

10 September 1971

Mr. Bob Smith  
CTIA  
927 15th St NW # 409  
Washington DC 20005

Dear Bob,

Many thanks for your interesting letter of the 6th. Let me deal first with the questions of the autopsy photos and X-rays. Tink Thompson and I have been in touch with Cyril Wecht on this question since (as I recall it) early spring, having in mind the imminent expiration of the five-year moratorium and the need to pursue--for the record, and despite the unlikelihood of success--every opportunity to obtain access to this pivotal evidence. I have been in continuous consultation with Dr. Wecht and have provided him with a synthesis of the contradictory findings set forth in the original Humes autopsy, Humes review, and Russell Fisher panel reports, in case he should ultimately be able to view the photos and X-rays.

In other words, we seem to have been thinking and acting on parallel lines, you and I, although each unaware of the other's interest. I would have kept you informed, had it occurred to me to do so, but no harm seems to have resulted and we seem to take the same general approach. Actually, I was in Dr. Wecht's company on the night almost five years ago when the news story broke of the so-called transfer of the photos and X-rays to the Archives, and we have remained in close touch on the question ever since then. However, there is no issue at all of your "trying to steal the show" or anything like that. If you can provide Dr. Wecht with additional material for his reference, it might be helpful to him--even if it duplicates what he has already, or is superfluous, there is still no harm done. As for objections by Harold Weisberg or any other critic, I have not consulted anyone, since the whole matter is basically one of an initiative to be taken by Dr. Wecht. He is fully aware of Harold's singular contribution to our knowledge and understanding of the autopsy, and I believe worked closely with him in connection with the hearing before Judge Halleck in 1969.

On the issue of "trying to steal the show", I do not ascribe the worst possible motives to actions by any of the critics which clearly can be viewed as conscientious and well-motivated, even if they happen to be parallel. A reason for the friction that has often arisen among two or more critics is the tendency of some to over-react and to see sinister purposes where they do not exist, or do not necessarily exist. It is that kind of hyper-suspicion (and exaggerated secrecy and sense of personal prerogative) that has produced needless bitterness and accusation, in, for example, the matter of Boggs and the FBI.

I learned very early, back in 1965 and 1966, that where certain of the critics were concerned, even the most simple and unambiguous or casual matters were constantly converted into crises of confidence and grounds for hysterical recrimination. I have therefore always tried to keep maximum distance and detachment from these colleagues. In more general terms, the danger of such needless imbroglios has caused me to avoid involvement with committees and like groups, and to keep my work and activities strictly independent. Thus, I several times declined to join the CTIA, mainly because it included among its founders and directors a man as despicable as Garrison, but also on general principle. Just two

days ago I was disgusted to read Bud Fensterwald's article on Garrison in the August issue of Computers and Automation, which caused me to regret even those tentative and cautious contacts I have recently had with the CTIA---although not, I hasten to add, my contacts with you or Jim Lesar, which I do value. Please ask Jim to share with you the letter I sent him yesterday, if he has not already done so, on this very point.

Much of what I have said above applies to the unfortunate circumstances surrounding the "now-infamous FBI memo", e.g., failure of communication, readiness to regard things in the worst instead of the best possible light, and inordinate jealousy of and claim to "prior rights". Two distinct threads of paranoia have characterized the critics' community from the first--a tendency to accusations of plagiarism when only independent or parallel discovery or initiative is involved, and a readiness to accuse all and sundry adversaries of being CIA agents. The best remedy is to steer clear of the practitioners of these follies, so far as possible. I might add here that Harold and I have disagreed from the outset on the moral and legal culpability of Earl Warren and other Commission members for the WR. I believe that Warren, at least, was a conscious party to and guiding spirit of the whole fraud, and that it cannot be palmed off on the lawyers alone. The same is true, by default at least, of the other members of the Commission.

You will judge from this that while I do not ascribe bad motives where good ones are equally plausible, neither do I hesitate to recognize mischief, malice, or other dereliction where they clearly do exist. This brings me to Paul Hoch. I note that you have sent him a copy of your letter to me dated 9/6/71, and perhaps of our earlier correspondence. I had long held a most high and friendly opinion of Hoch and it therefore gave me great distress and disappointment to have to revise entirely my view of him. That was necessitated by his now-infamous "melon" paper of about a year ago--an enterprise on Hoch's part for which I can see no justification whatever and which convinced me that he is not trustworthy, if only because of confusion and weakness rather than intentional duplicity or purposeful sabotage. I have had nothing whatever to do with Hoch since I sent him my comments on his melon paper, which is about as dirty and shoddy a piece of work from a serious researcher as we are likely to see and in a class with Fensterwald's attempt to whitewash and sanctify the bombastic half-wit and cheap creek Jim Garrison.

Therefore, Bob, please do not share any letters I send to you with Paul Hoch. What you do with your own letters is for you to decide--I am not seeking to influence your own relations with Hoch, but only to make clear my own desire to be completely disassociated from him.

I hope that nothing I have said in this letter about Garrison, Hoch, or anyone else is personally distressing to you, but these are my sentiments and convictions and I felt that I should make them absolutely clear rather than open the way for any future misunderstandings between you and me, which I would deeply regret.

Re: the Givens article--please ask Jim Lesar to share with you the copy I sent him of my letter to Belin dated 9/7/71, commenting on his "reply" to my charges. I look forward to further cooperation with you and with Jim Lesar as individuals, on matters of evidence and research. With kind personal regards,

Yours sincerely,

Sylvia Meagher  
302 West 12 St NYC10014