Kevin Walsh
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9/22/96

Dear Kevin,

I have not read Knudsen's HSCA testimony, which I should do before offering a definitive opinion. There is also what some might consider makes me biased, as I think I am not, so first I go into that.

Some time before NEVER AGAIN! was finally published I was familiar with some of Randy Robertson's work and rather liked it. I refer to his belief there were two shots to the JFK head. I suggested how he could strengthen what he had done by duplicating some of what I had published on that in 1975 but by using an independent expert. I believe he did not do that.

When I knew that NEVER AGAIN! was finally going go appear and when it was not safe for me to try to go to DC for a press conference on it I asked Jim to hold one for me. He agreed. I offered Randy participation. I did not ask him to say a word about my book. I did offer him that opportunity to present his case for a second shot to the head. I also asked Chip Selby to appear and he agreed. When Chip was working on his documentary I told him about Dolce, where he was, and suggested that Chip go interview him. He did. If you read NEVER AGAIN! you know that Chip gave me the full transcript of his full interview so I could use it and I did use much of it. Randy said he wanted to first explore the possibility of first publication in a professional publication. He said he'd know by the end as I now recall of April, 1995.

Jim developed an imagined fear, that he did not know enough to hold that press conference. I told him to say that he was doing it for me because it was not safe for me to go to DC, that he'd been my lawyer in all those FOIA lawsuits, I gave him copies of documents from the book to use and give out, wrote out what he should say about them, and told him to refer any reporters who had any questions to me by phone. He agree to that and then did nothing. Copies of the book were late reaching him but that did not interfere with the news value in what I gave him to give out. What his real reason was I do not know. I think he missed a real opportunity to inform people but I also think he has his own hangups. I think also that Randy missed a real opportunity to get some attention for bis work.

I believe these matters do not make me prejudiced about the Randy review.

You say you do not recall evidence of probes. In fact there was and it was the most influential in what the FBI said and never stopped saying about the assassination and about the autopsy. It is in CD 1. They could not get a probe in the back. I explained why in Post Mortem. The could get a little finger it for

perhaps one joint if I remember correctly, but only that little. That was because they probed with the body prone whefeas it was wounded when erect and the scapula moved as blocked the path of the bullet.

There is testimony and there are documents on this that are well known. I believe they should not be ignored in any commentary and that criticism would be legitimate if they are ignored.

With regard to that 1967 Fox statement, that may be the result of a deal Tom Kelley of the Secret Service and I made. I promised if they answered certain questions and provided certain records I'd not use FOIA to sue them. He wanted to avoid that. His compliance was aborted by the Archives and Justice but because he did make the effort I kept my word. I published what he told me about the printing of the autopsy film in Post Mortem. As I now recall it, Fox used the Navy lab to develop the blak and white film but that the Navy did the color work for him. I think this is what Mark Crouch says Fox told him.

I believe that at Bethesda there was no delay in the discovery of the wound on the back. It had to be seen as soon as the corpse was removed from the casket and unwrapped. I have questions about Randy's conjectures at this point, imcluding that one in particular. He is wrong in saying that Humes did not phone Perry until after midnight, and Andy and the HSCA knew that, and the Perry/ Clark press conference was aired live by radio and repeated often, including in the early editions of the morning papers, which were out not much if at all after the autopsy was begun. The paper that Humes uses in his proctocol dated there was a wound in the front of the neck. Humes merely omitted that.

A staff interview is not "testimony."

I think if this is used the conjectures should be dropped and what is omitted should be stated in that space, like what the official evidence is about the impossibility of getting a probe in the wound in the back. Plus Galloway's orders that they not track the wound through the body, as was required by the autopsy.

I have read Posty's Pudding. He is a subject-matter ignoramus, a propagandist. He was, as he had to be, removed from the Oswald case on which he'd done nothing except go see Marina, as soon as Oswald teed off on him. Even the title of his book is not true. His was not that assignment. It was a dead case until they learned Oswald was getting or had written the Daily Worker. That is all they had to open it and the case file had not reached Hosty from N.O. until the morning of the assassination. You'll have to wonder about the truth of anything he says. I do.

