalities as 'heart attacks', then doing the same for Lee Bowers wouldn't be that much of a stretch.

More to the point, though: if the medics who attended Bowers honestly believed his death had occurred during the crash, then why was he taken from one hospital to another in the first place? As Dickason states: 'Medical treatment would not be required for a deceased patient.' Well, quite. Ms Dickason doesn't appear to have gone further than the hard evidence permitted her. But the hard evidence shows that someone in Ellis County made a decision to spirit Lee Bowers to a hospital in Dallas County, and that wasn't some capricious whim.¹⁵ What is quite unmissable is the implication that someone in authority in Dallas County demanded that Bowers' cooling corpse be transported out of Ellis County, a move that was unwise and unnecessary from a medical perspective, and outright criminal from a legal one. The

¹³ Posted by a user identifying himself as 'Daniel' at 1:15am on 4 January 2013. See <<http://phorum.dallashistory.org/read.php?2,78757>>.

¹⁴ 'Trinity' being the Trinity River.

¹⁵ Given the near-absence of care available inside in a 1966 ambulance, if Bowers had really been alive at the time, the decision to move him would have been a death sentence.

jiggery-pokery with the falsification of the time of Bowers' death shows intent to conceal what had occurred, and Richburg's misconduct at the Inquest shows who was responsible for the concealment. Therefore, the inference has to be that it was Richburg who demanded the otherwise-inexplicable hospital switcheroo in the first place, to get the Bowers case into his jurisdiction. All this extra work is inexplicable, especially since Richburg was so negligent that he would hand out blank pre-signed death certificates just to get a good night's sleep.

So just what was the originating impetus for the furtive trans-jurisdiction 'cadaver-napping' of the late Lee Bowers in August 1966? Something sinister was obviously going on but frustratingly Ms Dickason only takes us to the brink of perceiving it. If pressed, I suppose she could always argue that her professional remit extended no further.

Ms Dickason was contacted about issues raised in this review, but declined to comment.