

25 November 1966

Mr. Peter Kihss  
The New York Times  
229 West 43 Street  
New York, N.Y. 10036

Dear Mr. Kihss,

I have been following with great interest your stories on the Warren Report controversy and especially the story of today, dealing largely with Dr. Boswell's statements.

It is surprising to learn that Dr. Boswell's autopsy diagram "placed the wound incorrectly" and that he would have been "more careful" had he known that the sketch would become public record. One would have thought he would have been "more careful" because he was conducting an autopsy on the body of an assassinated President which would become legal evidence in a trial of the accused assassin (which at the time of the post-mortem was to be anticipated).

It is true that while the "dot" is placed incorrectly, certain measurements have been placed in the margin which are purported to place the wound correctly. But it must be noted that this is the only instance in which such measurements were attached to any wound or other finding diagrammed (scar, incisions, etc.). Since the neck is so clearly delineated on the "work sheet" it is difficult to understand how so gross an error was made in placing the dot but such apparent precision exercised in recording the measurement ("14 cm. from the right acromium" etc.). It is difficult to understand also why the Warren Commission did not question the autopsy surgeons about this conspicuous discrepancy, which at least appeared to correspond with the location of the bullet holes in the clothing, and why we had to wait for Inquest to see for the first time photographs which showed the holes (those published by the Commission did not show the bullet holes).

We had to wait for Inquest also for the first indication of the existence of FBI reports which contradicted the autopsy report description of the site and nature of the back wound. Dr. Boswell dismisses those FBI reports as "simply wrong" but J. Edgar Hoover in a letter of September 12, 1966, maintained that they were correct. Dr. Boswell, and apparently Dr. Humes, now concedes that the autopsy photographs do not establish a bullet path through the body. It should be asked why it was that when the gross findings failed to establish such a path to a certainty, the doctors did not take tissue samples for microscopic study--a procedure which is routine in such situations, I am told by an outstanding forensic pathologist.

Moreover, the explanation that the surgeons concluded "the next morning" that the bullet had exited from the front of the throat is inconsistent with the account given in the Warren Report (bottom of page 88). Which is true?

The FBI agents who observed the autopsy were not trained in medicine, as Dr. Boswell says, but they were trained observers and reporters and their report of 11/26/63 indicates that they were fully aware of the solemn importance of the events they had witnessed. Their observations, moreover, are consistent with those of other federal agents. Are we now to take the word of Dr. Boswell that Sibert and O'Neill (and Hill, and Greer, and Kellerman, and Bennett) were "simply wrong"? Thus far, it is Boswell, not the others, who was admittedly wrong in the autopsy diagram--and "wrong" in a way that coincides with the error he attributes to others.

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Finally, in the last paragraph of your story, you mention the restrictions imposed on access to the autopsy photographs. That information is not consistent with statements made by telephone within the last few days by the Archivist, Dr. James Rhodes. He has said that no one, not even federal investigators, will have access to the evidence for five years--no one of any description. As I did not speak personally with Dr. Rhodes, I cannot vouch for this information, but I would suggest that The Times might wish to obtain an official statement from the Archivist.

Turning from your story to the editorial which appeared today, I should like to express my satisfaction at this small step forward, and my hope that The Times--whose past press stories, editorials, and books published in partnership with Bantam Books must have had an incalculable influence on public acceptance of the Warren Report when it was issued--will come the rest of the distance before too long.

With all best wishes,

Yours sincerely,

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