

February 7, 1974

Dear Dr. Lattimer,

Many thanks for your prompt response to my request for your published articles on the Lincoln and Kennedy assassinations. Thanks, too, for the invitation be your guest in Lenox Hill Hospital when you address the Society for Medical Jurisprudence on Monday night. I hope I will have read at least what you have had published on the assassination of President Kennedy by the time you speak. Perhaps your articles will suggest questions which you can answer from the platform or in personal conversation afterward. I expect that when I finish reading your pieces on the Lincoln assassination afterward I will have other questions.

Would it be relevant to your subject to discuss in your talk the problem of the two Kennedy death certificates? In testimony given under oath to Warren Commission assistant counsel Arlen Specter in Parkland Hospital in Dallas on March 21, 1964, Dr. Kemp Clark, head of the resuscitative team which tried desperately but vainly to revive the president, said, "Death was fixed at 1 p.m." Then he was asked, "Who was it who actually fixed the time of death?" To which he replied, "I did." Afterward Specter asked, "And did you have any part in the filling out of the death certificate?" Dr. Clark said, "Yes." Specter: "And what did you do with respect to that?" Clark: "I filled out the death certificate at the request of Dr. George Burkley, the President's physician at the White House, signed the death certificate as a registered physician in the State of Texas, and gave this to him to accompany the body to Washington." This testimony is found on page 20 of Volume VI of the Hearings Before the President's Commission On the Assassination of President Kennedy.

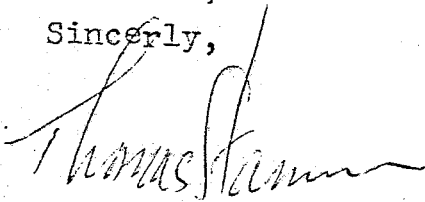
Shortly before receiving the material you sent me and from another source I came into possession of a Xeroxed copy of a "Certificate of Death" of "President John Fitzgerald Kennedy" which, I understand is available for inspection in the National Archives. This death certificate was signed on November 23, 1963, one day after Dr. Clark wrote out the original death certificate, by "George Gregory Burkley" who is identified in typewriting as "RADM" and "Physician to the President." Have you seen Dr. Burkley's death certificate?

Under the heading, "30. Summary of Facts Relating to Death," on the back of the certificate, Dr. Burkley wrote, "President John Fitzgerald Kennedy...was struck in the head by an assassin's bullet and a second wound occurred in the posterior back at about the level of the third thoracic vertebra." If I am not mistaken this location of the back wound is the only one given by anyone in these particular anatomic terms. . . Yet, again if I am not mistaken, no one has commented on Dr. Burkley's location. I wonder why. Other accounts place the wound a certain number of inches or centimeters from points on the head. Is that a more accurate or customary way of establishing

the location of a "posterior back" wound? Does Dr. Burkley's location of the wound correspond with your findings?

Dr. Burkley was present in the emergency room in Parkland Hospital and witnessed and assisted his medical colleagues' efforts to revive the president. And he was present during the autopsy at Bethesda Naval Hospital later that night when armed forces brass ordered the pathologists performing the autopsy not to dissect the track of the bullet which made the back wound Dr. Burkley located at about the level of the third thoracic vertebra. Later Dr. Burkley received reports from the Dallas doctors and, in fact, "complete protocol," as the editor of the Journal of the American Medical Association put it in April, 1965, was submitted to him. His office had issued the official autopsy report. He seems to have been an important, busy, and knowledgeable, if minor, figure in the events immediately following the assassination. Is it not strange that he was not invited to give testimony to the Warren Commission? What do you make of it?

Sincerely,



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