

1525 Acton St.
Berkeley, CA 94702
February 1, 1986

Stephen H. Trott
Assistant Attorney General
Criminal Division
Department of Justice
Washington, DC 20530

Dear Mr. Trott:

Dr. George Burkley, who was the President's personal physician in 1963, recently said "that he believed that President Kennedy's assassination was the result of a conspiracy."

This information appears on page 49 of "Reasonable Doubt," a new book by Henry Hurt, who is a Roving Editor of Reader's Digest.

Hurt notes that Dr. Burkley's "startling statement ... amplified an obscure exchange Dr. Burkley had in an oral-history interview" in 1967. Asked "if he agrees with the Warren Report 'on the number of bullets that entered the President's body,'" Dr. Burkley replied, "I would not care to be quoted on that." Since he had just indicated agreement with the Warren Report on the head wound as the cause of death, his unwillingness to reply certainly suggests disagreement, which - on that particular point - implies belief in a conspiracy.

Dr. Burkley did not testify to the Warren Commission, which published an account by him which is essentially devoid of medical detail. (CE 1126) He was interviewed five times by William Manchester for his 1967 book, "The Death of a President."

The House Select Committee on Assassinations noted Dr. Burkley's role in some of the administrative complications surrounding the autopsy. HSCA foot-notes refer to an interview, an affidavit, and an "outside contact report," none of which were published. (I commented on the importance of the unpublished HSCA medical evidence in my letter of March 17, 1981, to Rep. Louis Stokes, which I sent to Mr. Keuch of the AG's office on April 27, 1981, and to Mr. Richard of your Division on April 23, 1984.)

As far as I know, Dr. Burkley has never been officially asked about various important medical and procedural issues. For example, he wrote "accepted and approved" on the certificate prepared by the chief autopsy surgeon, Dr. James J. Humes, relating to his destruction of "certain preliminary draft notes." (Not published by the Warren Commission or the HSCA, but reproduced on page 524 of "Post Mortem," by Harold Weisberg.)

Dr. Burkley responded to a subsequent inquiry by Mr. Hurt "with an abrupt refusal to discuss the case." He apparently knows more than he is willing to discuss with unofficial investigators.

As the only doctor who saw the President's body both in the Dallas hospital and at the Bethesda autopsy, he is in a crucial position to clarify the evidence (presented by David Lifton in "Best Evidence") of surgical changes to the body.

Perhaps your office has already obtained information from Dr. Burkley. If not, I hope that you will try to do so. It would be most unfortunate to close the case while an allegation of conspiracy from such a key witness remains unexplained.

Sincerely yours,

Paul L. Hoch
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cc: Mr. Hurt
Prof. G. Robert Blakey
Dr. Michael Baden