

Dr. Gary Aguilar
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10/8/97

Dear Gary,

After we spoke I spoke to Jerry McKnight. When he has the time he'll send you the list of the Meagher files/records. He is department head and has an emergency replacement to make. Ties him up now. He also thinks it would be a good idea if when you are east again you and he meet and talk.

With regard to your 10/4 and its enclosure, I distinguish between ^{completeness} of the autopsy film and doctoring of it. I have always had questions about the completeness and tried to indicate this in Post Mortem and I do not believe it was doctored.

I think what you enclosed needs additions and questions not raised in it if you (will not be adding to it or using it with other materials.

You omit, for example, the DJ panel's review of the autopsy film and their report on it.

You use Humes as an honest man when he is a liar about areas of this and when he was under threat of court martial. I think that they were all under that threat should be mentioned. Besides which he had need to lie to defend what he had done and had not done. True of Boswell, too. (Liar's can, of course, also be truthful.)

On the first page of the enclosure where you quote Davis you also quote Humes in the sense of saying there was a wound "lower down on the neck," as there was not. They are referring to the back of the neck.

Can I tell you stories about Belcher! But as of the time of the DJ panel the DJ lawyer who seemed to be in charge was Carl Bardeley of Civil Division,

When after so long a delay I fell asleep in the office of the head of the Civil Division Belcher finally came with what I won the right to see in my first FOIA lawsuit, the records filed with the British court to get Ray extradited. They were all public, in England. But in the ^{DJ} ~~US~~ the package of them was classified SECRET!

I think that what you refer to as HSCA interviews, what I used in NEVER AGAIN! was actually sworn testimony.

It may be that someone gave Belcher the memo to get signed but is it not also possible that he wrote it?

With regard to that "wound of entry low in the rear portion of the skull" I again strongly urge you to make a real examination of the frames of the film beginning about 335 ^{or} 6, two frames that show the back of the head as he twists to fall onto Jackie.

I believe we spoke of the fragmentation I said was not possible for a

bullet made in accord with the Geneva convention, On this you might want to ask Western if that kind of fragmentation, some 40 dust-like fragments, was possible. You may also want to talk to Guinn if he is still around. He had been faculty at David. He did some DJ studies, including on copper jackets. That may not have included fragmentation but if talking to him is not hard it might be a good idea.

The jackets on those bullets were hard and they were used to prevent what the Xrays show. Which should also have been ^{w/}impossible for the lead that also was hardened.

"unless you ^{resolve} ~~re-ive~~ these questions beyond reasonable question all you do is in jeopardy.

You can't just argue ^u a case of what you believe. You have to examine both or all sides and that with diligence or you can get clobbered, hurt and your work destroyed, ruined.

At least in your own thinking you should be ^{w/}wondering about where some of those shots, like the one low on the back of the head, could have come from and how it could have gone wherever you say it went.

Thanks and best,

Handy

Have you thought of asking SF police forensic, esp. bullet experts, about whether that kind of bullet could provide 40 dust-like fragments with no jacket material remaining in the skull? At least the probabilities?

I am sorry you are so busy you can't spend any time here because there are many other considerations we have not touched on and can be, I think without question, are a factor.

For one example that rifle could not possibly have been used in that shooting. This is the actual official evidence.

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10-4-97

HAROLD,

IT WAS GOOD SPEAKING
E YOU TODAY.

I HOPE YOU
FIND THIS SARTABLY
"RESTRAINED"

BEST WISHES,

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THE QUESTION OF THE AUTOPSY PHOTOGRAPHS

DRAFT

by Gary L. Aguilar, MD 10-3-97

Setting the question of the true size and location of JFK's skull defect aside, the pathologists unanimously rejected the HSCA's photographic interpretation that "proved" the autopsy description of the wounds wrong. Humes joined Boswell to dispute the photographs shown him before the HSCA's forensic panel - a panel that had accepted the authenticity of the photographs. He insisted there was no high entrance wound on the night of the autopsy - in the cowlick area - regardless of the opinions of the panelists that the images did show an entrance there. The panel gently tried to coax Humes and Boswell to accept their 'correct' interpretation of the photographs--but to no avail, as Humes' s first, public interview before the HSCA made clear:

(HSCA's Dr.) Davis: "Well, in terms of the inshoot, my impression when I first looked at these films was that the inshoot was higher..."