We hope that you can come out some of these days. Our best,

Harold

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Harold Weisberg
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Dear Harold,

Dr. Robertson submitted the enclosed for publication in our newsletter. I would very much value your opinion of it and thought you might find it interesting. I don't recall evidence of probes and seem to recall Humes specifically explaining why it wasn't done. Did you hear he was deposed by the Review Board ?

I hope you like the newsletter. You may know it is a first time publishing for me and I have some usefull material in the pipeline.

Did you read the Hosty book? He and I have been talking. He's a pretty likeable guy and will be coming to town in November. There are areas of interest I want to get done on record from him. Got any suggestions?

Please give my warm regards to Lil. I don't get out your way much these days as work for $ is pretty paramount. Life at the AARC is a real challenge.

Please continue to write me at my P.O. Box and not at AARC.

Sincerely,

Ken Lesar

Robert Knudsen White House Photographer

The recently released HSCA testimony of a former White House photographer, Robert Knudsen, who was involved in the processing of film from the autopsy of President Kennedy, has raised serious questions over possible destruction of evidence and the completeness of the photographic record. From 1958-1965 Mr. Knudsen was a Naval photographer assigned to the White House and continued in this position as a civil servant from 1965-1974. On 8-11-78 Knudsen was interviewed by HSCA Staff Counsel Andy Purdy with Mark Flanagan in attendance and questioned over his participation in the development of the autopsy photographs. His first person account corroborates, in part, the autopsy physician's WC testimony that photographs were exposed the night of the autopsy which were not present when the autopsy materials were donated to the National Archives.

The most dramatic disclosure Knudsen made to Purdy and Flanagan could only be obtained after he requested and received permission from the Secret Service's legal counsel, Robert Goff, to break an oath of silence he had given to the Secret Service in 1963. This oath had to deal with the contents of the autopsy photos. In 1963 he was told by Dr. Burkley and the Secret Service that these photos concerned entry and exit points on the President's body and should not be discussed with anyone. Knudsen remembers seeing a side view photo of the President's upper body which showed autopsy probes inserted in an upward path through his back to the exit wound in the front of the throat. While not at the autopsy, Knudsen's description of the position of the body at the time of probing and the length and diameter of the probes is entirely consistent with others who had actually attended. Prior to being released from his oath, Knudsen, expecting the probe photo to be present , requested that Purdy bring it forth and it clearly would show where the probes had entered the body. Support for probing through the body and pictures of this has been found in the HSCA testimony of pathologist Dr. Robert Karnei and radiologist Dr. John Ebersole as well as others who witnessed the autopsy and in William Manchester's The Death of a President.

The photo of the probes not withstanding, their exact number and time of development should be interesting to researchers as well. At issue is whether and when specific photographs were destroyed. At the present time there are eyewitnesses to both the taking of this particular photo and it's presence on the initial processing of the film. The exact number of films originally exposed at the autopsy is not known because the receipt shows only the number of film holders and did not specifically record how many films they contained. The exposed negatives in their film holders were taken by Roy Kellerman back to the White House after the autopsy. According to Knudsen, he accompanied Secret Service agent James Fox to Anacostia Naval Processing Center where the negatives were developed in the presence of Lt. V. Madonia and these were returned to the White House the same day. It was at this initial development that Knudsen saw the negative of the probes which he was ordered not to discuss. A day or two later all three returned to the Naval Photographic Center and 8X10 color prints of the autopsy photos were made. Contemporaneous memos both dated 11-29-63 from Lt. Madonia to Fox and from Fox to Bouck which would have documented the numbers of negatives and colored prints were included in the list of autopsy related materials given to

Evelyn Lincoln by Dr. Burkley in April 1965. These crucial memos were the only textual materials found to be missing when these materials were donated to the National Archives in October of 1966. Questions may still persist as to exactly how many other photographs might have been taken the night of the autopsy.

