

CHAPTER THREE

I DON'T PICK BRAINS, I EAT THEM

Mr. Lifton took umbrage at the following paragraphs in my informal critique of his work on Compuserve:

"If Lifton had originally set out to prove his *Best Evidence* scenario, why did he spend 14-15 years prying information and ideas out of other researchers, pretending all the while that he had some great secret which he would never agree to reveal? The reason is that he had nothing. This semi-mythical manuscript which he told people he was working on (the one he would not even show to a staff attorney on the HSCA, even though he could have been assured that its contents would not be disseminated) could not have contained anything more than a pedestrian rehashing of a well-covered area which, by the late-1970's, many found just plain boring."

"I believe Lifton reached a dead end until his agent persuaded him that he could sell a book cast in terms of a personal odyssey through the wilderness."

"If Lifton had this theory nailed down when he first found his agent, why did it take him nearly three years to rewrite his original manuscript? That manuscript would have been pure gold! It would not have required the addition of "the personal touch." If it needed work in matters of style or syntax, Macmillan would have rewritten the book for him and rushed it into print!"

The history of Mr. Lifton's manuscript was sketched in Chapter One. There was a misstatement in the first paragraph quoted above: The manuscript that Mr. Lifton's told people he was working on during the years before 1975 was not "semi-mythical"; it was an outright, full-fledged lie.

Aside from "the big secret," Mr. Lifton for years maintained a pretense of being hard at work on a book manuscript when, in fact, he was not.

"I have been working, day in and out, and making solid progress generating typescript." (Lifton, David. Letter to Sylvia Meagher, March 17, 1969)

Compare this, however, with what he told an interviewer as the third edition of his book went public in November 1988: "It was still in the form of file material, conclusions, memos, but not a manuscript." ("His J.F.K. Obsession: For David Lifton, The Assassination is a Labyrinth Without End," *Los Angeles Times*, November 20, 1988, Magazine, p. 20)

Lifton told Meagher he was writing a section of his manuscript that would "blast away at the performance of the WC staff." (Lifton, David. Letter to Sylvia Meagher, March 27, 1969)

"It was still in the form of file material, conclusions, memos, but not a manuscript." ("His J.F.K. Obsession: For David Lifton, The Assassination is a Labyrinth Without End," *Los Angeles Times*, November 20, 1988, Magazine, p. 20)

"My work is progressing very nicely. I am so excited over portions of this manuscript that I sometimes have trouble getting a full night's sleep." (Lifton, David. Letter to Sylvia Meagher, June 2, 1969)

"It was still in the form of file material, conclusions, memos, but not a manuscript." ("His J.F.K. Obsession: For David Lifton, The Assassination is a Labyrinth Without End," *Los Angeles Times*, November 20, 1988, Magazine, p. 20)

"I have hundreds of pages behind me. . ." (Lifton, David. Letter to Sylvia Meagher, June 2, 1969)

"It was still in the form of file material, conclusions, memos, but not a manuscript." ("His J.F.K. Obsession: For David Lifton, The Assassination is a Labyrinth Without End," *Los Angeles Times*, November 20, 1988, Magazine, p. 20)

"The manuscript is based on evidence, much of it new, but all of high pedigree and legitimacy [sic]. The inferences from

evidence are very carefully made. Now, as regards political matters: the political superstructure that one places on an operational substructure is largely a function of the evidence, and the facts." (Lifton, David. Letter to Sylvia Meagher, August 7, 1969)

"I have told a few people that I am writing a manuscript. No one who is on the grapevine, however, knows the specifics that I told you in the telephone conversations we had back in January and February." (Lifton, David. Letter to Sylvia Meagher, August 7, 1969)

"It was still in the form of file material, conclusions, memos, but not a manuscript." ("His J.F.K. Obsession: For David Lifton, The Assassination is a Labyrinth Without End," *Los Angeles Times*, November 20, 1988, Magazine, p. 20)

It was Sylvia Meagher's understanding, based on previous conversations and letters, that Mr. Lifton felt his basic case was "coherent and conclusive." Yet she grew increasingly impatient with his failure to produce a finished manuscript. Although she would not agree to assist him in the writing of his work, she offered to help Lifton resolve any uncertainties that might be plaguing him, were he to deal with her candidly. (Meagher, Sylvia. Letter to David Lifton, August 12, 1969)

Lifton responded:

"[T]he basic case is coherent and complete. What still remains to be done? Basically, what remains to be done is the writing of sections of exposition which, for the most part, have already been researched." (Lifton, David. Letter to Sylvia Meagher, August 31, 1969)

"It was still in the form of file material, conclusions, memos, but not a manuscript." ("His J.F.K. Obsession: For David Lifton, The Assassination is a Labyrinth Without End," *Los Angeles Times*, November 20, 1988, Magazine, p. 20)

Either Lifton was telling Meagher the truth about his manuscript in progress, or he was simply prevaricating, or he was being duplicitous for some ulterior purpose. His representations of the subject areas of his work certainly do not correlate in the main with the subject, substantive contents, and major theme or theses of his book.

