

13 July 1968

Dear Tom,

I did not phone you last night because my niece and her husband were here for dinner and when they left it was nearly midnight, so I did not risk awakening you. However, Ed Epstein called me, despite the lateness of the hour, and filled me in on the reaction to his New Yorker article. It was a relief to learn that you were not getting the brunt of G's displeasure, but rather comical to discover that Jones Harris was in hot water! Jones had called me Tuesday night, to find out where he could reach Tink, and also to ask me to be on the panel opposing G. when he makes a public appearance in New York on the 7th, I think, of August. I declined to participate, for a number of reasons but mainly because I don't feel that G. should be taken seriously at all, in terms of "debating" his nonsense and improvisations, and I certainly would have no intention of contributing directly or indirectly to his fund-raising, which I believe is one of the objects of the exercise.

It appears that Jones then proceeded on Wednesday to call Ed and urge him to be on the panel. Ed said when he called me last night that he had accepted, in a weak moment, but would now have to call Jones and tell him that he would not appear, after all. He was reluctant and uncomfortable about it, but said that he would call Jones right then and there, to get it over with. A few minutes later, Ed called me back, laughing heartily—it seems that Jones himself is "through" with his efforts to arrange G's public appearance here, and through with G and his "investigation," because (Jones first said) he was so shocked by G's responding to Ed's article by merely launching a new sensation about the "foreign intelligence service," reported in The NY Times of 7/12/68. Then, as the conversation continued, it emerged that Jones was getting the blame for Ed's article, and for inviting Ed to be on the panel, and that his romance with the D.A. was over on that ground, whatever Jones may have felt about the story in The Times.

By the way, I played the record that you gave me, yesterday when the last aftermath of the housepainting was gone and all the furniture finally back in place. As you know, I am unfamiliar with the jazz idiom, but I thought parts of the record were most musical, sweet, and haunting. I read the jacket commentary with interest, too, and only regret that my acquaintance with the whole milieu is so wackety that I cannot make any informed comment. But at least I now have one jazz record in my collection of chamber and ballet music!

This morning I received the copy of your letter of the 10th to Tink Thompson. (I don't know when it will reach Tink, who was camping somewhere in Wyoming last I heard from him, out of touch with the world, and not to return to Haverford until September. If you don't get a reply in reasonable time, it may be that the letter is being held for his return—in which case, you may wish to send a copy to him c/o Paul A. Violich, 2832 Divisadero, San Francisco.) Meanwhile, let me comment on a few points in your letter.

My comments about the certificates of 11/24/63 was based merely on their tone and contents. After working for more than 20 years in a bureaucracy, it seemed to me that a certificate relating to an action of the same day would more likely have been phrased differently; while a certificate or affidavit executed at a later time, to explain or certify to an antecedent action or event, would have been phrased like the actual certificates in question. I did not make a strong claim or argument but merely stated my impression, as to the chronology, and I might not have written anything at all on that question but for the fact that every other part of the autopsy evidence and documents raised serious doubts and questions or were clearly suspect. If the certificates were the only dubious elements in the body of medical and post-mortem evidence, I would not have raised questions about them. Certainly, I do not know for a fact that they were written after the passage of time and given a deliberately misleading date; nor do I even have strong suspicion that it was so. I do consider it a possibility which must be considered and assessed in the light of the numerous other, more serious problems which the autopsy documents and testimony pose.

I do not think that "the only really vital question about the autopsy relates to the location of the back wound." I think the head wound or wounds are also vital; and as I have detailed in AAF, the known facts about the head wound are contradictory and incomplete, and irreconcilable with the relevant sequence of the Zapruder film. As to the location of the back wound: You seem to be arguing in your letter to Tink that at the time that Humes handed in the autopsy report, on 11/24/63, he had neither reason to falsify it nor directives as to the manner in which it should be falsified. There is another possibility---that is, that Humes and his colleagues were unqualified, incompetent, and careless, and erred in their findings in such a way as to create the basis for Specter's single-bullet theory. If and when Humes realized that the official autopsy report contained serious errors, if and when he realized that the objective evidence was wholly incompatible with Specter's assumptions, he did not admit to error nor take the initiative in raising obstacles to the hypothesis which Specter clearly, and the Commission presumably, had embraced. He accommodated the official views, rather than confess that the autopsy he had performed was amateurish and deficient, and rather than raise the heresy of more than one assassin and therefore of conspiracy.

In other words, Humes did not have to falsify anything on 11/24/63. He had merely to file an erroneous report then, and, at a later point in time, to insist (whether in ignorance, uncertainty, or guile) that the erroneous findings were correct and that they could be reconciled with evidence such as the holes in the clothing, the head-snap in the Zapruder film, the condition of the stretcher bullet, etc., all of which became accessible to Humes only after the autopsy examination and report (or so I assume, as there is no indication at all that he examined these objects before or on 11/24/63).

