

Dear Hal,

11/17/98

Lil, is doing well where the hospital has sent her, to where they specialize in physical therapy for senior citizens, but she is not close to coming home. Which I am about the leave for Johns Hopkins for evaluation of what can be done for my kidney failure. If I am lucky they'll be able to get the access inside my ~~20%~~ left forearm. I'm ^{not} that lucky I'll be going to a diuretic place of the hospital three times a week with the treatment time taking four hours. Then there is coming and going and I'll not be allowed to drive the first three weeks. So, much is on my mind and I've too much to catch up with.

Gary begins his 9/27 article referring to Twyman's position on the ^{my} subject and to yours. If he had the required knowledge of the subject-matter he'd never refer to anything Twyman wrote. Twyman is a subject-matter ignoramus off on an ego trip he has the means to indulge. He is remarkable ignorant of the basic, official information for all the time ^{many} and effort he has out into this. He has kept himself away from what is official, proven and basic as he pursues what makes him believe he is Perry Mason returned. Which is large ^{by} what can be said about Gary and others. They get an idea and nothing else is important to them. ~~They~~ In pursuit of their idea they stick to that alone and in the course of it the basic official evidence is lost on them. ^{Even} when they have it, they have not read it or ~~that~~ they have ignored it.

Long ago I wrote Gary, as I did you, to look at the earliest of the Zap frames the FBI suppressed when it was making copies for printing. Two of those frames show, clearly, that the back of the head is not only intact ~~but~~ but not a hair is out of place, not a trace of blood can be seen.

I also pointed out that if the film was doctored ^{ed} it was done irrationally because it destroys the official story. The X-rays show that non-military ammo was used in the head wound and nobody would ~~go~~ go to the trouble if ~~it~~ faking and do the opposite of what the faking is for. As you may remember, both panels the reports of which I have in the PH appendix, with appropriate footnotes, state what disproves the Report when they examined that film.

Gary has, to the best of my knowledge, ^{not} shown any interest in finding any other explanation of what he is so excited about.

He cites ~~McC~~ McClelland but he does not recall, on McC's dependability as an observer, in those ^{55'} times of extraordinary stress, that he wrote a memo saying that Kennedy was struck in his ^{left} forehead. And as an example of the little slips that find their way into what is written, he says, 10/98, that the ARAB was a "panel of civil historians." One was not.

Where he refers to what HSCA omitted he ignores that one reason could have

not to have to fact^{of} the perjury issue, the autopsista^{to} having testified to it
other than the ~~fact~~ did the WC.

I'll look at the other enclosures, for which many thanks, when I have
the time.

Thanks and best,

Lah

HAL VERB
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11-13-98

HAROLD WEISBERG
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Dear Hal:

This letter will have to be necessarily brief as I'm in the process of gathering (& reading) material for the 2 conferences to be held in Dallas.

I leave for Dallas on Wed. Nov. 18th & will be returning to S.F. late Mon. night Nov. 23rd.

Look over the enclosures when you get a chance. I particularly wanted to have you read Gary Aguilar's article on me ("Hal Verb's misunderstanding"---). I'll phone you when I get to Dallas (probably early Thursday morning, Nov. 19th). As you can see Gary is of the firm belief the back of the head was blown out because his witnesses say so. While not committing himself completely, he leaves you with the direct implication the photos were altered.

Gary wants me to speak at his COPA conference (& I will) & my talk will be on the non-attraction of the 2-film. I'm also talking on the same theme for the Lancer conference so I'll be running back & forth between conferences. I'll talk to you soon.

Best,
Hal Verb

copy to H. WEISBERG

reference, and it is accurate. JFK's brain may have weighed more, given that he was no mental lightweight, just as, for all we know, the "magic bullet" may have weighed more than the "average" 6.5 round. We'll never know for sure, because Kennedy's brain was never, obviously, weighed while he was alive--too Republican to even think about it.