A Question of Legitimacy

In *Best Evidence* it is not only the chronology of his philosophical musings about the Warren Commission's honesty and integrity (or lack of it) that Mr. Lifton has reconstituted and woven into a fictitious autobiographical construct; the same conclusion obtains regarding his analysis of the substance of the evidence.

Mr. Lifton writes in *Best Evidence* about his reaction upon reading the first critical appraisal of the Warren Report to receive widespread media attention:

"I first read *Inquest* in June 1966. I thought Epstein was wading in very deep waters when he extended his "political truth" concept to the deliberate falsification of the Kennedy autopsy." (BE, Chapter 4)

And later in the book, he ridicules the notion that the autopsy pathologists' testimony could have been untruthful:

"To believe that Humes' testimony was false, one had to believe that a navy commander would deliberately lie, risk criminal charges, and bluff the Chief Justice of the United States." (BE, Chapter 6)

Compare, however, Lifton's diametrically opposed contemporary view:

"I consider the entire Bethesda autopsy result to be incorrect and *fraudulent*. It is unfortunate but true that those who argue for a rearward hit in the President's head, although they concede the Bethesda autopsy to be false in other areas (like the first shot exiting at the throat) assume that in this one area, possibly, the doctors aren't lying 'that much', and that possibly the exit wound on the head shown in the artist's drawing does exist." (Lifton, David. Memorandum re: Head Snap Phenomenon and Zapruder Film Frame Sequence, March 20, 1967) (Emphasis added)

"The double-head-hit theorists thus invoke Bethesda autopsy descriptions of the head to find an exit wound for a rearward entering bullet.

"I believe the Parkland Hospital description, only, on this point. I do not accept the Bethesda autopsy." (Lifton, David. Memorandum re: Head Snap Phenomenon and Zapruder Film Frame Sequence, March 20, 1967)

What Lifton wrote in March 1967 is completely at odds with what his book alleges he was thinking at the time.

The Case for Three Assassins (The January 1967 *Ramparts* Article)

Three Assassins was an able synopsis of the Kennedy assassination controversy as it stood in late 1966. It is not my purpose to review the details of that controversy. Rather, I raise the subject of Lifton's only previously published work on the assassination because it stands in astonishing contrast to his later work, *Best Evidence*, where Lifton gives an account of the progress of his research and theory that is grossly inconsistent with the contemporary published work.

As late as mid-October 1966, Lifton could still say, "I believe at least two men were shooting, and probably several more than three from about three different locations." (Lifton, David. Letter to Sylvia Meagher, October 13, 1966) In *Three Assassins*, Mr. Lifton argued for a crossfire scenario in Dealey Plaza, and accepted as true that both the President and Texas Governor John Connally had been struck by shots from the rear, as well as from in front of the limousine. Yet, according to *Best Evidence*, by the time Mr. Lifton wrote and published "Three Assassins" in *Ramparts*, he was well on his way to developing the "trajectory reversal" theory that is central to the body swipe and alteration thesis of his book, not a hint of which is to be found in the *Ramparts* article. The inconsistency is not completely lost upon Mr. Lifton, because he does fumble over it for two or three pages in his book, finally conjuring up the lame excuse that he did not regard the senior management of *Ramparts* (Warren Hinckle and Robert Scheer) as smart enough for him to explain his theory to them. Who among us is indeed worthy? The key question, however, is what did Mr. Lifton find so good about the evidence upon which he relied in "Three Assassins" that soured for him by the time he wrote *Best Evidence*? It is this strange metamorphosis in either the evidence or himself that Mr. Lifton declines to elaborate, even as he disparages other assassination critics for holding views similar to those he originally expressed.

