

30 August 1970

Dear Fred,

Thanks for your letter of the 25th and the enclosed notes on the JFK autopsy. You make some very interesting points, although I believe that certain of the discrepancies (as to the wrapping of the body in sheets and/or plastic coverings) may arise from defective recollection by witnesses or defective reporting by the likes of William Manchester, whose documentary work on this case resembles fiction more than history.

I completely agree that the fatal bullet entered at the right temple, based on the evidence from all sources, and that the whole back of the head was blasted away. It follows, then, that the autopsy surgeons almost certainly did falsify the small entrance wound in the hairline--which the Russell Fisher panel subsequently moved upwards by no less than four inches, a point that you might add to your memorandum. While it is theoretically possible that the so-called entrance wound in the back was "added" while the body was in transit between Parkland and Bethesda, I find it hard to see how the head wounds could be rearranged so as to cause Humes and the other two at Bethesda would become genuinely confused and misled.

The skull diagram (p 110 Thompson) puzzled me so much that I requested an opinion on it from Cyril Wecht, when I was preparing the ms. of Accessories. He could not really understand it, either, and I would hesitate to invest it now with any authority. It may be that the top of the skull was also missing, in which case the Fisher panel would have a hard time explaining just where their re-located small entrance wound is found.

As to the three pieces of skull delivered to Humes: as I understand it, one piece was sent from Parkland Hospital, and another piece was found on the back seat of the car. A third piece of skull was found by Seymour Weitzman, on the street, and turned over to the Secret Service--see 7H 107.

It is strange that they should have switched from a bronze to a mahogany casket, as you point out. ~~Hummmmm~~. By the way, you say that one Parkland doctor "felt the entire back with his hand to see if it was damaged." I have a faint recollection along these lines, but can you tell me the doctor's name?

I have an open mind on your theory of altered wounds but would need more decisive evidence to consider it a real possibility. As to your other hypothesis, involving the driver---literally hundreds of reasons crowd into my mind for rejecting the very idea, but even so I will try to be as clinical and un-subjective as I can manage if and when you are able to elaborate your evidence and your reasoning. But to be honest, it strikes me as incredibly far-fetched. I had one correspondent for a while, a lady poet from Kansas, who was certain it was the motorcycle cops. (I have re-read Betzner's affidavit, it did not really convince me that it was an adequate basis for your hypothesis--uncertain impressions, natural enough under the circumstances.) Also, re 5H 473-474, I just don't know what might have been behind it. Again, ~~hummmmm~~.

Upward. Best affection to you and Marlynn,