But when a brain sustains a trauma, [and what is more traumatic than Zapruder frame 313ff?] it has a tendency, in a protective sense, to engorge itself with as much blood as it can. So if--key "if" there--if JFK's brain weighed 1400 grams in life--not unrealistic, and one-third of that was lost to the damage from the bullet(s), and not body-alteration related, then 466 grams would have been lost and the brain seen at Parkland Hospital--what was left of it, would have weighed 934 grams **plus** the additional weight of engorged blood in surviving blood vessels. Let's also remind ourselves that the 466 grams missing is equal in non-metric weight to just under a pound, and the engorged blood could make up for some of that weight, as a pound of liquid is not a great deal.

Then we have to go back to the sentence in the Supplementary protocol: "Following formalin fixation..." In lay terms, the human brain is spongy, almost jello-ish, and because of that, does not lend itself to immediate examination at autopsy. It must first be hardened, with formaldehyde or some familial derivative. When that process is completed, and it takes time, the once spongy brain is clay-like and can be "sectioned," or cut into cheddar-cheese like slices, in order to follow

the maze(s) of ballistic damage.

So again, if blood engorged the surviving cranial superstructure of arteries, veins, and capillaries, and the brain was then in a pail full of formaldehyde to harden it for purposes of sectioning, what reasonable weight should we expect of it?

I can't supply an answer here, but I would ask any of our subscribers who are in the medical field -- tell us what you can, or better still, attempt to replicate this on the next trauma patient you deal with--weigh the brain when it is removed (ie. on the November 22 timeline), and again after it is fixed (on the December timeline), and see what shakes out.

I would have loved to have addressed this question to a certain "J. Humes," but I doubt an answer would have been forthcoming. On the other hand, he might have said "sure" if it was my brain at issue--but then again, he'd have to locate that one first, right?

**Formerly Suppressed
JFK Autopsy Evidence
Raises New Mysteries**

-- by Gary L. Aguilar, M.D.

President John F. Kennedy was assassinated almost 35 years ago. When Oliver Stone's controversial film about his murder, JFK, debuted in 1991, an emotional debate erupted over whose history of Kennedy's slaying was right. Was the Warren Commission right in 1964 that a lone-nut assassin, Lee Harvey Oswald, single-handedly killed JFK? Or were the critics who believed in conspiracy right? Intriguing new answers may lie

in autopsy evidence that has recently surfaced after having been suppressed by the government for decades.

At the center of the controversy are the stark differences between what the autopsy witnesses saw and what the autopsy photographs show. Formerly secret documents have revealed for the first time that JFK's fatal skull wound was probably not toward the right front of JFK's skull, which is where it appears in autopsy photographs today, and where it should be if Oswald was responsible for creating it. What accounts for the discrepancies? Several clues have emerged from previously hidden testimony that no one has yet investigated: all three of JFK's pathologists, and both autopsy photographers, have claimed under oath that they took photographs that can't be found now. Similarly, a White House photographer said he developed and examined autopsy images that don't now exist. The House Select Committee on Assassinations (HSCA), which reinvestigated JFK's death in 1978 to settle lingering doubts about the Warren Commission, falsified statements of JFK autopsy witnesses in its report, and so put a pro-Warren Commission spin on the prickly autopsy contradictions.

That the government was still slanting the evidence and suppressing it so many years after a supposedly open-and-shut murder case begs the question, Why? It is now evident the suppressed evidence posed no threat to our national security whatsoever. But it was threatening nonetheless. It would have given powerful ammunition to Warren critics who rightly viewed the government's excessive secrecy with skepticism. Had it not

been for Oliver Stone's movie, and the document releases it provoked, we would have had to wait until 2028 to learn of the disturbing news.

When Stone's JFK premiered, almost 30 years after the murder, a mountain of official information was still being unjustifiably withheld from the public. It was the controversy surrounding that film that prompted a change. In 1992, the US Congress passed a little known statute, The JFK Records Act, intended to lessen, wherever possible, the secrecy. The Act led, after lengthy procedural delays, to the creation of the Assassinations Records Review Board, a panel of civilian historians appointed by Bill Clinton. The Board members were finally sworn in on April 11, 1994, and set to work locating, reviewing and publicly releasing all possible documents relating to JFK's murder. With one year remaining before the Review Board's scheduled termination, it seems clear already that declassified documents from the WC and the HSCA may never fully satisfy either side of the debate, at least with regards to JFK's medical and autopsy evidence.