In *Three Assassins*, Lifton accepted that both Kennedy and Connally sustained wounds to their backs during the shooting, and he posited at least two gunmen firing from behind the presidential limousine, while also arguing for shots to Kennedy's head and throat from at least one assassin firing from in front, i.e., the grassy knoll. In *Best Evidence*, Lifton ignored Connally's wounds and theorized that Kennedy was not shot in the back after all, the wound was artificially inflicted by plotters.

In *Three Assassins*, Lifton cited and discussed the testimony of Glenn Bennett, a Secret Service agent riding in the follow-up car behind the President who saw the second shot hit him, in support of both the existence and location of the President's back wound, never providing any inkling that Bennett's testimony and written report could be doubted. (Lifton, David and Welsh, David. *The Case for Three Assassins*, *Ramparts*, January 1967, p. 82 [hereinafter, *Three Assassins*]) Furthermore, Lifton pointed to the holes in the President's suit jacket and shirt as corroborative of the back wound's location. (ibid.) In *Best Evidence*, Lifton branded Bennett a liar and part of the conspiracy; he insinuated that Bennett's role in the plot was to provide a false Secret Service cover story for the phony back wound. Furthermore, the holes in the President's clothing he now deemed fake.

Examining the Warren Report's "single-bullet theory", i.e., that one shot pierced both President Kennedy and Governor Connally, Mr. Lifton discussed the bullet fragments embedded in Connally's wrist and thigh. (*Three Assassins*, pp. 84-85) In *Best Evidence* this evidence is ignored.

Mr. Lifton asserts that all the ammunition allegedly recovered by investigators was planted.

The *Ramparts* piece cast suspicion on Dr. James Humes for burning the original draft of his autopsy report. (*Three Assassins*, pp. 81, 91) *Best Evidence* exonerates Dr. Humes as an honest guy.

In *Ramparts*, Mr. Lifton conceded, "The fact that the Parkland doctors observed no entry wound there [on the rear of the

President's head] does not mean that it did not exist, and it is conceivable that a hit from the rear occurred." (*Three Assassins*, p. 90) [And notice the similar view Lifton expressed three months after the publication of the article: "It is possible that the doctors at Parkland missed a rear entrance wound on the head. This is generally conceded. For example, no Parkland doctor testified to right temporal entrance wounds..." (Lifton, David. Memorandum re: Head Snap Phenomenon and Zapruder Film Frame Sequence, March 20, 1967)] In *Best Evidence*, however, what was once conceivable became impossible, and the impossible (creation of a false entrance wound after-the- fact) became both conceivable and lucrative.

In 1967, Mr. Lifton pointed to the Warren Commission's "consistent failure" to call witnesses who thought shots came from the knoll. (*Three Assassins*, p. 93) From at least 1980 through the present, however, the Warren Commission has been okay with him.

In a survey for *Ramparts* of the eyewitnesses who thought that one or more shots came from the grassy knoll, Mr. Lifton did pick up the testimony of Paul Landis, Jr., another agent riding in the follow-up car ("I heard what sounded like the report of a high powered rifle from behind me, over my right shoulder."), and presidential aide David Powers ("My first impression was that the shots came from the right and overhead...") (*Three Assassins*, p. 97), so it is clear that he studied the testimony of the Dealey Plaza witnesses who heard shots from either direction, including those who thought that all or some came from behind the presidential limousine.

Was *Three Assassins* replete with factual errors? Did someone check the many citations to the official record in that article and find them inaccurate or nonexistent? And, which of the above mentioned points from the article are less valid today than they were twenty-six years ago? Upon what grounds?

Mr. Lifton requests our confidence and belief in his explanation that he really didn't mean it; while he was working on bringing *Three Assassins* to publication, he was actually developing a completely different theory of the case. I do not accept what I call his "split personality" hypothesis.

He says in the Compuserve essays, "By the end of December 1967, I not only had a case that the wounds were different in two areas of the body, but I had the beginnings of a theory as to when and where the body had been intercepted—on the east coast, at Bethesda, in connection with the events surrounding the ambulance chase."

As we have seen, Mr. Lifton was thinking about many areas concerning the assassination. We have also seen, to some extent, that the views he held then were radically different from the views he says he held then in his book. This point will be further developed later. There is no doubt that, in late 1966, Lifton asked the FBI about the head surgery remark in the Sibert and O'Neill report. The iron facts are, however, that the theory Lifton claims is his own was first published by others, and that he did not find the witnesses who were key to the version presented in his book until 1979.

