

May 15, 1975

Dear Dr Wecht

No doubt you are extremely busy and lack time to answer my cards and letters. But I will appreciate hearing from you about a number of points which I will make as brief as I can.

On page 35 of the transcript of the Warren Commission executive session of January 21, 1964 (Sighttext edition, page 134), there is the following:

Mr McCloy. ...this raw material business...Does it consist of the raw material of the autopsy? They talk about the colored photographs of the President's body - do we have these?

Mr. Rankin. Yes, it is a part of it, a small part of it.

Mr. McCloy. Are they here?

Mr. Rankin. Yes..."

I interrupt Rankin's answer to remark I thought the "colored photographs" were not "here" because they were then in the possession of the Kennedys who received them from the Secret Service who obtained them, undeveloped, in the autopsy room the night of November 22, 1963. Was Rankin mistaken? Was he lying? If he was telling the truth what of the testimony which described their peregrination to the Kennedys? And if Rankin spoke truthfully when after January 21, 1964 were the photographs given to the Kennedys, how long before they made a gift of them to the National Archives? What would be the significance of the "later" gift of the photographs to the Kennedys?

Returning to Rankin's interrupted reply to McCloy:

"But we don't have the minutes of the autopsy..."

What are "minutes" of an autopsy?

"...and we asked for that because we wanted to see what doctor A said about something while he was saying it, to see whether it is supported by the conclusions in the autopsy and so forth."

The autopsy is your field of special interest in the assassination of president Kennedy. So I ask you:

Inasmuch as Rankin said he had asked for the "minutes of the autopsy," must we not predicate the existence of such minutes, at least as a basis for our own inquiry? Should we not also be concerned to track the course of these minutes from birth to final resting place? Have you come across any evidence of their existence and disposition? Were they destroyed? Burned by Commander Humes? Were they suppressed? Could they be languishing in the National Archives?

Does Weisberg have them?

Why did Rankin think it necessary to check the conclusions in the autopsy report in the Commission's possession? Are we not entitled to infer that the autopsy report to which Rankin referred and the problem about which he left the Commissioners in the dark on January 21, were discussed in the session of January 27, from the recently declassified transcript of which, it is now established, the Commission had before it an autopsy report in sharp conflict with the "official" autopsy report published ten months later as Appendix II of the Warren Report? And that the conclusion which created a problem was the finding Kennedy's original anterior neck wound was the result of a bullet or bone fragment?

What happened between January 21 and January 27, 1964? On the 22nd the Commission was startled by untraceable, and therefore suspicious, reports Oswald about whom the FBI had amassed a stupendous volume of evidence to establish his guilt, had been an FBI agent. On the 22nd the Commission did not discuss the autopsy. But on the 27th, although it was still preoccupied with the problem of disproving Oswald's rumored FBI affiliation, the Commission returned to the problem of the autopsy. The transcript of this session, however, yields no clue to Rankin's success or failure in getting the "minutes of the autopsy."

How should we go about investigating the fate of these minutes? If Burkley collected the medical protocol of the assassination wasn't he the logical or likely recipient of these minutes? Would you begin with him?

Hopefully,


Thomas Starn