It is also clear that the evidence will encourage further distrust of government investigations in general, and the Warren Commission's investigation in particular.

A sophomore in high school when Kennedy was shot on November 22, 1963, I had paid only a little attention to early Warren critics, possibly because I'd acquired my staunchly Republican parents' dislike of Kennedy. The discouraging revelations of official lies and cover-ups in Vietnam, Watergate and elsewhere, however, made me wonder

if perhaps the American majority that distrusted the official verdict in the JFK case might not be entirely wrong. After seeing Stone's *JFK*, I dusted off some of my old books on the subject, and delved back into it with renewed interest.

As a physician, I was naturally drawn to the JFK medical/autopsy evidence. I read with fascination the Journal of the American Medical Association's (JAMA's) May 27, 1992 interviews with JFK's autopsy physicians. In JAMA they hotly disputed Oliver Stone's depiction of them as being under intense pressure or performing a "controlled" autopsy.

I wrote a letter to JAMA's editor asking questions of JFK's pathologists, which was selected by the editor and published alongside many other letters. But when JFK's autopsists refused to answer even a single colleague's question, including mine, I knew the medical/autopsy evidence was worth a closer look. Why were JFK's pathologists stonewalling colleagues in a medical/scientific journal so long after JFK's murder?

I requested, and was granted, permission by the Kennedy family to see the still-restricted autopsy photographs and X-rays. Despite the fact bootleg copies of the real autopsy images had repeatedly been published, the originals were of far higher quality, and were just as baffling. As the Review Board's work progressed, and suppressed documents spilled out, my bafflement only grew.

The most confusing aspect of the autopsy evidence to me was the huge discrepancy between the witnesses' description of JFK's fatal wound and the autopsy photographs. Virtually every witnesses described JFK's fatal

wound as a gaping skull wound toward the right rear of JFK's head. The autopsy photographs revealed a skull wound toward the right front of JFK's skull, with no damage at all behind his right ear. There were, however, two groups of witnesses with ample opportunity to judge Kennedy's skull wound: the emergency medical team at Dallas' Parkland Hospital, where JFK underwent a valiant, though unsuccessful, resuscitation effort, and witnesses present during JFK's four-hour autopsy, which was performed at Bethesda Naval Hospital, near Washington, D.C.

Parkland Hospital in Dallas, renowned for its experienced, and expert, trauma staff, was the best hospital to which the limousine driver could possibly have taken JFK after the shooting. Treating Parkland physicians described seeing a defect in the right rear of JFK's skull. For example, neurosurgery professor Kemp Clark, MD, examined JFK's skull wound before pronouncing him dead. Later that same day, he wrote, in an official summary, "There was a large wound beginning in the right occiput extending into the parietal region ... Much of the skull appeared gone at the brief examination... "

Over 20 other Parkland witnesses, many of them physicians, repeated Dr. Clark's mention of a right-rearward, "occipital" skull defect. The "occipital" region of the skull overlies the occipital bone, a bone directly in the lower rear part of the back of the skull. When you lie down on a bed face up, your "occiput", or "occipital" scalp, touches the pillow. Among over 20 Parkland witnesses who described JFK's skull defect as rearward, 8 participating physicians used the term

"occipital" in documents available in the Warren Commission's volumes: Drs. Kemp Clark, Robert McClelland, Marion Jenkins, Charles J. Carrico, Malcolm Perry, Gene Akin, Paul Peters, and Charles R. Baxter.

Non-physician witnesses at Parkland described JFK's skull wound the same way.

But, I wondered, how could JFK's skull defect be in the right rear if the autopsy photographs, which show only a tiny hole in the rear, and a large exit defect toward the right front, are accurate? Besides, a gaping skull wound in the right rear seemed incompatible with the official version that had Oswald's bullet causing a small entrance wound on entering the back of JFK's skull, only to blow out a large exit wound toward the right front as it left the skull. There was another problem with the witnesses, too.

A frequently cited experiment reported in the *Harvard Law Review* had shown that when test subjects were asked about "salient" details of a scene they had witnessed, their accuracy rate was 78% to 98%. Even when a detail was not considered salient, witnesses were still accurate over 60% of the time.