Under these assumptions, how can we explain the apparent "shift in the location of the wound by six inches, as early as November 24"? Could it have been an honest error, rather than a deliberate and anachronistic falsification? Thanks to an unpublished manuscript shown to me confidentially, fairly recently (and after AAF was published), I think that this can indeed be argued. I don't wish to violate the confidence in which I undertook to read the unpublished ms. (the publication of which I am trying to facilitate), but I think that I can indicate that the author presents very convincing physiological arguments which explain why a bullet wound which in fact was 5.5 inches below the top of the collar would appear to the autopsy surgeons to measure 5.5 inches below the mastoid bone. If so, they would have recorded honestly the measurement "14 cm. below the right mastoid" and indicated honestly the apparent visual locus of the bullet hole well below the neck as on the notorious face-sheet. The error, unrealized or unretracted, later served as a platform for the single-bullet theory.

Now I come to the dates on which the Secret Service and the FBI came into possession of the autopsy report. My statement in AAF p.138 that the Secret Service had the actual autopsy report when they conducted the on-sitetests of 5 December 1963 was based on Commission Document 37 or 370 from the National Archives, which reports that the autopsy report was given to Robert I. Bouck of the Secret Service PRS on 11/26/63, and on the testimony of Dr. Carrico (3H 363-64) and other Parkland Hospital witnesses to the effect that Secret Service agents who interviewed them within a week of 11/22/63 had the autopsy report, or at least seemed to know the autopsy findings.

As to the FBI's access to the autopsy report, there was no information available on this point until after the publication of Inquest. In the furor created by the book, writers and reporters set out to learn the date on which the FBI had come into possession of the autopsy report. As a result, J. Edgar Hoover made an official statement on 11/26/66 (printed in full in the NY Times that date) that "The FBI and the Warren Commission each received a copy of the official autopsy report on December 23, 1963." (Actually all of this information is in AAF but not all in one place, so I have
(over)

recapitulated it here.)

From all this, I can only conclude that the FBI had a copy of the autopsy report in hand before it filed the FBI Supplemental Report of 1/13/64, in which it reiterated that the bullet had lodged in the back and had not transited, although the autopsy report supposedly said as of 11/24/63 that the bullet had exited at the anterior neck at or near the Adam's apple; and that the Secret Service, supposedly with that same autopsy report in hand as from 11/26/63, conducted on-site tests on 12/5/63 to determine how the President could have been struck in the throat by a bullet from the 6th floor window.

Unless and until those aberrations are satisfactorily explained, the suspicion *remains* that the undated autopsy report is not what Humes handed in on 11/24/63 but an altered document, changed at a later date (subsequent to 1/13/64) to accommodate the single-bullet hypothesis.

I think that I have answered quite precisely the question you put to Tink in your letter: "Do we know for sure that the FBI and/or the Secret Service ever saw the official autopsy report?" Clearly, the FBI on 12/23/63 and the SS on 11/26/63 did receive what was at that time the official autopsy report, but which may not be the same official autopsy report that was entered into evidence in March 1964 and subsequently published by the Commission.

NOTE: I just realized that I thoughtlessly am typing only one carbon copy of this letter and that I should have made a second carbon for Tink Thompson. As I have no access to a xerox for the summer months, I hope that you will find it possible to xerox the original and send a copy to Tink on my behalf.

One final word: although I have suggested in this letter that it is possible that Humes and/or his colleagues could have made a genuine error on 11/22-24/63 with regard to the position of the bullet wound in the back, or the back of the neck, and that they did not ^{neccessari} engage ⁱⁿ falsification on 11/22-24/63, I continue to believe it possible and even probable that the autopsy report of 11/24/63 was a different report from the published undated autopsy report. I continue to think so largely on the basis of the FBI Supplemental Report and the SS on-site tests, both of which are incompatible and irreconcilable with the published autopsy report, as well as on the basis of second-hand or hearsay information from sources I consider reliable which support the hypothesis that the autopsy surgeons (and to some extent, the Parkland doctors also) did "adjust" their findings to the single-missile, lone-assassin hypothesis for which the Commission and its counsel argued, both off and on the record.

I would like to emphasize again that the fact that the Garrison "investigation" has no shred of validity does not mean that the Warren Commission's findings are thereby proven valid, and my conviction that if the same impartial and objective scrutiny is made, both "investigations" are ^{found} fraudulent and perverse. You know, of course, how dismayed I felt when respected critics of the Warren Report fell into the fallacy of believing that because Garrison also attacked the WR, he had to be trusted and believed, despite the mounting pile of his unmistakable misstatements and inventions. It is very disquieting now, along the same lines, to find that Garrison's opponents allow their disappointment in him to thrust them into the posture of apologists for the Warren Report, whether by reason of genuine conversion, emotional recoil, or inadvertence. None of Garrison's affronts to fact and logic invest the corresponding affronts of the Warren Commission with the slightest respectability. Much as I should wish to avoid an attitude of self-righteousness, I am frankly appalled by the application of a double standard which condones the violence to truth of Garrison, or of the Warren Report, while denouncing the the equal violence to truth of the party not condoned. If that is to be the rule, it is a complete triumph for moral and intellectual corruption.

All the best,