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Sept. 6, 1971

Mrs. Sylvia Meagher  
302 W. 12th St.  
New York, N. Y. 10014

Dear Sylvia:

I have owed you a letter for some time now. Having heard from Jerry Policoff that you are back from your summer vacation, perhaps this is a good time to relieve some of my feelings of guilt for not having written sooner.

To take up the more urgent matters first, I take it you are well aware of the impendency of Oct. 29, 1971 -- the expiration of the five-year restriction set by Burke Marshall on accessibility of the autopsy photos & X-rays to "any recognized expert in the field of pathology or related areas of science or technology ...", quoting from the Marshall/Knott letter agreement of 10/29/66. I have written to Dr. Wecht and to Dr. Robert Forman about this and to suggest that they undertake the steps necessary to obtain Marshall's and the GSA Administrator's approval. Dr. Wecht has replied and indicated his intention of doing so. I have not yet heard from Dr. Forman.

Dr. Wecht, in his reply, emphasized the considerable delicacy of the matter and the desirability of his making the approach independently, i. e., without any affiliation with us or any other organization (except possibly some kind of scientific group). I am in complete agreement with his suggestion in that respect and have written him accordingly. The situation seems to call for self-restraint and an absolute ban on publicity.

In the meantime, however, I have been conducting a review of the available medical data, including what is in the Volumes, 1968 Panel Review, court proceedings, the various critics' books, etc., to prepare a digest for advance study by Dr. Wecht or anyone else who might be permitted to examine the autopsy materials. My thought here is not to tout any particular theories as to what happened, but rather to emphasize the various uncertainties and apparent discrepancies which need to be resolved (if that is possible) in order to construct a coherent explanation. For example, the exact location, shape, size, and angular orientation of the elliptical entry wound in the back of the President's ~~skull~~ head comprise a set of data which are nowhere clearly and unequivocally described and about which there has been much controversy, and much inconsistent testimony.

I would be happy to have your thoughts on this subject, particularly if they represent any amplification or modification of the views you expressed in AATF. You might prefer to write Dr. Wecht directly on the subject, and of course I would have no objection. I am trying to present to him a reasonably broad summary of different views on the matter, omitting only the more outlandish possibilities.

I hope I do not wind up being roundly condemned for trying to steal the show, mis-using or misinterpreting other people's ideas, etc. I had raised this question about whether or not anyone was planning anything for the 10/29 date about two months ago. Bud said he was not aware of anything being planned, and he also expressed some pessimism

as to whether anything could be gained by it. Not having heard anything more, or any indication that anyone was even going to try, I finally decided to get the ball rolling myself, whence the letters to Wecht and Forman. I assure you my only purpose here has been to promote some action that seemed called for by a forthcoming opportunity to get more information about the President's wounds and the autopsy. I hope even Harold Weisberg would not object. (Or does he?)

This brings me to the subject of the now-infamous FBI memo. First of all, I appreciate your kind remarks about it, as well as those of Paul Hoch, which you were evidently able to render with some objectivity notwithstanding Harold's advance billing (which he has not yet found the strength to show me). There are many things about that episode on which I could recriminate at length (I almost quit the CTIA over it, and for a while it caused some bad feelings between Jim Lesar and myself), but I shall confine myself to just these few:

1) The memo was intended for Boggs' use without attribution -- no names, whether of individuals or the CTIA, would be associated with it, except Boggs' own, of course. In other words, it was to be represented as Boggs' own views, or those of his staff.

2) Boggs had complete freedom to do whatever he wanted with it -- use it whole, use it in part, or add things to it. That is why it was constructed the way it was, more or less in "modules", with citations that he or his staff could check in the Volumes before committing himself to any particular item.

3) The matter came up rather suddenly, as a result of a contact between Bud and a member of Boggs' staff whom Bud has known for some time, and it was needed in a hurry --- Boggs had already made his allegation about FBI phone-tapping on Congressmen and needed some ammunition. Bud drew up a hurried outline, and I went to work on it with the Volumes, AATF, and a few other sources, including a memo by Paul and quite a bit of my own research, as a result of which several of Bud's earliest ideas were dropped, most were retained, and a few new ones were added. Jim contributed part D (about Ramsey Clark). The emphasis was on items which could be documented (for Boggs' comfort), but the language was intentionally strident in view of the controversy then raging, and the presumption that these were to represent Boggs' own thoughts (which does make a difference, as anyone who has ever written speeches for someone else will verify). The whole thing was put together, through three or four drafts, in less than a week.

4) Apparently Harold was in communication with Boggs or his office concurrently, perhaps even before Bud was. I really don't know, and Harold hasn't shown me his correspondence on the matter, but Harold claims to have had the idea first and therefore that we (or I, or maybe just Bud) stole it. Perhaps also Harold supplied something of his own to Boggs-- if so he hasn't shown it to us, although he insists we ought to show him everything before it goes out so that he can correct it. Furthermore, when Harold did see it, during a visit to him by Jim, he delivered a long tirade claiming that every item was either in error or not a fault of the FBI (whom, of course, he has never criticized unjustly), that all these things were the Commission's fault and we should be criticizing them, and then, with copious crocodile tears, how could we do such a thing to good old Hale Boggs, a member of the Commission? In recent conversation, Harold insists that even the Jan. 9, 1964 FBI Summary Report was the fault of the Commission, apparently because they didn't either: (a) accept it as gospel truth in regard to the wounds; or (b) denounce it and J. Edgar Hoover publicly.

5) As it turned out, Boggs chose not to use it in any way, and perhaps that is just as well, although I for one would have no objection to seeing a showdown between the

FBI and a member of the Warren Commission over these questions, and I'm not sure I understand Harold's compassion for Boggs. After you and Paul submitted your comments, which were easier to understand, Jim revised and re-typed it, in the course of which four or five of the citations became disarranged. In that, its present form, Bud has circulated copies to one or two other places, although now I think it is for CTIA attribution, which is not what I had originally anticipated, as otherwise I would have chosen rather different (more conservative) language.

Personally, I am disgusted with the whole experience, and from now on I'm going to write only for my self, with my own name attached to it. I mention all this because it has caused me to be somewhat uncommunicative for several months, and because I am convinced that neither you nor Paul knew the real story behind that memo, either from Harold or Jim.

I was pleased to see your article on Givens in the Texas Observer, and it was amusing to see Belin avoid the point. I'll be looking forward to your further comments on the matter.

Sincerely,

*Bob Smith*

cc: Paul Hoch