

8 August 1966

Dr. Cyril H. Wecht
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Dear Dr. Wecht,

I am greatly indebted to you for your letter of August 5th, which arrived this morning—unhappily, too late for me to contact you before your departure for Europe and discussions with forensic pathologists from other countries. You may be sure that I appreciate, and am grateful for, the considerable trouble you took in studying and commenting upon the autopsy sketch in Volume XVII, page 46. Corroboration from you that the bullet entry wound is not shown on the sketch is very helpful information indeed, in the context of the failure of every one of the Parkland Hospital doctors to see that wound, and the failure of the non-medical observers at the autopsy—except for Kellerman—to confirm its presence.

Recently a very significant document became available at the National Archives—the report of FBI agents Sibert and O'Neill on their observations during the autopsy (they were present throughout). Their report indicates that a bullet seemed to have hit the back of the head, exploded, and exited through the top; but they do not appear to have been aware specifically of a small round entrance wound, either in the hairline or in the higher position shown in the schematic drawings (CE 386 and CE 388). Secret Service agents Greer and Hill—the latter was called in expressly to view the wounds—were also unaware of the existence of the entrance wound.

I believe that disturbing ambiguity will surround this question unless and until the autopsy photographs and x-rays, which remain suppressed and the location of which at this time is not known, nor the custody, are made available. They are essential, above all, to resolve the contradictions about the wound in the back, which Sibert and O'Neill of the FBI described as below the shoulders; they, too, say that the bullet penetrated only a short distance and that it did not exit from the front of the body—which is consistent with the holes in the coat and shirt, with eyewitness testimony of two Secret Service agents, and with the autopsy sketch on page 45 of XVII.

Access to the autopsy photographs and x-rays assumes great urgency if it is correct, as I have been told, that the undeveloped film expires and disintegrates after five years--i.e., November 1968. There is no evidence that the films were ever developed (some 45 black-and-white and color photographs); time may be running out. That is what I would have liked to discuss with you before your departure, had it been possible; as it is, I am hoping that someone at your Pittsburgh address will forward this to you at Stockholm or Copenhagen. The International Forensic Medicine Meetings should, perhaps, take formal cognizance of the imminent disintegration of invaluable evidence, and use its collective influence to urge the preservation--if the expiration time is valid--if not the release of the photographs and x-rays as indispensable to historical truth and accuracy.

Some of your other comments on the sketch are not readily understandable to a lay person; perhaps on your return you will be good enough to clarify some of the questions which arise--for example, the possible relationship between the "area of fracture in the base of the skull above the left orbit" (not described in the autopsy report) and the persistent impression of several Parkland doctors, and of the priest who administered the last rites, that there was a wound on the left side of the head, at the temple or near the eye.

I must thank you also for your kind remarks about my article in the July/August TMO. An excerpt from my manuscript on the Warren Report dealing with the incident of the "auto demonstration" will appear in the September issue.

You are no doubt aware already of the many interesting developments which have taken place since the publication of Inquest, including a proposal for (and editorial support of, in a number of papers) a review of the Warren Report and, if need be, a re-investigation. While it is encouraging, it may well fade into nothing unless continuous pressure is applied; and such pressure from the scientific community is particularly needed.

I shall look forward to hearing from you on your return. Meanwhile, my renewed thanks for your valuable help.

Sincerely yours,

Sylvia McGher
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