

Fred t. Newcomb

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July 24, 1972

Mr. Cyril H. Wecht
Coroner, Allegheny County
542 Fourth Avenue
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania
15219

Dear Mr. Wecht,

I am very flattered to know that you would ask me to attend a meeting on August 9th in Washington with various other critics to discuss your findings.

Unfortunately, the financial burden alone of such a trip would make it impossible for me to attend, however much I would value this opportunity.

In spite of this, I would be delighted, for what it's worth, to make a few suggestions that may help with your examination.

First, it is a pity you cannot spend more than one day viewing the photographic exhibits of the autopsy. I'm sure you could use three or four days if given the opportunity.

As I mentioned before, I am on very shaky ground when I attempt to advise someone of your qualifications.

I think it would be wise (since I assume one of the restrictions placed upon you is that you may not make copy photographs or tracings of the exhibits) if you were to prepare actual size charts of JFK to use to make notes. I would do this from news photographs of JFK - a front, right side, left side and rear of the head.

I could do this as I have the optical equipment to make these to scale - in outline drawing. I also have reference books giving average measurements of the male figure to use as a guide. That would be four charts. A fifth would include a chart of a portion of the

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upper back and neck to use as a reference to locate accurately any wounds on the back. A sixth chart for the front of the throat area.

Then when you walked out of the Archives you would have a fairly accurate record of what you saw.

Dr. Lattimer's drawings represent a very poor attempt to do just this, as his scale and proportion are very crude.

As for the x-rays, and I have no way of knowing if this is allowable, but I would suggest that you walk in there with a set of x-rays of a male body of the approximately same size of JFK. X-rays that would include similar views and film size as the ones described in the 1968 Panel Report, i.e. 3 - 10x12" x-rays and 10 - 14x17" x-rays. Next you could place your x-ray next to the similar JFK x-ray and make notations upon your x-ray. This way you could gain a fairly accurate record. You could make notes right on your "Control x-ray" with a grease pencil to approximate the outstanding features you see in the Bethesda x-ray.

If this is not allowable, then you could secure charts (drawings) made from these control x-rays to use as forms for your notes.

I would think that it would be better to work this way rather than to try to translate notes into drawings after you have left the Archives.

My next suggestion would be this. I would like to see you telephone Dr. Humes, Dr. Boswell and Dr. Burkley -- Finck too, if he's available - before and after you make your examination. First, to find out the procedures followed - or not followed - on November 22nd, 1963, and to clear up the many inconsistencies between their original autopsy report and the 1968 panel Report and Lattimer's report.

Although you may not agree, for obvious professional reasons, I would advise you to tape record these interviews without their knowledge and prepare a transcript of this for your own record. Destroy the tape later if you wish. I would think that the importance of the record you make would outweigh by far any professional code you would be ignoring. As you know, this is strictly illegal to do, however, it is not illegal if you were to have a stenographer on an extension, for example.

I would like to know from Humes and Boswell, for example, the exact condition of the body when they first saw it when it was removed from the casket. How many x-rays and photographs were taken and when.

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Were there two x-ray sessions? Was the clothing available during the autopsy? Why not? Who brought the piece of skull into the room and when? Why did not Adm. Burkeley tell them about the wound in the throat. Burkeley was with the body at Parkland. Why was the autopsy report undated? Why did Humes burn his notes? I could go on and on but I'm sure you are aware of all of these basic points.

One last point, if you should decide to talk to the autopsy doctors, another thing that needs to be clarified. Dr. Boswell made a sketch of the top of the skull (See CE397, Volume 17, page 46). I would hope you could get him to explain all of his notes on this sketch. This might be a big help to you when you view the actual exhibits.

Another suggestion regarding the x-rays. I would feel that it would be ideal if you had in your possession a set of pre-November 1963 x-rays of JFK to use to authenticate the x-rays you examine. Am I correct in assuming that x-rays are as identifiable as fingerprints when compared side by side?

I would think that Dr. Janet Travel - JFK's family physician - would be a good source for these. At least she would have chest and back x-rays on file. In this way you could determine, for instance, whether or not that object at the "first sacral segment, about 4 cm from the midline" as mentioned by Lattimer is residue from a "fixation device" or not.

I would caution against using Adm. Burkeley as a reliable source for information regarding this autopsy. However, this does not mean he should not be interviewed. He should be talked to and I would think you could do this where others of us have had no luck. The good doctor has even refused to comment to the AMA on this subject.

Could you also determine from the Archivist who it was who untied JFK's tie while it was in evidence as an exhibit? The FBI lab photographed this while the tie was knotted and now we learn that it has been untied (Lattimer, page 51). This means it is now, not possible to tell which side of the knot was nicked by a bullet or fragment. This is very important when one attempts to determine a trajectory of any such missile through the body. But why am I telling you this?

The Archives should know this and be able to supply you with a note explaining what happened here.

I cannot, at this time (even if I had the money) participate in a group discussion with other critics since I am, in the process of completing a manuscript based on research completed by Perry Adams and myself. I do not, however, mind being of assistance to you in any way I can as long as you keep my correspondence confidential.

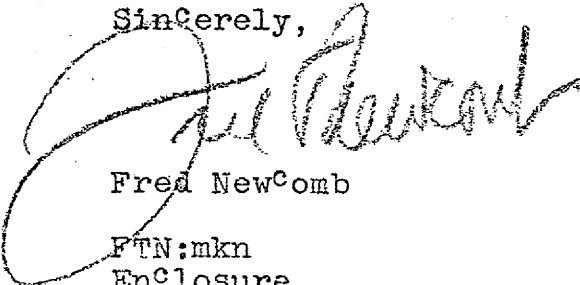
Since I am a commercial artist by trade, I would be only too happy to prepare any visual aids that you feel would assist in your examination. I would not expect to be paid for this and would consider it a privilege to be of assistance in some small way.

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Enclosed please find a memo I made regarding the autopsy report.
I hope this is self-explanatory.

I will probably think of more things to say, but want to get this
letter into the mail. Please know that I will promptly assist
you in any way I can should you care to call on me.

Sincerely,



Fred Newcomb

FTN:mkn
Enclosure