

11/1/71

Dear Dick,

Sincere thanks for your long and thoughtful letter of 27th October and copy of your letter of the same date to HW. I am disappointed to learn that the AR/NRA returned your monograph. It leads me to some of the discouragement I felt when Howard's ms. was returned, and to many past such instances when material of striking merit and importance was rejected. Do you suppose that you should submit the monograph to the Journal of Forensic Sciences, perhaps via Cyril Wecht (who is either President or a Past President of the Academy)?

After writing to you and expressing some of the anxiety I feel about HW, I received (about a week later) from Wecht a copy of the 7-page letter HW had sent him and his very restrained reply. Reading Harold's letter made my blood boil—it was offensive towards Wecht, without the shadow of any basis (Wecht has still not written his request to examine the photos, to the best of my knowledge, is almost certain to be turned down, and intended from the first to confer with all the knowledgeable critics if by some miracle he is given the opportunity to look at the photos) and railed bitterly at others, named and unnamed, rehashing petty incidents that date back to 1966. Since Wecht is a well-balanced and very decent guy, I feel certain that he will not let Harold's letter affect his relations with other critics, but I do fear that it will certainly affect any future contacts with Harold. And I don't blame Wecht. Why should he take this kind of crap from anyone?

I agree with almost everything you said in your letter to me about Harold, as I also agree with almost everything you said in your letter to Harold. I have never liked Harold as a person—he is too oppressive, too egotistical, too petty and basically too hostile, jealous and suspicious to be likeable—but, like you, I respected and valued his achievements as an investigator. When I look back over the years, I realize that I have always been very cautious with him, humoring him like a mental case for fear of setting off an explosion and a stream of recriminations. It is wearying and I am too exasperated to bother any longer, after the reckless assault HW made on Wecht.

I am not sure that I go along with you all the way with respect to the double-dealing Harold has suffered. It seems odd that he should be the only one to be repeatedly martyred by the same general set of critics, buffs and transients whom we all dealt with over the years, without getting burned time and again. Harold himself must generate some of the problems he has had, if only by sowing unbelievable confusion and causing people to dislike him to the point where they enjoy his discomfiture. In the last analysis, I am not sure whether he has done more good or more harm to the case by his various excusses and especially by his ridiculous claims to various prerogatives and monopolies which affect (in his view) what other critics may and may not do. If only he would stop insisting on credit and recognition, he might get the kudos that he has really earned—but the more he demands, the less he will receive, whether in tributes or in cash subsidies (which he also seems to feel are owed him, by me and by others who never asked him to make the case his life's work and might prefer it if he had not done so).

If and when Wecht is given access to the photos—I am convinced that it will NEVER happen—all your well-taken points will be emphasized to him. Your careful tactful remarks to HW on the matter should sober him but I fear it will only spark more 7-page letters describing his anguish and injustices. (He almost has me doing it, so I will stop here and now!) All the best,

Smce. Richard Coops
Bernabei