JFK's fatal skull wound would certainly have been a "salient detail" to experienced medical witnesses. But if JFK's autopsy photographs were right, they proved that over 90% of the witnesses were wrong! The *Harvard Law Review* study was not precisely analogous to all the medical witnesses, because the test subjects were tested shortly after viewing a film, and some of JFK's witnesses didn't report what they'd seen until months or even years later.

But a number of Parkland witnesses

did contemporaneously describe what they saw, like the test subjects in the study. Their statements were no different than those who testified, or wrote, later: JFK's skull defect involved the right rear of his head. Drs. Clark, Jenkins, Perry, Baxter, and registered nurse Pat Hutton, all of whom described JFK's skull wound on the day of the murder, used words like "occipital," "right rear," "occipitoparietal," and "cerebellum," all terms associated exclusively with skull injuries involving the rear of the skull.

Only a few witnesses gave vague and useless descriptions, and it is only these that don't flatly contradict the photographs. Since error tends to be random, [ed. note: or Random House], I couldn't fathom how so many Parkland witnesses could have made the exact same mistake by agreeing on the same wrong location in the rear. But were they really so unanimously in error? Perhaps not, though as I was to discover, the controversy over Parkland witnesses' descriptions of JFK's skull wound was 20 years old.

In fact, in the 1978 reinvestigation of JFK's death, although the HSCA concluded a murder conspiracy was "probable," it nevertheless went to great lengths to back up the Warren Commission's version of JFK's gaping skull wound by specifically refuting Parkland witnesses who described it in the rear. The HSCA reported, "Critics of the Warren Commission's medical evidence findings have found (sic) on the observations recorded by the Parkland Hospital doctors. They believe it is unlikely that trained medical personnel could be so consistently in error regarding the nature of the wound ... In disagreement with the observations of the

Parkland doctors are the 26 people present at the autopsy. [ed. note: There were many more than 26] All of those interviewed who attended the autopsy corroborated the general location of the wounds as depicted in the photographs; none had differing accounts ... it appears more probable that the observations of the Parkland doctors are incorrect."

The HSCA's statement, supported, the HSCA said, by "Staff interviews with persons present at the autopsy," was devastating to critics who believed that Parkland witnesses proved a different wound, a different bullet trajectory, and, most importantly, a different gunman than Oswald. JAMA put the "mistake" in perspective, explaining that Parkland witnesses were more concerned with saving JFK's life in an emergency situation than with accurately observing his wounds. The refuting autopsy witnesses, which included other physicians besides the pathologists, calmly watched the pathologists explore JFK's wounds over a period of several hours. They were undeniably in a far better position than Parkland's witnesses to accurately describe JFK's wounds. But the proof - the autopsy witnesses' interviews before the HSCA - did not appear anywhere in the 12 volumes the HSCA published. They were suppressed, **and perhaps for very good reasons.**

Review Board-released documents have revealed for the first time that the HSCA misrepresented the statements of its own Bethesda autopsy witnesses on the location of JFK's skull defect. The HSCA also misrepresented the Warren Commission statements of the autopsy witnesses as well. It was not true, as reported by

the HSCA, that the autopsy witnesses unanimously corroborated photos showing JFK's gaping skull wound was toward the right front side of his head. On the contrary. Whereas over 20 witnesses at Parkland described JFK's skull defect as rearward, suppressed documents show that, similarly, over 20 autopsy witnesses said the same thing. In fact, not a single witness described what is visible in the photographs: a wound toward the right front of JFK's skull.

Assuming the photographs were accurate representations of JFK's wounds, the mystery suddenly deepened. Not only were virtually all Parkland and Bethesda witnesses wrong to locate JFK's gaping skull wound toward the rear, not a single one of them - of over 40 - got it right!

In a classic example, the Warren Commission reported that Secret Service agent Clinton J. Hill said, "I observed another wound (in addition to JFK's throat wound) on the right rear portion of the skull." Hill's recollections, as well as other, similar autopsy witness descriptions of JFK's rearward skull wound, have been available in the Warren Commission volumes since 1964. But what of the HSCA's suppressed autopsy witnesses?

