

Mr. Harold Weisberg
Route 8
Frederick, Md.

31 March 1969

Dear Harold,

I have mailed back to you under separate cover, insured, the ms. of Post-Mortem III. Thank you for offering me the chance to read it. As you know, I had read the ms. of Post-Mortem only a week earlier, and that proved to be regrettable in that there was too little time lapse between the two readings to produce the maximum attention-span for PM III.

Nevertheless, I can say in all sincerity that your attack on the 1968 panel report is a tour-de-force of the highest order, in vigilance, relentlessness, detail, and scope. Not a comma, not a speck, has escaped notice or interpretation. The 1968 panel report is such a feeble, sloppy and disgraceful document--not in terms of its avowed purpose, which cannot be a serious yardstick for its examination, but in terms of its implicit purpose of cover-up and whitewash--that the scorn you heap upon its authors and your moral indignation at the insult they have offered to the intelligence of the critics and the public is certainly understandable.

However, I have some doubt of the wisdom of sustaining throughout PM III a kind of continuous tone of rage at boiling-point, however justified the rage may be, for though it is intended to assault the federal authorities and their servant-surgeons, it begins to assail the reader--which is not intended or to be desired. You know that I am not advocating antiseptic, unemotional writing--not at all. I am only suggesting that the rage and sarcasm should be carefully and strategically injected, as punctuations to an otherwise calm, objective exposition of fact and analysis, in order that the emotion, when expressed, has its maximum impact and at times may even be anticipated by the reader's own anger. The ms. really does need some greater variation of tone and mood.

Of course, you wrote PM III at fantastic speed, that is obvious. But what is achieved in terms of rapidity may sacrifice clarity of writing, organization, and economy. I feel sure that if you had the luxury of time, the ratio of verbiage to factual and analytical content, and the tone and style, would have benefited. Unless you were writing against a deadline, you might have forced yourself to take it more slowly in order that the finished ms. would have the best prospects for publication. I understand and share your desire to build a record but it is also important to reach the public, to strike while the iron is hot. In my view, the major points of conflict and deception should be extracted from the ms. and embodied in an article of magazine-length (e.g., the differing inventories of the photos and X-rays, the black negatives with no images, the missing X-rays of the four extremities, the four-inch shift in the location of the so-called entrance wound in the head, the alleged bullet fragments in the neck area, the position of the entrance wound in the back and analysis of vertical and lateral angles and the failure of the 1968 panel to address itself to the specific points of contention which were supposedly the *raison d'etre* for its examination of the autopsy evidence).

Since the article would cover only a selected number of questions, it would not compromise later publication of PM III in its entirety. Such an article might be of interest to Ramparts or the NY Review of Books and most certainly to the L.A. Free Press and the underground papers in general. I have also been told that Reader's Digest is interested in articles on the JFK assassination, for whatever that is worth.

I could have ended this letter at the second paragraph, Harold, and if I have prolonged it in order to comment more critically it is because of my genuine concern that work as penetrating and decisive as your autopsy on the 1968 panel report should have the best possible opportunity to make its impact. If these suggestions offend you or raise any doubts in your mind about my good faith or good will, you may be sure that I will not venture into such commentary again. Meanwhile, I do urge you to review the entire ms. before any publication of it, to modify and vary the general tone and to restructure sentences to inject greater clarity.

My point about sentence structure and clarity applies to page 1 line 1, which should read "...had charged that a prominent..." (These examples are literally at random.) Page 6, para. 6, line 1: "Here, with the subtlety characteristic of lawyers, Marshall really says that he was not..." Page 8, para. 5: "As I said in a letter to Marshall afterward, it is a contract not in the family's interest, conceived under the most dubious circumstances, and given to the New York Times -- in open violation of regulations -- on what was, for all practical purposes, an exclusive basis."

Page 27, para. 4: "Despite obfuscation at the outset of the report and omission at the end of the document, we can determine beyond doubt by persevering through the verbiage that the task performed by the panel was entirely different from the task it was asked to perform. This is stated in the first paragraph as a request

to examine various photographs, X-ray films, (etc.)"

After the quotation, Harold, I think you should make it clear why the conclusion (that "the photographs and X-rays...support the above-quoted portions of the original Autopsy Report...") is in conflict with the stated purpose ("...to examine...and to evaluate their significance..." etc.). I realize that you have made your point as to the fate of the "original Autopsy Report" and the other points, but you have dispersed your comments and furthermore created a distraction by discussing, immediately after the quotation from the first paragraph of the panel's report, its reference to the death rather than the murder of the President.

Page 44, para. 4: "The most superficial "examination" of the photographs and X-rays raises questions which the panel should have answered and which an honest panel would have felt impelled to answer. One simple but basic question is, did the panel have before it all the film?" Same page, next paragraph: "A proper "examination" of the four exhibits under "bullets," an examination warranting the weight and force which the panel knew would be attached to its conclusions, required prolonged time and effort, including the search for and mastery of the relevant detailed testimony and documents."

These examples will suffice to indicate the kind of editing and re-writing which would, in my opinion, greatly enhance the ms. But in closing, I want to reiterate my tribute to your tenacious, all-inclusive, feat of scrutiny and exposure of a fraudulent "verification" exercise.

Sincerely yours,

Jeffrey Beagles