

UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON

SEATTLE, WASHINGTON 98195

*School of Medicine  
Department of Surgery*

October 13, 1977

Harold Weisberg  
Route 12  
Frederick, Maryland 21701

Dear Harold:

I really don't know how to begin this letter, and I suppose I won't know how to end it either. I regret that I must take a position somewhat apart from that presented in the affidavit you submitted for my signature. I hope you take this in the spirit that it is offered, and realize that I do not mean to be obstinate. I have attempted throughout to be cooperative, but I honestly am not certain what my position should be in regard to the civil action you're taking.

The excerpts which you present in the affidavit are, I am sure, knowing how you work, taken directly from documented records and therefore probably quite accurate. Unfortunately, I don't have those records and I can't verify that that's what I said or did and my memory has not been sharpened by 14 years, so I cannot state with certainty as to the accuracy of the comments contained in your proposed affidavit.

There are obviously some things in the affidavit which are not exactly true, as far as I know. In addition, they are excerpted in such a fashion as to point up the conclusions that you wish to reach, and the scientist in me rebels at things being taken out of context. As you recall, this removal of certain thoughts and sentences from the context was the ploy used by the world press which got us into all this difficulty. Had they published in entirety the things that were said and done, at least by me, there would have been a lot less confusion as to what really occurred during those tragic days in November.

Let me give a few observations to emphasize my problem. To begin, Dr. Carrico was not a senior surgical resident; he was a first year resident in charge of the emergency room. He wasn't really preparing an apparatus to assist the president's respiration -- that was being done by an anesthesiologist. Jim was attempting to get an airway obtained. I was called to see Governor Connelly's wound, but I didn't really have an opportunity to examine the wound carefully as the operation was already in progress and I did not scrub but only peered over Dr. Shires' shoulder at what he had found. I cannot verify the business of a fragment of a half-inch under the skin and three and three-and-a-half inches from the wound; as a matter of fact that is not the way I recall it at all. I don't remember any fragment

Mr. Weisberg  
October 13, 1977  
Page 2

being removed and I made no conjecture as to the trajectory of any fragment. In fact, there was no evidence that wound went deep into the leg at all, as far as I remember. The boney fragment seen down in the bone could well have been there from previous times or unknown injuries. I know of no evidence that we uncovered at the time that would enable us to describe any trajectory.

I object to the aspects of "tooting my own horn" as it were, and would point out that the unsupported observations that I've had a lot of experience with wounds and knowledge of various kinds of ammunition and loaded my own ammunition and all that really does not verify any credentials. Again, in regard to Governor Connelly's wound, the incision was already made by Dr. Shires when I got to the operating room and I can't speak with authority as to whether the skin wound was made by that bullet; but on my peering over his shoulder I did not see evidence of a deeper wound, which I mentioned in my testimony.

I don't recall whether the Commission asked me about Governor Connelly's injuries or not and would be reluctant to testify that they did not since that is not within my recall. I have no way of knowing that Dr. Humes correctly understood me about the anterior neck wound or not -- that's pure speculation and I would think that type of hearsay is not useful at all. I do recall Mr. Specter asking me about whether I thought the interior wound was an entrance wound or an exit wound and we discussed that, but I just don't recall the contents of that discussion, although I assume it's present within the testimony, both when I was before the Warren Commission and also in my deposition.

Regarding the description of the wound, I gave that in the testimony and don't now remember the exact sequence or exactly what I said, so would not be able to verify what you say in the affidavit unless I had all that testimony in front of me, which I do not. I don't remember being asked about bruising, but I might well have been, and again that should be in the record as to whether or not it was there.

Concerning Item 19, at the press conference I did not state that the president appeared to have been shot from the front. I said that it could have been an entrance wound, but I qualified that statement on at least two occasions by saying that I did not know, nor did Dr. Clark know, how many bullet wounds there were and pointed out that this was conjecture on my part and I did not categorically state that he was shot from the front.

Regarding Item 21, about Governor Connally's wound, I don't know how much metal was deposited in the wrist and it was only a very cursory evaluation. I really don't feel qualified to say what the opinion of the other doctors who attended Mr. Connally were, and we'd have to depend on their testimony.

In Item 22, bruising of the president's pleura, you point out that no experienced surgeon would have caused this bruising in an adult, and that is not a statement I made. Bruising is a lay term for the presence of local bleeding which produces hematoma and blood staining, and as a matter of fact

Mr. Weisberg  
October 13, 1977  
Page 3

during any operation such side effects are unavoidable. Where one is incising tissue, clamping tissues and retracting tissues it's impossible not to produce some bruising. And I am equally certain I did not say that we avoid that when performing tracheotomies in children who have much smaller bodies and chest cavities.

Item 26: I don't know that my interpretation of those films and documents you sent to me confirms the belief I held at the time I treated him. The reproduction is of such poor quality I would never make such an opinion from looking at those, and never having had the opportunity to see the originals I can't comment on that.

Harold, I honestly don't intend to be difficult or devious, and have been very cooperative in the past with things that you needed, as you well know. I am not, however, disposed to signing an affidavit which clearly has many statements which in my mind are hazy, and calls for conclusions and hearsay testimony which I cannot verify nor even remember. Although I am sympathetic to your problem I would think that if you wish to continue with this civil action you can extract sworn testimony and use it as it appears in the depositions. Everyone would understand that I do not recall with certainty events that occurred that far back in such an emotional time and I am adamant in not attempting to give precise and specific details about those events to anybody inasmuch as there are almost certain to be inaccuracies.

I have given the other deposition and copy of the letter to Dr. Carrico for his evaluation and perusal and will leave it up to him as to what he wishes to do, without any coaching at all from me. He may elect to return it intact or to sign it or whatever. That's between you and Jim, and I will try to stay out of his decision-making process.

I hope you know that this in no way is directed at you personally, but is only an extension of the reluctance that I have demonstrated in the past to testify in specifics as regards things on which I have really no finite information.

Sincerely,



Malcolm O. Perry, M.D.

pb