Jan Gail Rudnicki, a lab assistant on the night of the autopsy, was interviewed on 5/2/78 by HSCA counsel Mark Flanagan, who reported Rudnicki told him, the "back-right quadrant of the head was missing." General Philip C. Wehle, Commanding officer of the military District of Washington, DC, was interviewed by HSCA counsel D. Andy Purdy, on 8-19-77. Purdy's formerly suppressed memo reported that, "(Wehle) noted that the wound was in the back of the

head so he would not see it because the President was lying face up" ***JFK's wound as shown in the autopsy photos would be easy to see with JFK lying face up.*** Several of the autopsy witnesses, including two FBI agents, prepared diagrams for the HSCA that depicted JFK's skull with a right-rearward gaping skull wound. These diagrams were also suppressed. Thus in HSCA interviews, as well as in Warren Commission testimony, depositions, and statements given to reporters and writers, JFK's autopsy witnesses reported - as overwhelmingly as Parkland witnesses had - that JFK's skull wound was in the right rear. The HSCA's report to the contrary simply muffed it.

But who wrote the HSCA's inaccurate summary, and who decided to keep the interviews and diagrams from the public? I wrote to HSCA counsel, Mark Flanagan who conducted a number of the interviews. He never answered. I spoke with HSCA counsel, Andy Purdy, who conducted many of the interviews, and I wrote the former chairman of the HSCA, Robert Blakey, now a Notre Dame law professor. Neither had any idea who had written the inaccurate passage, nor could either explain why the non-sensitive interviews were suppressed. Purdy did concede, however, that he was "not happy" with the way the misleading passage had been written.

But the public was not the only group that was kept in the dark about the HSCA's autopsy witnesses. The HSCA's own forensic experts, tasked with evaluating the autopsy evidence, were apparently not shown the autopsy witness diagrams or interviews either. In 1995 I spoke at a conference in Washington, DC, hosted

by the Coalition on Political Assassinations, on the subject of the JFK autopsy evidence. I showed both the former chairman of the HSCA's forensic panel, Michael Baden, MD, and one of the HSCA's panelists, Cyril Wecht, MD, JD, the current coroner of Pittsburgh, the suppressed autopsy interviews and diagrams. Both were also lecturing with me that day in Washington, and they were standing with me on the podium. Both admitted they had never seen the suppressed testimonies or diagrams, despite the fact it was their responsibility to assess this evidence for the HSCA. Had this knowledge been shared with the HSCA's forensics consultants, it might have led the HSCA investigators toward evidence finally being pursued today - 20 years later - by the Review Board: the possibility that the photographic inventory from JFK's autopsy has been violated.

If it were true that the autopsy photographic record had been tampered with, an easy resolution would emerge to explain what would otherwise be an astounding improbability: that over 40 witnesses were unanimously wrong that JFK had a gaping wound toward the rear of his skull. Intriguingly, formerly secret evidence has emerged supporting such a possibility, and there may be more to come.

In one secret memo, HSCA counsel, Purdy, reported that chief autopsy photographer, "(John) STRINGER (sic) said it was his recollection that all the photographs he had taken were not present in 1966 (when Stringer first saw the photographs). There are no photographs of the interior of JFK's chest in the "complete" set of autopsy

images at the National Archives. However every autopsy participant who was asked recalled that photos were taken of the interior of JFK's body, as they should have been to document the passage of the non-fatal bullet through JFK's chest. Stringer told the HSCA he recalled taking "at least two exposures of the body cavity." An HSCA memo reported that James Humes, MD, JFK's chief autopsy pathologist, "... specifically recall(ed photographs) ... were taken of the President's chest ... (these photographs) do not exist."

Regarding J. Thornton Boswell, MD, the pathologist who was second in command after Humes, the HSCA claimed "... he (Boswell) thought they photographed '... the exposed thoracic cavity and lung ...' but (he) doesn't remember ever seeing those photographs." Robert Karnai, MD, a physician witness who was not a member of the autopsy team, told the HSCA, "He (Karnai) recalls them putting the probe in and taking pictures (the body was on the side at the time) (sic)." Floyd Reibe, the assistant autopsy photographer, was reported to have told the HSCA, "he thought he took about six pictures--I think it was three film packs--of internal portions of the body."