Dr. Petty: "We were wondering if that had been the inshoot (referring to the higher object in the photograph)."

Humes: "No, no, that's no wound."

Davis (continuing as if he'd not heard Humes): "Because in (photograph) No. 42 I interpreted that as a wound, and the other, lower down in the neck, as just being a contaminant, a piece of brain tissue."

Humes: "No, that was a wound, and the wound on the skull precisely coincided with it."
(HSCA7:251)

A few moments later Humes repeated his disavowal of the 'higher' wound insisted upon by the HSCA's forensic panel as the true entrance wound. Referring to the higher "wound" on the rear of the head photos Humes declared, "...I can assure you that as we reflected the scalp to get to this point there was no defect corresponding to this in the skull at any point. I don't know what that is. It could be to me clotted blood. I don't, I just don't know what it is, but it certainly was not any wound of entrance." (HSCA--V7:254)

The forensic panel desperately sought a way to determine how the autopsists' memories, and the contradictory photographs and X-rays, could be reconciled. The panel wondered if the scalp have might been pulled such that the wound falsely appeared in the photos to be higher than the pathologists recalled. Humes unequivocally answered, "...That is not the case."

Baden responded, "That is not the case?"

Humes: "Because I submit to you that, despite the fact that this upper point that has been the source of some discussion here this afternoon is excessively obvious in the color photograph, I almost defy you to find it in that magnification in the black and white....One of us is lifting the head, flexing the neck if you will, by holding the scalp, and to show the wound where it was in relation to the man's head (not to distort the location of the wound)."(HSCA--V7:260-261)

To discourage any thought that the skull defect might not coincide with the defect in the scalp and thus 'explain' the discrepancy Dr Davis asked hopefully, "But at the time of the autopsy there was no defect in the scalp other than where the bone was gone."

Humes: "Right." (HSCA V7:256)

While the HSCA claimed the autopsy photographs were "authenticated", legitimate questions exist regarding at least the completeness of the photographic record. All of JFK's pathologists and both photographers, as well as Bethesda pathologist-witness, Robert Karnai, MD, recalled the taking of photographs that do not now exist. The evidence that the photographic file is complete, however, seems to be the 11/10/66 statement regarding the X-ray and photographic inventory which was signed by Humes, Boswell, Ebersole, and Stringer after they examined the materials. It read, "The X-rays and photographs described and listed above include all the X-rays and photographs taken by us during the autopsy, and we have no reason to believe that any other photographs or X-rays were made during the autopsy." (*Report of Inspection by Naval Medical Staff on 11/1/66 at National Archives of X-rays and Photographs of President John F. Kennedy*. In: Weisberg, H., *Post Mortem*, p.573.) It seems unlikely that anyone would write such a statement about a group of photographs they took three years before and never saw. But the signatories virtually certainly did not write the statement, they merely signed this statement, which was prepared for them by an unidentified government employee. This was convincingly shown in a recently released document which reads, "On the afternoon of November 10, 1966, I (Carl W. Belcher) took the original and one carbon copy of the document entitled 'Report of Inspection by Naval Medical Staff on November 1, 1966 at National Archives of X-Rays and Photographs of Autopsy of President John F. Kennedy' to the Naval Medical Center, Bethesda, Md., where it was read and signed by Captain Humes, Dr. Boswell, Captain Ebersole and Mr. John T. Stringer. Certain ink corrections were made in the document before they signed it..." (From: *Carl W. Belcher*, Chief, General Crimes Section, Criminal Division, US Dept. of Justice, 11/22/66. Agency: DOJCIVIL, Record # 182-10001-100021. Emphasis added.) Moreover, in a document entitled "PRIVILEGED COMMUNICATION" (sic) written by Finck on February 10, 1967, Finck corroborated Belcher's claim that the Justice Department had prepared the photographic and X-ray inventory. Finck wrote, "The statement (the inventory) had been prepared by Justice Dept. (sic) We signed the statement." (Reference copy, JFK Collection: HSCA RG 233)

Whatever one's view of the question of photographic tampering, there is evidence that autopsy photographs of the interior of the chest, and images of the skull entrance wound are missing. Finck was certain he never saw some photos whose taking he'd directed - photographs of the internal and external aspects of the skull bone entrance wound. In addition to noting the absence of these images in his own notes, Finck had the following exchange, released for the first time in 1993, before the HSCA:

Charles Petty, MD: "If I understand you correctly, Dr. Finck, you wanted particularly to have a photograph made of the external aspect of the skull from the back to show that there was no cratering to the outside of the skull."

