

10 October 1972

Mr. Edward R. Williams
308 Charles Street
Belleville, Ontario, Canada

Dear Ed,

I am grateful for the several notes and greeting cards you have kindly sent to me in recent months, to which I am now making a belated reply. As I think you know already, I became ill during the first week of June and was hospitalized in July for eleven days. After a deceptive week of seeming recovery, I had a frightening relapse. There followed ten nightmarish days alone in my apartment, and then readmission to the hospital, for four weeks. "Recovered" again, I returned to my desk at the UN, lasting two whole weeks this time before becoming newly devastated by asthma and bronchial infection. Finally, yesterday I resumed work at my office, facing an enormous backlog of official paperwork as well as personal correspondence. This explains, I think, what must have seemed to you to be outright incivility or affront on my part.

Early in the course of this series of illnesses, recoveries, and relapses, I learned from Cyril Wecht that he had finally received a go-ahead from Burke Marshall. I did not disclose to Wecht at that time the serious degree of my disability, hoping that I would be sufficiently recovered in time to meet with Wecht and others to discuss all aspects and implications of his opportunity to inspect the autopsy materials. But my condition deteriorated. At one point, Wecht virtually suspected that I had been "reached" by the CIA--there seemed to him to be no other reason for withholding my help.

At about the same time, you will remember, there ensued a series of bitter accusations and quarrels among WR critics, some of whom regarded Wecht as "the enemy" and therefore refused him their cooperation while others threatened to bury him altogether under an avalanche of facts and figures. Seldom have I witnessed such a display of hysteria, pettiness, and pomposity--such juvenile self-righteousness or such mutual malice.

In retrospect, I can only feel glad that I was relatively remote from the storm center and the battleground. There was, I think, greater sanity in the psychiatric ward where I was twice a guest, diagnosed as a case of "involuntional depression". Involuntional, my eye! It was a pure and pristine Warren Report depression, of which the grotesque behaviour of some of the WR critics served as side effects.

Ultimately, the Fred Graham story ("...Mystery of the Missing Brain!") appeared on the front page of the Sunday Times. Here was a self-fulfilling prophecy, if I ever saw one. I was naive enough to be shocked by the slanting of the Graham story, especially by the attempt to implicate Wecht as a creature of the Fensterwald Committee and a buddy of the lunatic Garrison. Later press reports of Wecht's remarks--and in particular the exclusive interview he gave the Enquirer, which you enclosed with your note of 4th October--could not, however, be explained away as slanting or misquotation. I confess my disappointment and anguish at the repeated characterization of Oswald as the Tippit killer, especially as that canard has been amply exposed in the literature. I admit my pain to find Oswald described as one of the JFK assassins ...to read the stale Garrison/Lane fiction of RFK emissaries...the sophomoric and irrelevant charges against the CIA, a la Garrison...and I admit my utter dismay and consternation to hear from a colleague that a critic who had crossed the continent to give Wecht the benefit of his wisdom and advice had subsequently remarked that we WR critics would simply have to resign ourselves to the fact that the autopsy photos and X-rays support the conclusions of the Warren Commission!

I am sorry indeed that Wecht did not confine his public remarks to the autopsy evidence and that he did not hammer away harder at the irreconcilable conflict between the photos and X-rays and the official conclusions. I do not think that he knows the Tippit case evidence, for if he did know it he would never suggest that Oswald was inculpated in that killing. At the same time, Wecht has been a most outspoken and uncompromising adversary of the Warren Report. What other forensic pathologist has spoken out consistently and bluntly? Has given his time and expertise to various WR critics? Has risked personal reputation? Has incurred the hostility of low creatures such as Finck and Russell Fisher? Even if Wecht did harm to the position of the critics--and I must concede that some damage has been done--I cannot ascribe it to some sinister subterfuge or ominous purpose.

I do not think that I could have influenced Wecht to abandon the effort to examine the autopsy materials, had I tried, but the fact is that I actively supported his effort and confidently expected a dramatic turn-about in our vexing situation. My illness during the crucial days is irrelevant and I take whatever blame or responsibility I may have incurred. There seems to be enough to go around.

I have received a number of direct and indirect indictments of my role in the matter of Wecht's findings and pronouncements and this letter to you is perhaps the best way to respond, by circulating copies to those concerned. We had an opportunity to reverse events and to establish definitively the innocence of Oswald and the operation of a highly sophisticated conspiracy. I fear that we have lost the opportunity, as Weisberg and Roffman predicted, and that is a bitter blow indeed. I have no apologies for my own published work on the Dallas assassination but, in hindsight, I do regret that I did not close the chapter at an earlier date, when it became obvious that I did not possess the omniscience that some WR critics do enjoy.

Please keep well and happy in your new setting and I will always be glad to hear from you as a personal and valued friend.

Sincerely yours,