The question naturally arises, did anyone ever see autopsy images that have since disappeared? The answer, apparently, is, Yes. In a previously suppressed interview, former White House photographer, Robert Knudsen, told the HSCA he developed negatives from JFK's autopsy which he examined in the course of his work on November 23, 1963. During the HSCA's investigation, he was shown the complete photographic inventory. Knudsen

repeatedly insisted, against pressure, that in 1963 he saw at least one image not in the inventory he was shown in 1978 - an image with a metal probe through JFK's body that entered the back at a lower position than it exited through the throat wound. Inasmuch as Oswald is supposed to have fired from above and behind JFK, if the back wound was indeed lower than the throat wound of exit in front, Oswald simply didn't do it.

Whether over forty witnesses from both Parkland and Bethesda Hospitals miraculously made the identical errors of describing a right-forward defect as being rearward is problematic, to say the least. That so many HSCA-gathered documents poking holes in the Warren Commission's version of events were suppressed by the very HSCA investigators charged with resolving Warren Commission doubts will hardly inspire anyone to suggest that a new government investigation is what is needed. Despite the passage of almost 35 years, our wait for the full truth is not yet over. We may have to await the efforts of historians who will pour over documents liberated through the Assassinations Records Review Board's efforts. The Board's term, as you read this, has expired. No doubt there are more surprises to come.

While the document releases are unlikely to answer all remaining questions about JFK's death, the Review Board has done us a signal service lifting the cloak of secrecy that has fueled suspicion and mistrust, and spawned so many wild conspiracy theories over the past thirty years. Oliver Stone's shocking Kennedy movie may thus ironically have brought an unintended benefit to our

democracy: the U.S. government has finally begun to do what it should have done long ago--in the "pre-Stone age" - be open and accountable to us citizens. And, who knows, when the Review Board's work is all said and done, we may just even learn something about JFK's assassination, besides the fact the government doesn't always report accurately what it has found. More optimistically, if the Review Board initiates a trend toward greater government openness, we citizens may also learn to have more faith in government.

[ed. note: Gary L. Aguilar, MD, is a practicing physician in San Francisco. He has testified before the ARRB in medical matters pertaining to John F. Kennedy's assassination. At the Board's request, he has also provided historical and background research data to aid in the Board's preparation for further interviews with witnesses to JFK's medical injuries.

BOOK, MEDIA, INTERNET NOTES

-- by Walt Brown

A great deal of new material has become available since our last issue of the journal, some quite good (see Book Review section), some of much diminished quality, and some still on the way, in the "wait and see" department.

It would be remiss of the *JFK/DPQ* if we did not begin with publications by two of our subscribers, Allen Peppitt and Larry Sneed. Peppitt's work, *A Necessary End*, is an engaging narrative that has Oswald wearing a

bullet-proof vest during his transfer, and thereby surviving Ruby's bullet. From there, it's part *People v. Lee Harvey Oswald*, but mostly the genius of British researcher Peppitt, who was kind enough to send me a draft some months back.

I enjoyed the work a great deal--it doesn't solve the case, but hey, neither did Posner or the Warren Commission, right? For inquiries, write to Allen Peppitt, 5 Goldsmith Close, Woking, Surrey GU21 3HF, England; consider including an international postal coupon to evoke a swift response.

Closer to home, subscriber Larry Sneed has put together *No More Silence*, a 601 page oral history--the first of its kind, with up-close and personal interviews of 49 individuals, mostly in "officialdom" circa 1963. If the "sound bytes" in the promotional literature are any indication of the quality of this work, the reader is in for a treat, as the folks being interviewed (samples--Charles Brehm, Joe Murphy, Gus Rose, Harry Holmes, Jim Leavelle, Joe Cody, and Bill Alexander) are not under the constraints of pre-planned questions, a la the Warren Commission; they are simply reliving the events as they remember them, and are, as *Candid Camera* used to say, "Caught in the act of being themselves." As the literature suggests, "*No More Silence* humanizes those who were involved in the events."

Who could ask for more than that?

No More Silence is due for publication in October, 1998, and will be available through Three Forks Press, PO Box 823461, Dallas Texas 75382. Along with Dale Myers' new work, this book will be reviewed in the next issue