Finck: "Absolutely."

Petty: "Did you ever see such a photograph?"

Finck: "I don't think so and I brought with me memorandum referring to the examination of photographs in 1967...and as I can recall I never saw pictures of the outer aspect of the wound of entry in the back of the head and inner aspect in the skull in order to show a crater although I was there asking for these photographs. I don't remember seeing those photographs." (HSCA interview with Finck, p.90.)

On the question of the completeness of the photo inventory, the HSCA's Andy Purdy reported that, " (John) STRINGER (sic - the chief autopsy photographer) said it was his recollection that all the photographs he had taken were not present in 1966 (when he first saw the photographs). (Emphasis added.) (HSCA rec. # 180-10093-10429. Agency file # 002070, p. 11.) Stringer apparently was not satisfied with the explanation given him for the missing photos, for the HSCA reported, "He

(Stringer) noted that the receipt he had said some of the film holders (sic) had no film in one side of the cassettes. He said the receipt said this happened in two or three of the film holders where one side only was allegedly loaded. He said he could understand it if the film holders were reported to have poorly exposed or defective film but could not believe that there were any sides on the film holders which were not loaded with film...")

No photographs now exist of the interior of JFK's chest, but it was unanimous that such photographs were taken. Finck was apparently never asked about interior chest photos, but both photographers and Humes and Boswell were asked, and they all recalled the taking of such images. Purdy conducted many of these interviews, and should have known the content of all of them. He apparently never explored this important controversy, but HSCA interviews, which were first released only in 1992 and 1993, speak eloquently for themselves:

"STRINGER remembers taking 'at least two exposures of the body cavity' (A. Purdy. HSCA rec. # 180-10093-10429. Agency file # 002070, p. 2.)

HUMES: "...specifically recall(ed photographs)...were taken of the President's chest...(these photographs) do not exist."(HSCA record # 180-10093-10429), Agency file # 002070, p. 17.)

BOSWELL: "...he (Boswell) thought they photographed '...the exposed thoracic cavity and lung...' but doesn't remember ever seeing those photographs." (A. Purdy. HSCA rec# 180-10093-10430. Agency file # 002071-p. 6)

ROBERT F. KARNAL MD. "He (Karnai) recalls them putting the probe in and taking pictures (the body was on the side at the time) (sic)." (A. Purdy. HSCA, JFK Collection. RG #233, file #002198, p.5.)

FLOYD REIBE: "he thought he took about six pictures--'I think it was three film packs'--of internal portions of the body."(David Lifton, *Best Evidence*, p.638.)

It thus appears far from certain that an undiminished photographic record now exists. It seems virtually certain, however, that someone gave Mr. Carl W. Belcher of the Criminal Division of the United States Justice Department the completed memo for the witnesses to sign. That unidentified person may have wished the photo and X-ray record to appear undiminished. Given the apparent absence of some of the images taken at the autopsy, and the fact that not a single one of 46 descriptions closely matches the images themselves, it is not surprising some suspect there was also additional photo tampering - especially when even Finck had the effrontery before the HSCA to ask, of images he was being shown of the suspect backside of JFK's head, "How are these photographs identified as coming from the autopsy of President Kennedy?" He also said, "I don't remember the difficulty involved in separating the scalp from the skull but this was done in order to have a clear view of the outside and inside to show the crater from the inside...the skull had to be separated from it in order to show in the back of the head the wound in the bone." (HSCA interview with Ebersole and Finck, page 90 - 91.) No photograph currently exists that shows scalp pulled aside to show JFK's skull wound in the back of the head.

What must not be lost in the confusing JFK-medical forest is the consistency with which a rearward wound was noted by credible witnesses at Bethesda, as it was at Parkland. A careful reading of the autopsy places the wound of entry low in the rear portion of the skull with a "defect of the scalp and skull on the right involving chiefly the parietal bone but extending somewhat into the temporal and occipital regions...". Such a description is clearly consistent with the observations of Parkland and Bethesda viewers. It seems inconsistent, unfortunately, with the photographs we have of the back of the head as published in numerous recent books, and as seen by the author at the National Archives, which show no defect behind the right ear. The mystery remains.