5/1/69

Dear Cyril,

To come to the point immediately, despite your concern for him, Fisher is no friend of yours. I will detail what I know. In addition, he seems to have played a strange role in the trial in which the panel report surfaced.

There are a number of reasons why my sources have to be protected, which is why I asked in advance that you mention none of this to anyone, including those in agreement with us in whom we both have the greatest confidence. As time goes on, we forget where we learn things and they bubble out-and too often get back to those who can pinpoint the source, in addition to the distress this can cause the source, it also dries up the well.

What relates to you is once removed from an assistant attorney general. My source overheard part of a conversation with him. I also have several letters Fisher wrote a young man who works with me. My sources are as solid as they can be, really dependable, mature people.

The weekend before release of the panel report, Department of Justice people, including some not really on the case, went to Baltimore to see Fisher. He convinced them of the validity of the medical findings of the Warren Report. He made what is described to me as "a very strong case" and "totally convinced the Department of Justice people".

Here I digress to let you know I have asked my source if it is fair to infer that some of the lawyers had doubts. If I get an answer, I'll let you know.

In the course of making a case in support of the medical evidence of the Warren Report. Fisher apparently felt it necessary to go after you. He questioned your "objective on the matter". He said that when you were his student you were, among other things, "headstrong and bullheaded", "very"; a student with "wild ideas". And he seems to have found it necessary to make a comparison between himself and you, presenting himself as "clearly a higher authority", in the words of my source.

Now it happens that one of the Justice lawyers has a son who is the friend of a close friend of mine, a young man of high intelligence, incorruptible integrity and a knowledge of the fact of the case possessed by few. My friend told this son some of the fact and was present when the son, in some perturbation, phoned his father in Washington. They had a long and loud dispute. The impression my friend got from what he overheard is of those involved in the government case, "at least the Assistant Attorney Generals were talked into things by Fisher himself." This may carry you back to a stupidity at the trial, for when the son told the father about the backward head motion at Z313, his reply was "to point out that when the brain is injured, movement occurs", apparently in this case contrary to the great force exerted.

However, this lawyer did let his son know that increasingly there are rumors in the Department that the FBI did cover up to hide their own failures.

At my bidding, a friend has been writing Fisher, asking him probing questions. Here is one answer: "Suffice it to say that we found correlation between the bullet holes in the clothing & the entrance bullet wound of the body and from studies on cadaver material in a medical school Department of Anatomy we were convinced it was possible for a bullet tract to connect the entrance

Are not wounds without being deflected by, or hitting the bony vertebrae?

Asked earlier about the single-bullet theory, Fisher said the panel had no concern with this and it was outside their consideration.

I do not anticipate any more letters from Fisher, who pleads "a great many letters of inquiry about findings in our autopsy review".

You will have a quiet uproar about that paragraph, from a man of forensic science, the one who finds you "very headstrong and bullheaded", who is the greater expert. I do not want it to obscure these quiet words, "and from studies which we personally did on cadaver material in a medical school Department of Anatomy". In the same two days of their study, which they say in their report they spent at the Archives? There is no Department of Anatomy there, and that is not a medical school. So, they did what is not in their report, and that is lacking in the report. I will, in my own way, be carrying this forward, slowly, for there are many steps if we are to get access to that.

Does "we" mean all the panel? Is it Fisher's editorial "I"? Did they do this work with cadavers before or after their study, alone or with others, like the autopsy doctors, DJ lawyers, FBI agents, etc.? Did they do more than they could have done on a living person? If they did not, why refer to "studies which we personally did on cadaver material". And why "cadaver material", why not "cadavers" or "a cadaver"? Have you any idea what they might have done, other than fire a bullet into the edge of the neck? Have you any comment from the standards and ethics of forensic medicine, or doing what is unreported, of defining it out of your report?

Perhaps his sentence on the single-bullet theory which follows does not relate. It is this:

"I have no comments to make on whether this bullet also struck Governor Connelly since we did not investigate this phase in detail."

That pseudo-scientific schwantz! Does he mean they did investigate it and not "in detail" or that they didn't investigate it? If they investigated it at all, why is there no reference to it in their report?

At this point I am willing to do a little conjecturing, without insisting any of it is right. I am willing to presume that for reasons unknown to me, Fisher took the lead in persuading the DJ lawyers that the evidence was the way the Warren Commission put it. I assume that because it is not really material to their case, these lawyers must have had some doubts. They did go to Baltimore, a number of them, one a weekend. It is they, not Fisher, who seem troubled. I have no doubt Fisher knows better than he said in the report. I am also inclined to believe that he took the lead in the report. His letters are in similar language. Also, he does have a leading reputation and is the closest of the panel to Washington. What I do not understand is why he jeopardized his fine reputation with so unprofessional a job. Do you know of any unusual connections he may have, any hangups, anything that someone might hold over him? Beginning with the assumption he had to know better, I conclude he did this on his own, for reasons I do not know, or under the persuasion of someone who could offer him the protection he would require.

Please find the time to give me your opinions, hunches, conjectures, or any suggestions you may have.

Sincerely,

Harold Weisberg

CONFIDENTIAL

Memorandum
To: Harold Weisberg
From: Gary Schoener
Date: 4/15/69

This information must be kept confidential if the source is to be kept open. It was obtained during the fight for the X-Rays and Photos in Washington during several discussions with the informant. The informant, Dan Jaffe, is the son of an Asst. Attorney General of the US. He is the roommate of a close friend and has been a friend of mine for several years. He is quite bright and considered extremely honest and forthright, and in addition, is a very objective scholar. He is a graduate student in psychology.

According to Dan, the weekend before the 1968 Panel report was release, several Justice Department representatives, including Dan's father (who was not really on the case) and those who were on the case, traveled to see Dr. Fisher in Baltimore. Fisher presented a very strong case for the validity of the WR's conclusions in regard to the medical evidence and totally convinced the JD people. He questioned Cyril Wecht's objectivity on the matter and noted that when Wecht was a student of his he was very headstrong, bullheaded, etc. He presented himself as a clearly higher authority and Wecht as a student with wild ideas. After hearing my slide presentation, Dan placed a long distance call to his father in Washington (from the home of Dr. & Mrs. Fisher in Minneapolis) and carried on an extended and very loud argument with him about the need for him to study this stuff. His father said that he was familiar with the critical books and then outlined the meeting with Fisher. The impression I have gotten was that at least the Asst. Attorney Generals were talked into things by Fisher himself. Fisher might be the subject of further investigations since I do not regard his 1968 Panel report as professionally honest.

Dan indicated that Fisher's reply to the head motion was to point out that when the brain is injured, movement occurs. Dan's father has no reply, of course, to the movement of the fragments, or to a question as th the likelihood of where the shot came from based on the movement.

Dan more recently informed me that his father had become aware of a rumor in the JD to the effect that the FBI did cover up after the assassination in order to cover their failures. I pointed out that we had always assumed that and that no one suggested that the FBI was any more than an accessory. Dan pointed out that he would believe anything about Hoover based on what he has heard from JD people. (i.e. Hoover keeps a car running 24 hours a day, and he has a special stairway to reach it, with a series of compartments, each of which is "cleared" by a agent who preceeds him before he enters it.)