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OLD WARNER ROAD

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Miss Sylvia Meagher
c/o The Bobbs-Merrill Company
New York, N Y

Dear Miss Meagher:

Even though I have not ~~not~~ finished reading your ACCESSORIES AFTER THE FACT, I can't wait to pass on to you two notions of my own which I have not seen mentioned in print, nor yet discovered in your book. Reading about the assassination is only an interest of mine, I have not read everything available about it, and I am without any special knowledge, so these points may not be correct or even interesting to a scholar such as yourself, but I present them, anyway.

In an article in the Saturday Evening Post published early in December after the assassination, Dr. Malcolm Perry gives his story of his part in the care of President Kennedy. My copy of the magazine is stored in the attic with other material I have accumulated, so I cannot quote exactly, but certainly to the point, since one statement made a definite impression. Dr. Perry, making the point that he felt it was necessary to be sure that every detail of the event must be reported accurately, since it was of historical importance, said that it was necessary to do the tracheotomy below the neck wound, in order not to change its appearance. This would indicate that this particular wound had not been "obliterated" when viewed at the official autopsy.

The other item that seems most peculiar to me is the various statements made by Dr. Humes that he made and then destroyed his original notes on the autopsy. While this is in itself an incredible action, it also indicates a situation which I cannot believe is logical. I have never attended an autopsy and so do not know exactly how one is performed, but my daughter assisted at part of one during her service in the WAC. Her role was to note the findings of the doctor. For this purpose, a printed form was supplied with spaces in which specific findings in every area of the body were to be noted. A doctor performing an autopsy obviously cannot make notes at the same time - it seems only reasonable that he would announce what he saw to someone who would either write it down or enter the information on such a form. The idea of Dr. Humes doing the autopsy and then going home to jot down notes about what he saw stretches the imagination entirely too far. Did he, then, destroy the official autopsy report?

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I have not read all of the Warren Commission Report, in spite of my interest in the affair, and I doubt very much if more than a handful of people have, unless they are dedicated students. I am a professional writer, and a great deal of my work is based on intensive research which I translate into language understandable to the non-expert in the particular field. From this viewpoint, I find the Report one of the worst jobs of this type I have ever attempted to read. It is muddled, confusing, disorganized, and deliberately dull. I tackle it occasionally and always decide those who compiled it were either terribly inept and stupid, or intended to discourage the reader.

I have, however, read almost all of the twenty six volumes of Hearings and Exhibits, and so far as I know am the only one in New Hampshire to have done so - at least I am the only one to have borrowed them from our State Library. Your brief description of their contents in your introduction seems remarkably kind to me. In the copies I read, the hearings were not in chronological order, many of the reports of FBI interviews were printed more than once, and some of them were printed only in part - that is, a report of an interview would stop at the end of a page, but not at the end of the interview. It was also interesting to me that much of the material was reproduced so poorly that it was practically impossible to read, if it consisted of words, or impossible to understand, if it was photographic material.

During my research for my most recent book, which concerned the American Revolution, I came to the conclusion that one of the most important differences between a democratic government and any other kind was the decision as of the former that every citizen was entitled to know everything about his government since in a democracy the citizen is the government. What really worries me about the assassination is that we, as a people, will not care enough about what really happened to demand the truth. I found the New York Times review of ACCESSORIES AFTER THE FACT particularly irritating, because of this very thing. (Mr. Graham's statement that the book is a bore reminded me of a high school student who once told me she didn't like history, because it had nothing to do with her.) Your immediate reaction that a Communist would be blamed does not seem so much emotional to me as reasoned, and not only because I had the same thought myself. Neither of these matters has any particular place in the review of a book such as yours, and the fact that the content and purpose of the book are practically ignored is rather terrifying. If there is any reasonable doubt at all about the accuracy of the Warren Report, few things can be so important to our country as to remove this doubt at once. Otherwise we must assume that we are not a democracy, but a captive people ruled by a group which decides for itself and by itself what it is proper for us to know.

Thank you very much for ACCESSORIES AFTER THE FACT, and all of work it entailed for the sake of America.

Sincerely,


Duane Bradley Sanborn