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OFFICE OF THE CORONER

November 4, 1971

The Honorable James B. Rhoads,
Archivist of the United States
National Archives
8th and Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D. C. 20408

Dear Dr. Rhoads:

I am writing to request permission to examine all the materials associated with the post-mortem examination on President John F. Kennedy at the Bethesda Naval Hospital on the evening of Friday, 22 November 1963.

I should like to refer to Professor Burke Marshall's letter of 29 October 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 (5) years after the date of 29 October 1966.

Pursuant to the terms of that letter, I hereby request authorization to examine and study the said x-rays and photographs at the earliest possible time.

I am submitting this request in my professional capacity as a qualified and experienced forensic pathologist, duly certified by the American Board of Pathology in anatomic and clinical pathology, and also in forensic pathology. In addition to currently holding the office of Coroner of Allegheny County, Pennsylvania, I am also the President of the American Academy of Forensic Sciences;

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President of the American College of Legal Medicine; Research Professor of Law and Director of the Institute of Forensic Sciences at Duquesne University School of Law; Director of the Pittsburgh Institute of Legal Medicine; and a member of various other local, state, national, and international scientific, legal, and medical-legal professional organizations. I am the Editor of the Legal Medicine Annual, published by Appleton-Century-Crofts; Editor of The Medico-Legal Autopsy Laws of the Fifty States, the District of Columbia, American Samoa, the Canal Zone, Guam, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands, published by the American Registry of Pathology, Armed Forces Institute of Pathology; and Editor and Editorial Consultant to several other national and international medical-legal publications.

Rather than list any further professional qualifications, organization memberships, or other professionally relevant items, I am taking the liberty of sending along a Curriculum Vitae for your review and evaluation.

Since 1965, I have written and lectured widely on the assassination of President Kennedy and on the autopsy findings. I also testified as an expert witness in a hearing before The Honorable Charles Halleck, Jr., Judge of the Court of General Sessions, District of Columbia, on 14 February 1969, pursuant to a subpoena issued by the District Attorney of Orleans Parish, Louisiana, for the autopsy x-rays, photographs, and other relevant materials associated with the post-mortem examination.

My purpose in requesting permission to make an examination of these autopsy materials is to determine what they may reveal regarding President Kennedy's wounds, the trajectories of the missiles that struck him, the presence of metallic fragments and other foreign materials, the exact anatomical sites of bullet entrance and exit wounds, the gross and microscopic findings in the brain and other body organs, and various other aspects of the autopsy examination.

If, on the basis of my examination of the x-rays, photographs, and other materials, it becomes possible to reconcile various previously published conflicting descriptions of their contents, and also to eliminate certain ambiguities in the physical evidence, I would hope to publish my analysis in one or more professional journals, such as the Journal of the American Medical Association and the Journal of Forensic Sciences. It would be my intention to write these articles with the highest possible standards of scientific objectivity and professional ethics.

In essence, my sole purpose would be to serve the medical, legal, and historical records by making an in-depth, qualified determination.

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I would be happy to answer any questions which you may have regarding this request. Please let me know if you require any additional information.

I would also be willing to meet and discuss this matter with you personally, should you so desire.

Thank you for your consideration of this request. I very much hope that I shall receive permission from you to review these autopsy materials in the near future.

Respectfully yours,

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

CHW/mg

Enclosure (1)

cc: Professor Burke Marshall