

July 6, 1967

Milton Helpern, M.D.  
Chief Medical Examiner  
City of New York  
New York, New York

Dear Dr. Helpern:

The Argosy article seeming to be a contraction of part of the book to be published by Coward-McCann in September prompts me to write you, I hope you will believe, without venom. I begin by acknowledging that, from everything I have heard, your qualifications in forensic medicine exceed those of anyone else of whom I have knowledge. I wonder if this is not, in fact, the reason you have embedded such an utter destruction of your own reputation in this writing.

The subject of the assassination is an enormously complicated one. I doubt if there is anyone in the world who has devoted as much time to it as I, and I have learned a number of things, one of which is that, much as I think I know, I do not know enough.

I would like to assure you that the thrust of your argument that the autopsy is the answer to everything is quite fallacious. Were the autopsy without question and if it reached identically the same conclusions, it could not make the Report viable. There are so many things of which you apparently have not the faintest notion; yet as a man of science, firmly based upon this ignorance, you make charges against others. I am in complete accord with your comment on the inadequacy of the autopsy, much of which could have come from my own writing and is found in no one else's. This in no way justifies some of the amazing comments that cannot possibly be justified on any ground. For example, your comment that the autopsy "was the real spawning ground (for critical books whose) genesis can be traced directly to what was done and not done in a single operating room ...". This is as foolish as it is inaccurate, and I am astounded that you would jeopardize your excellent reputation by such unwise comment having no basis in fact.

Compounding your lack of knowledge of the assassination, you display a disturbing lack of knowledge of the most basic medical evidence. I shall not here take your time or mine with the documentation of it because my purpose is not to embarrass you or to engage in a dispute with you, but to inform you for any benefit it might do you. I think that, once this book appears with the kind of statements in it that are in the Argosy article, you will be personally and professionally embarrassed to a degree I think you cannot comprehend, your lack of knowledge of what you are talking about is that thorough. I regret very much that you appear not to have read my published work, knowledge of which would have prevented some of these.

Dr. Helpern - 2

If you have any interest, I will be glad to discuss this with you over the telephone, to get your article and call some of these to your attention.

I have no interest in this matter except to help, to the degree man now can, establish the truth. Unfortunately, it is not helped by such ill-considered, wild-swinging generalities as those dispensed in your name as though they were science when they are, in fact, far removed from reality. Please believe me, Doctor, I mean no insult and I am genuinely sorry for you that you have been quoted in this manner, for when the whole story becomes general knowledge and when you learn what is already public knowledge but unknown to you, you will better understand what I am talking about.

Sincerely,

Harold Weisberg