Sometime later when the receipts for the initial handling of the film were found missing, agent James Fox was asked by the Secret Service in February 1967 to provide an account of the processing of the film. In direct conflict to Knudsen's later HSCA testimony and his previous contemporaneous documents which indicated that color prints were made on 11-29-63, Fox said that only negatives were processed on 11-27-63 and that color prints were not generated until the late date of 12-9-63. Fox's 1967 revisionist statement made on 2-16-67 has the implication that no prints had been viewed when the Secret Service informed Betheseda on 12-5-63 of exactly how many sheets were contained in the film holders. On that same day and at the latest the next , 2-17-67, another statement was being created elsewhere in the Secret Service intended to account for the chain of custody of the autopsy materials. Only one week after his first statement, Fox signed this second document which included the additional information that Fox had made black and white prints in the Secret Service photographic laboratory a few days after the initial 11-27-63 processing. Without the missing 11-29-63 film processing memos, the Secret Service's 12-5-63 memo to Betheseda is the only remaining document that purports to list the actual number of sheets of film exposed at the autopsy. This delay in informing the Navy presented could have presented the opportunity for someone to view the black and white prints, destroy the negative that Mr. Knudsen saw on the initial processing and thus manipulate the number of films. If Mr. Knudsen's specific recollections, supported by contemporaneous memos, are correct then prints of the probe were available to the Secret Service at the latest on 11-29-63 and any destruction of particular photos might have occurred prior to 12-5-63 when the Secret Service "set" the number of photographs when they officially informed Betheseda. This discrepancy in the number of exposures actually taken and possibly recorded on the missing 11-29-63 memos versus the number documented on 12-5-63 memo may account for the missing photos participants have said were taken at the autopsy.

The question as to why a photo showing probes through the body was destroyed or held back by the Secret Service so early after the assassination raises intriguing possibilities. There may have been an initial plan to tie the stretcher bullet to JFK's body as Sibert and O'Neill's initial F.B.I. reports would indicate but the official autopsy report would immediately exclude this as a possibility. The subsequent friction between the FBI and Secret Service as a result of interactions that evening indicate steps were taken by the Secret Service the night of the autopsy to establish what Roger Feinman has elaborated on as the "throat wound ignorant" story. Their denial of knowledge of a bullet hole in the throat could mean that some misstep occurred as a result of it. If the autopsy had proceeded on the supposition that the throat wound was one of entrance as reports from Parkland indicated, then a delay in the discovery of the back wound could have lead to unnecessary incisions in search of the bullet that had reportedly " entered" the throat. While Manchester's source for the following passage from pages 432-433 of The Death of a President may not be disclosed for many years but it describes, I believe quite well, the motives behind the destruction of the probe photograph. " They had heard reports of

Mac Perry's medical briefing for the press, and to their dismay they had discovered that all the evidence of what was being called an entrance wound in the throat had been removed by Perry's tracheostomy. Unlike the physician's at Parkland, they had turned the President over and seen the smaller hole in the back of his neck. They were positive that Perry had seen an exit wound. The deleterious effects of confusion were already evident. Commander James J. Humes, Bethesda's chief of pathology, telephoned Perry in Dallas shortly after midnight, and clinical photographs were taken to satisfy all the Texas doctors who had been in Trama Room No. 1." Mac Perry's scalpel did not obliterate the widely publicized first verbal reports of a bullet hole in the throat. It is quite likely that Dr. Burkley and/or the Secret Service agents provided at least verbal if not written documentation of the wounds that Dr. Perry and Clark had seen at Parkland. If the autopsy team had immediate knowledge of the throat wound and the back wound and initial radiographs showed no evidence of a bullet in the body then why did any question persist as to what had happened to the bullet. Logic would have dictated that the bullet transited the body. A negative radiographic survey with knowledge of only the throat wound, however, would have lead to confusion. The delay in the discovery of the back wound and realization that the bullet had transited the body would have revealed to the autopsy team that any surgical attempts to find the bullet had been unnecessary. Such a sequence of events could explain early attempts to cover up their knowledge of the throat wound. Robert Knudsen's testimony would indicate that this knowledge was photographically documented the night of the autopsy which might well explain why this photo has disappeared.

Randy Robertson