The "Sources" listing at the end of his book, revealing that many of his interviews are dated 1978 or later, implies that much of his formulation of the *Best Evidence* theory is based on interviews with witnesses who were either first identified by the HSCA or whose military orders not to talk remained in effect until the HSCA investigation.

In the Compuserve essays, Mr. Lifton explains the progress of his research according to what he terms "Areas A and B." While Mr. Lifton sank deeper into the quagmire between "A" and "B", trying to figure it all out, the body alteration theory was first published by Fred Newcomb and Perry Adams in an article for the September/October 1975 issue of *Skeptic* magazine, excerpted from their unpublished manuscript, "Murder From Within", a fact that is nowhere acknowledged in *Best Evidence*. The Newcomb/Adams thesis was precisely that advanced by David Lifton in his book, i.e., the alteration of the wounds between Parkland and Bethesda. Like Lifton, only sooner, Newcomb and Adams posited a high level plot implemented by the Secret Service.

At the very least, one would have expected to see Mr. Lifton report the impact that this *Skeptic* article had on his research, any fault that he found with its evidence or logic, some evaluation of his conversations with either Newcomb or Adams (surely he must have found the time to call them before he completed his unpublishable first draft in August 1976). After all, hadn't he felt "isolated" with his terrible secret all those years? Didn't he want some company?

The subject of "changes in the size and shape of the wounds" is not original to David Lifton. Previous authors wrote extensively about the apparent discrepancies between the Parkland and Bethesda descriptions of the wounds.

About "evidence" that the body was intercepted. Lifton says he discovered the "ambulance chase" in 1967 and knew that, "something happened at Bethesda." This is what he calls his "Area A." He discovered nothing except a group of witnesses, *dramatis personae minor*, whose stories (when they were able to remember anything at all) contradicted each other so wildly that they made no sense.

He claims that by February 1971, as he was "soliciting Dr. [Cyril] Wecht's help in connection with my work", he already had formulated "a series of lengthy memoranda" which, as it turned out, "correspond [sic] exactly to what is in *Best Evidence*" chapter by chapter in "many key areas." It is noteworthy that he points to material he prepared after his dealings with Sylvia Meagher ended in 1970. The record of those dealings varies dramatically from what he alleges in his book and strongly implies that, if he did have "the beginnings of a theory", it did not take any concrete form until after that period. He claims that these memos to Dr. Wecht dealt with:

Alteration of the neck wound (Chapter 11);

The statement in the Sibert and O'Neill report mentioning surgery (Chapter 12);

Alteration of the head wound (Chapter 13);

Trajectory reversal (Chapter 14);

The theory of the pre-autopsy autopsy (Chapter 18)

Mr. Lifton interviewed a number of Parkland Hospital personnel in 1966. It bears mention that, with only three exceptions, he did not interview any participant in the autopsy until 1978 or later. The three exceptions were the chief autopsy pathologist, Dr. Humes (1966); the photographer, John Stringer (1972); and the radiologist, Dr. John Ebersole (1972). Mr. Lifton discusses these three interviews in his book. They make no reference to any observations of the neck wound. Mr. Lifton's theory of alteration to that wound relies chiefly on another researcher's interview of Ebersole in 1978. Therefore, before the time of the HSCA investigation, Mr. Lifton had nothing except possibly an analysis of official and other published resources, including the confirmation by the Parkland doctors of their Warren Commission testimony.

Chapter 18, dealing with the theory of "the pre-autopsy autopsy", dwells on Lifton's vain search of medical texts for support of his "head surgery" theory. It relies heavily on the HSCA's published interview with two of the autopsy pathologists (published in 1979), as well as Lifton's consultations with Drs. Michael Baden and Charles Wilber during the late Seventies. In substance, the chapter contains nothing that was unavailable in published sources before 1979. It is simply Lifton's own highly conjectural analysis of the Warren Commission testimony, material contained in other assassination books, and his reading of medical textbooks. By cleaving the post-1978 material from the rest of the chapter, what remains is clearly a rudimentary and inconclusive hypothesis that the parietal wound in Kennedy's head was surgically enlarged to gain access to a brain that Mr. Lifton did not have reason to think was absent from the cranium until he spoke to Paul O'Connor in 1979.

