



County of Allegheny

542 FOURTH AVENUE • PITTSBURGH, PA. 15219

(412) 355-4460 355-4466

OFFICE OF THE CORONER

June 6, 1975

Mr. Thomas Stamm
2705 Bainbridge Avenue
Bronx, New York 10458

Dear Mr. Stamm:

In response to your letter of May 15th, I should like to pass along the following thoughts that I have appropriately broken down into four areas.

1. Rankin, most likely, was simply mistaken. The "raw material" to which McCloy adverted was in reference to the huge volume of FBI and other agency reports that the Commission was receiving and which the members had no time to read (e.g., see pages 114-116, and page 132 of the Sighttext edition). Rankin himself seems not to have been fully cognizant of the contents of the "raw material" (e.g., see pages 236-237 where he makes another error and has to be corrected by McCloy in regard to the ballistics evidence in the Walker shooting). Rankin was overloaded with work, and he seems to have had difficulty distinguishing between what he had actually seen and what he had only heard about. Also, he had an unfortunate tendency to want to please the Commission Members and impress them with his knowledge and command of the evidence, at the expense of occasionally slipping into error about what he knew.

In the transcript of the 4/30/64 session, at pages 257-261 in the Sighttext edition, it is perfectly clear that the Commission did not have the photos and that they had never been seen by either Rankin or any Commission Member up to that time, at least. Rankin even states that the photos had not yet been developed and were under the control of the Kennedy family, so it is obvious that he was mistaken in the January 21 session.

2. I would assume that it is and was fairly common practice to make a tape recording of autopsy procedures, but not universally. Rankin may simply have assumed that such was done, or else that someone

Mr. Thomas Stamm
Page 2
June 6, 1975

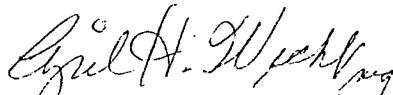
at the autopsy may have taken detailed notes. (Indeed the FBI agents, Siebert and O'Neill actually did so and later reported their observations. Their report was initially withheld but later released, and it is printed in several of the critics' books.)

I have never seen any other reference to "minutes" of the autopsy, nor to any tape recording, nor to any "destruction" or "suppression" of them, except for the statement by Humes about burning his "draft notes". So other than for Rankin's remarks, which as noted above could have been motivated by pure assumption on his part, I don't know of any good reason to believe they exist (i.e., as something different from either the Siebert-O'Neill report or the Humes "draft notes").

3. It is perfectly obvious that the Commission did not understand the President's wounds and how to account for them and that they were not satisfied with whatever autopsy report they then had. It is also fairly clear that the autopsy report they had was not the "official autopsy report" ultimately published, and we have said this in the most recent Modern Medicine article.
4. There is no reason to go chasing after the "minutes", because we haven't the slightest basis for assuming they exist, other than the somewhat presumptuous remarks by Rankin. If Burkley had received them, I am sure they would have been listed as an item in the Memo of Transfer, but they are not so listed (or otherwise indicated, directly or indirectly).

I probably shall not have the time to respond in detail like this again in the foreseeable future, for I am terribly far behind with many professional commitments. However, it is always interesting to hear from you, and I hope that you will continue to write whenever you wish to share some thoughts.

Sincerely,


Cyril H. Wecht, M.D., J.D.

CHW/cjk