

9 May 1971

Dear Cyril,

Further to your letter of the 1st to Tink Thompson, I have put down a few ideas for your letter to Burke Marshall on the enclosed page. It is pretty much off the top of my head and perhaps Tink will have some additional suggestions. Such a letter has to be geared to a number of purposes. First and foremost, to persuade Marshall and his principals to grant permission for the examination of the X-rays and photos. Second, to build a record of correspondence suitable, if necessary, for ultimate release to the press and the news media in general, should you be turned down arbitrarily or out of a seeming desire to obstruct an eminently legitimate investigation by a highly qualified expert not selected by or serving in the Government. Third, to establish a record for possible legal action to compel disclosure.

What we all need to think about, and to discuss if we can manage to get together personally, is two strategies -- one that is predicated on a favourable response, to ensure that your actual examination of the photos and X-rays touches all bases and yields the maximum information on the numerous contested points of evidence, assuming you are shown authentic, undoctored materials (including possible ways and means of assessing their authenticity). Another, predicated on a negative response, seeking to place pressure on the "custodians" of these materials and to make their position invidious; and if no reversal results, to obtain professional and public support and an open debate.

I know that you have contacts with a number of serious critics other than Tink and myself, and they may have valuable ideas and suggestions to offer. This is one case where we need the benefit of the widest informed advice available, because a great deal may be riding on the outcome. Fortunately we do have time to think carefully about all the angles and all the ramifications, and to re-read the sections on the autopsy and the ballistics in the literature, as the basis for a kind of "inventory" of the points for scrutiny and assessment if and when you get to see the photos and X-rays.

Best, as ever,

Sylvia Neagher

cc Tink Thompson

P.S. As soon as I can get the use of xerox facilities, I will copy and send you under separate cover an article I wrote in April 1969 comparing the findings of the Fisher panel with earlier reviews of the autopsy photos and X-rays by Humes et al and with their autopsy report and testimony. I wrote the article in the hope that Harold Weisberg, on whose research it was predominantly based, would agree to my seeking publication; but as he did not agree, I merely filed the article away without doing anything further. Although I still feel bound by Weisberg's embargo, I think that it is vital for you to have the article for information and reference if you are to examine the photos and X-rays; but please treat it as absolutely confidential and restricted to your personal use alone.

(Hoagber 5/9/71)

I refer to your letter of October 29, 1966 to Lawson B. Knott, Jr., Administrator of General Services, Washington, D. C., depositing in the National Archives X-rays and photographs connected with the autopsy of the late President John F. Kennedy, and in particular to Article II (2) (b) which states that access to those materials shall be permitted to "any recognized expert in the field of pathology...for serious purposes relevant to the investigation of matters relating to the death of the late President" subject to the elapse of five years after the date October 29, 1966.

Pursuant to the terms of your letter, I hereby request authorization to examine and study said X-rays and photographs at an early date after October 29, 1971.

I make this request in my capacity as a qualified and recognized forensic pathologist. In addition to my current office of Coroner of Allegheny County in the State of Pennsylvania, I am (the President) (a past President) of the American Academy of Forensic Sciences; Director of the Institute of Forensic Sciences at Duquesne University School of Law; editor of the first Legal Medicine Annual (1969); and (any additional honors, offices, titles).

Since 1965, I have written and lectured widely on the assassination of President Kennedy and on the autopsy findings, and have testified as an expert witness in a hearing before Judge Charles Halleck, Jr., in 1969, on a subpoena of the autopsy X-rays and photographs.

My purpose in requesting access to make an examination of said materials is to determine what they reveal as to the wounds, the trajectories of the missiles, the presence of metallic fragments and other foreign materials, the sites of bullet entrance and bullet exit, and (add other points, in as highly technical jargon as possible). If, on the basis of my examination of the X-rays and the photographs, it becomes possible to reconcile various conflicting descriptions of their contents and to eliminate certain ambiguities in the forensic evidence, I would intend to publish my analysis in a professional journal or journals, such as (list two or more in the fields of medicine, pathology, and law), on the basis of the highest standards of scientific objectivity and ethics. My sole purpose is to serve the medical, legal, and historical record by making an independent, qualified determination without commitment to any preconceived viewpoints or theories.

I will be happy to clarify any questions which you may have or to discuss the matter with you personally.