Most noteworthy in Chapter 18 of *Best Evidence* is Mr. Lifton's passing reference to the fact that, "an earlier version of his manuscript [presumably the one that he completed in 1976 but could not sell] was submitted for review by a prestigious pathologist." The doctor refused to buy Lifton's theory. Indeed, *Best Evidence* does not name a single physician who says that a surgically removed and re implanted brain could have escaped the attention of a pathologist at autopsy. Living in denial, Lifton turns this fatal shortcoming into another theory: Humes speaks in riddles that only Lifton can understand, i.e., when describing gunshot damage, Humes really means surgery. Lifton does not ignore, but pretends to harness in support of his theory, Boswell's statement to the HSCA's forensic pathology panel that, "the dura was completely—as you can see here—completely destroyed, practically." (7 HSCA 247)

Mr. Lifton did not complete any kind of manuscript until August 1976, before "Area B" sprang to mind. According to Mr. Lifton's own chronology, none of the chapters to which he refers were written until after he received his book contract at the end of 1978.

Mr. Lifton leaps forward to his set of "1979 discoveries", after the HSCA investigation, and well after he received his book contract. He "discovered" that something happened in Dallas before takeoff. This is what he calls his "Area B." Again, he discovered nothing that he did not make happen himself, and his interpretation of events has been hotly

contested.

Lifton asserts that Dennis David's account of the arrival of one casket at Bethesda before the arrival of another meant that, "the Dallas casket was empty." Assuming *arguendo* David's recollections were accurate, he did not know what those caskets contained. That is Lifton's assumption. On that, and O'Connor's recollections—which Mr. O'Connor has since modified in part, but which also have been contradicted by other witnesses involved in the autopsy—Mr. Lifton leaps to the conclusion that the body was placed in a different casket before Air Force One took off from Love Field in Dallas. This is his self-proclaimed "Air Force One Insight."

The question remains, what was Dave Lifton doing during all those years that he was bluffing people with his non-existent manuscript about a non-existent secret? As Mr. Lifton's Compuserve essays and the later chapters of this study make clear, he was canvassing the research community for information, ideas, or theories to incorporate in his work. He would tell people that, while he could not disclose to them what he was working on, if they would share their information with him, he would put it in his book.

In all, it appears that Mr. Lifton, either on his own or with the help of others, amassed a number of ideas and theories that he could not tie together, let alone prove, until he obtained a commitment from a publisher. During the ensuing year or more that he spent writing the book, he struggled to make it all work for him.

The flimsiness of Lifton's support for the *Best Evidence* scenario, the careful juxtaposition of interview excerpts to make them seem more persuasive than they actually are, his near total dependency on HSCA-developed sources, and the obvious haste with which the later chapters of the book are formulated, compared with the earlier portion of the book, all tend to the conclusion that Lifton urgently needed cash.

David Lifton says in the Compuserve essays, "*Best Evidence* presents a radical approach to the evidence in the Kennedy assassination...one which, if there was a special prosecutor, could provide a valuable roadmap [sic] for a new investigation." We shall come to understand that, by "radical approach to the evidence," what he really means is, "I ignore what I don't like."

Of more immediate interest, however, is why didn't he give his road map to the old investigation, i.e., the House Select Committee on Assassinations? He seems to say in his book that, just as with *Ramparts*, it's because they weren't smart enough. Judging from the recollections of one former HSCA staff member, however, Mr. Lifton may have withheld his alleged secrets and his unpublished manuscript in pursuit of his own very different agenda.

During the planning stages of the HSCA investigation, senior staff attorneys became interested in conducting a limited dialogue with the Warren Commission critics. In early 1977, Kevin Walsh was a staff researcher whose responsibilities included advising his colleagues on the critics' work. Because he was previously familiar with the case, Walsh was asked to submit the names of discreet individuals who would best be able to give the attorneys useful in-person briefings. The plan was to invite them to the Committee's offices for "discussions of the evidence with an eye toward planning our course of investigation." Walsh saw this as "a critical opportunity to assist a duly authorized congressional investigation in benefiting from the years of prior scholarship and unofficial investigations."

He says that David Lifton, who stationed himself in Washington during much of the Committee's activities, was "lobbying intensely for an introduction to the staff." Walsh did not know Lifton well and had only met him for the first time in 1976. On the recommendation of a well-respected West Coast researcher, however, Lifton got the first opportunity to brief the HSCA staff. Walsh now recalls it as "the worst mistake I ever made." He describes what happened:

"The entire J.F.K. Task Force was assembled and also a number of senior counsel from the M.L.K. Task Force...[Lifton] took the stage and launched into his college circuit lecture talking down to some of the best qualified and most experienced detectives and prosecutors Congress had ever employed. He spoke to the staff as though they were children and would have to prove themselves before he would reveal any sensitive information. He flat-out declared he had explosive evidence that he was saving for his upcoming book and would only discuss the outline of it when the Committee evidenced that they were serious and knew their basics. Staff members were furious, and when Mr. Lifton declined to answer several of the first questions, senior staff counsel canceled the meeting and I was strongly criticized for having brought the man in." (Walsh, Kevin. Memorandum, June 3, 1993)

Walsh attributes the Committee's decision to scrub their planned series of briefings by the critics to Lifton's performance,

which he calls an "embarrassing disaster."

