

Eleven years plus one day

Cyril H Wecht
Coroner
County of Allegheny
542 Fourth Avenue
Pittsburgh Penna 15219

Dear Dr Wecht

It was flattering of you to write you appreciate being informed of my views. I am encouraged to think I can requite you in part for the exposition of your ideas as developed in your writings and letters, and to hope our exchanges will culminate in common understanding of the historic event which occurred on November 22, 1963.

I was disturbed, however, to read you thought I had berated you. I had no such intention. Indeed, it would have been an arrogant presumption for me to have done so. The language I used was prompted by acute and amazed disappointment at your suggestion that the Warren Commission, which was mandated by Executive Order "to ascertain, evaluate and report upon the facts relating to the assassination of the late President John F. Kennedy," committed no more than an innocent error or blunder when, sitting in executive session in January 1964, it considered and discarded an autopsy report, the existence of which was a classified secret for eleven years, a report which differed crucially you discovered from the "official" autopsy report included in the Commission's Report published in September 1964, which constituted a "hard" evidentiary basis for the Commission's single-bullet theory of the wounding of Kennedy and Connally. I was reminded of microscientist Josiah Thompson's gratuitous speculation magic bullet 399, which entered and traversed Kennedy and then Connally, emerged virtually undeformed and intact, and disappeared, was placed on Connally's stretcher in Parkland Hospital in Dallas by a souvenir seeker who, afraid to carry off his prize, deposited it where it was found.

Even more astonishing is the parallel between the Commission's unlike twin autopsy reports and the two Kennedy death certificates, siblings by different sires but both fostered by the romantic, gallant Rear Admiral Burkley, physician to the slaughtered president and attendant on his widow. Two versions of each of two vital documents, one "official," the other illegitimate! Concealment of one autopsy report and one death certificate for years! What is the explanation? Are these extraordinary coincidences explicable as errors? Are we not justified in suspecting manipulation and fabrication of evidence to cover up the murder conspiracy? Is not investigation an imperative? Should the search for truth turn back, swerve aside, or mark time at the sign: ~~private~~ private literary property; no trespassing? Must not the truth be bruted to the world?

But let all that be awhile. Smaller concerns command attention; Magic bullet 399, interred in the National Archives, is endowed, it seems, with immortality, and has been resurrected, in controversy, by that indefatigable artificer of models and experiments, that postulator and ratiocinator of pseudoscientific validations of the Warren Commission and its findings, our dealer in hard evidence, the - in Sylvia Meagher's felicitous characterization - urologist-apologist, Dr. John K. Lattimer, M.D., Sc.D. and his

good sons, Gary and Jon.

In small details and large issues the Kennedy assassination is suffused with comic irony. Consider the absurdity of the Warren Commission. There were seven serious men, prestigious establishmentarians, exemplars in diverse ways of free enterprise and individual achievement, engaged in a collective effort to write the biography of a self-proclaimed but isolated Marxist, working-class, impecunious nobody whom they invested with a sinister purpose antithetical to his views and personality and endowed with imaginary lethal skill but whose motivation for determining the presidential succession and altering the course of history by a single murder escaped them. Is there not irony, too, in the receipt from you of a letter, not responsive to my nine-month old request for copies of your writings, a day before arrival from Dr. Lattimer of an unsolicited reprint of a monograph by him and his sons, published on pages 33-56 of Medical Times, issue of November 1974, under the title, The Kennedy-Connally One-Bullet Theory: Further Circumstantial and Experimental Evidence?

Writing in characteristically deadly professional style, the Lattimers "postulate" that bullet 399 "must have struck a vertebra in President Kennedy's neck," leaving "two chips," interpreted by them as bone, and began to tumble in further flight between Kennedy and Connally and within the latter's torso and limbs. In support of this supposition the Lattimers amassed a welter of photographs, diagrams, charts, documents, and "References" to testimony before the Warren Commission and their own and others' writings, including yours. Like Hoeh and Alvarez before them, who also validated the Commission's single-bullet theory, the later Lattimers conducted ballistic experiments. But instead of Hoeh and Alvarez's taped honeydew melons, which recoiled ~~against~~ in a direction opposite to the line of flight of the bullets which pierced them, the Lattimers devised "a simulation of the President's neck, made of either rubber or horsemeat which caused their bullet to "tumble." And like the Warren Commission, the Lattimers ignored contradictory evidence, misstated fact, and adduced irrelevant data, only to conclude: "While we cannot prove that it was President Kennedy's neck that caused Bullet 399 to be tumbling by the time it had struck Governor Connally, we can definitely say that the tumbling was compatible with the situation revealed by our experiment's 'mock-ups' of President Kennedy's neck."

The Lattimers should be answered, their abuse of scientific method, reason, and truth exposed. You are uniquely qualified to do so and on their own ground. Besides you have a second cause. The Lattimers cite you as an authority and imply your agreement with them on the autopsy and x-ray evidence. "Everyone," their monograph begins, "who has viewed and reported on the autopsy and x-ray evidence from President Kennedy's body now agrees that the President was hit by two bullets only, that these were both fired from above and from the rear, and that there is no evidence that he was shot from the side or from the front. This group includes some of the most voluble critics of the Warren Commission Report. Even they now agree that these two shots came from the Texas Book Depository Building..." The initial word, "Everyone," is followed by "Reference" nos. "1,2,3,5." "5," at the back of monograph, reads: "Wecht, Cyril H. and Smith, Robert

P. : The Medical Evidence in the Assassination of President John F. Kennedy. 'The Forensic Science Gazette,' Dallas, Texas, Vol. 4, No. 4, pp. 9-19, Spet. 1973."

The Zapruder film, of course, belies the Lattimers' smooth assurances. And I expect and hope your reply will, too.

Sincerely,

Thomas Stamm

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P.S. Will you send me copies of your past and future writings, please?