

14 January 1972

Dear Howard,

For reasons that are unrelated to the assassination, I wanted to look at a number of samples of RFK's authentic signature and the other day I examined his signature on the Autopsy Authorization form which is annexed to your manuscript.

This time I was struck by something I had overlooked when I read the ms. last July. RFK's signature is that of a "witness", while the designated "Authority to consent" is designated "wife". However, there is no actual signature of the wife on the appropriate line, which has her typewritten name.

It may be only a technicality but unless there is some further stipulation authorizing RFK to act on behalf of the wife (or, more precisely, the widow) in the matter of consent to the autopsy, it could be argued in purely legalistic terms that there was no proper consent for the post-mortem examination. Of course, an autopsy is mandatory in a homicidal death in many jurisdictions, but in this case the body had been removed from the proper jurisdiction.

Your argument on page 77 of the ms. is that no restrictions were imposed on the conduct of the autopsy, and insofar as the form is concerned, that is entirely true. However, so as not to provide some WR apologist with an excuse to question your argument on the technicality of the lack of an actual signature by the "wife", you might wish to add a footnote. Since the autopsy was in fact performed, the Bethesda authorities obviously considered the RFK signature sufficient authorization, and he did not stipulate any limitations, so that your basic point is entirely valid.

I wonder, in fact, if next-of-kin can have the right to impose restrictions on an autopsy when a homicide is involved. Such restrictions might act to frustrate the entire purpose of an autopsy which seeks to determine precise facts needed for the identification of the perpetrator(s).

Best regards,