Lifton omitted all mention of this briefing session from *Best Evidence*, while attempting in Chapter 24 to convey a completely contradictory impression of his attitude toward the HSCA:

"I had decided to keep my distance from the Committee because I suspected their motives and methods. . . . I felt I might be used, and didn't want my material discredited But I felt some guilt about the course I was following"

In fact, however, the HSCA did not seek Lifton's advice; he was aggressive in seeking access to them. It was Lifton, according to Walsh, who was "most persistent" and "immediately available" to receive an audience with the staff. It might therefore be supposed that Lifton, who had confided his great secret in former Warren Commission attorneys years earlier, would be bursting to tell it to the HSCA. Lifton, who had spent all those years since 1966 hunting, diagnosing, and assimilating the work of various other researchers, might have been expected to be eager to share his vast store of knowledge with what some people fear was the last official investigation. Yet, it appears that, when they finally gave him the crucial opportunity, Lifton instead stonewalled them, insulted them, and humiliated his sponsor. In discussing his relations with staff counsel (see BE p. 554), he also conceals a fact that he related to me in a contemporary conversation, that he refused their request to make his manuscript available. Walsh says the incident had "long-lasting implications for the critics' opportunities" to achieve meaningful input into the HSCA investigation. Indeed, although I could only look at the situation from the outside, it seemed as though the critics generally were left out in the cold.

In August 1977, Sylvia Meagher called me and insisted I hold our conversation in the strictest confidence. She had been invited to submit a memorandum to Professor G. Robert Blakey, the new Chief Counsel to the HSCA who was hired in June, and to attend a weekend colloquium of several prominent critics with Blakey and members of his staff that September. She asked me to assist in preparing the memo, but I was to tell no one because Blakey insisted that she sign a secrecy oath as a pre-condition to her participation. Sylvia had serious misgivings about both the colloquium and the oath itself, but she acquiesced because she did not want to be criticized for withholding her support from an investigation that the critics had worked so hard to achieve.

Although the memorandum was heavily weighted toward problems with the medical evidence, other areas were discussed. We tacked on a list of 25 questions that I prepared to be submitted to Dr. George Burkley, the former White House physician. Sylvia sent the memo to Blakey and went down to Washington to attend the September colloquium.

That same month, the House Select Committee's forensic pathology panel convened for the first time, and six members of the panel, accompanied by HSCA staff counsel, met with Drs. Humes and Boswell. Considering the fundamental significance of the medical evidence to the case as a whole, one might assume that the HSCA staff would have absorbed the critics' insights and suggestions long before then, had they regarded the critics as serious and credible. (Sylvia was not the only critic to submit concrete proposals for investigating the medical evidence.) Walsh, on the other hand, believes that the purpose of the September 1977 colloquium was to get the participants to sign non-disclosure agreements. (Walsh, Kevin. Memorandum, June 3, 1993)

To the best of my knowledge and recollection, Sylvia never heard from Blakey or the staff again (at least, not on an official basis). Immediately upon the conclusion of the HSCA investigation, Blakey released the verbatim transcript of the September 1977 colloquium, obviously to make the point that he had given the critics their say.

Several years later, at my behest, Sylvia inquired of one of her former HSCA contacts, Donald "Andy" Purdy, who was chiefly responsible for developing the medical evidence, what had become of our memo and the list of questions for Burkley. Purdy told her that he never saw the memorandum—a document solicited from and prepared by one of the most respected Warren Report critics. This episode, and the already obvious propensity of the HSCA to promote and ridicule some of the more tenuous conspiracy theories, indicated that, whatever Kevin Walsh and others of similar sympathies and goals might otherwise have achieved, after Lifton, the HSCA did not take the critics in a serious vein.

Dr. Burkley consistently refused to grant private interviews to writers and researchers regarding the President's wounds and the conduct of the autopsy. He died in early January 1991.

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