

RB SM

Return to CW in 1972 across file. How is this for an "independent analysis" by a 19-year-old?

Dear Howard,

8/30/72

We had an assortment of in-town letters this a.m. I read your letter to SM of 8/27 in about three snatches. I think I remember it well enough to make some comment without rereading and have enough time before lunch but not for other work requiring longer continuity.

By and large I think it is an excellent analysis. I am glad you did not take what now would be a counter-productive line, combining that I warned explicitly against what happened with the questions of the motives of others. As I have often told you, spilt milk is for cats. Our problems are how to eliminate such things and how to find some use for what they yield. There is no adverse event that hasn't had angles we could use for constructive purposes. It is to that that we should now address ourselves, in my view the "our" also being considerably fewer.

Because you sent carbons to RB and the letter to SM, I'll also carbon them. Because you raise the point about CW's not returning your call for so long, I think it might help SM's understanding of what she might be unwilling to believe of CW to tell her what my files show on this, that he asked me to call him reverse, giving me a special number, that he then was not in and never returned the calls, and actually later said he had but I was not in when for a long period of time I was never away and move the phone outside when we are outside. You might be able to correlate this with what information he had by then gotten from me and whether he might logically expect to have gotten more without something from him by way of good-faith showing. To this I think it would be helpful to her willingness to believe what will not be either easy or pleasant that Cyril did refuse to be a witness for me in a suit for some of the related material, having earlier led me to believe he would help in this and other ways, and finally said it was because he was making too much money and didn't want to give up more of the possibilities for increasing his wealth. You might include how long ago it was that I anticipated the current thing, not so much to say I was right but in a limited context, the suggestion I made to CW for us to work together on a perfectly safe approach that had none of the liabilities inherent in this, and his failure to respond. She may have had this from me, may not credit it, and you know of that offer and I later discussed the entire approach with you. I do not want details of this given at this point, but the fact and your estimate of its worthwhileness or lack of it might be helpful to her and to RB.

You do a kind of analysis of the troubles we have with the combination of Cyril and Graham. As far as you go I think it is excellent. You do not carry some of what you deal with as far as is possible, perhaps by choice and for time pressures. You should, however, be aware of more than that there was falsehood, that there was more falsehood than you listed, and that I told Graham more than eight months ago that this is exactly what he would do and that it would be contrived to look honest whereas it would be false and of such intent. You heard that. So, it is more than just bad, it is the following of a deliberate design by "the other side", easily seen in advance if one but wanted to. In short, there is more wrong with this than you say, and others as well as you should understand this. There is new hazard in what Cyril is now up to, as you do not completely explain. Where you do it is limited, as with front entrance. I do agree that Cyril's handling was a shock to me because the one thing of which I was completely without doubt, despite my past experiences, where I could without difficulty attribute incompetence to other things, is his incredible incompetence in this entire matter as reflected to this point. I'm learning from the past and going no further. You know what is in the new last part of PM and know that I have more I could not include. The incompetence is monumental.

But the main point I want to make, and in making it suggest that if Sylvia is still ill it can have therapeutic value to her, is that we should now be trying to figure out any good uses we might be able to make of this mess. There are some. You are aware of some of my initiatives, as is everyone I want to know at this point. I'm not about to undertake to cope with new "good conscience" problems. I think there are possibilities, and if there are those who can see what I do not, I'd sure like to know. I think by now everyone has enough reason to consider that before anything is done with anything like this I should be at least consulted, for various reasons. One is knowledge, which exceeds yours, the next in completeness. Another is not to cross up what is already in the works, of which others do not know. Let us respect the Sprague/CTIA monopoly on this kind of stupidity. One of the things that now interests me even more is anything at all on Marshall, including anything that can advance my understanding of the unique genius he applied to making a bigger and new and unnecessary scandal/mess at Chappaquiddick.

Hastily,

8/27/72

Dear Sylvia,

I've heard nothing about your condition since your niece wrote me that you would not be able to rent a summer-house this year. I hope you are doing well. I have been extremely busy with my book, and have almost a month's accumulation of mail which I've not yet answered. In a week I return to school.

Today the Times gave page-one coverage to Wecht's monumental irresponsibility and dishonesty. I am writing you as a matter of record and for your information. This is indeed a disagreeable matter for any responsible assassination critic, and I hope the state of your health is not such that the reality of this matter will upset you or prevent you from understanding and analyzing it.

First, let me give you a little backgrounding of things that have happened since we were out of touch. Wecht wrote me soliciting "suggestions" and inviting me to a mish-mosh meeting of "critics" to "digest what he saw at the Archives. I absolutely refused to be part of the meeting, and told him that I had decided there was really no way anyone could brief him before he went in to see the materials. I wrote him some cautions, and I set forth my position vis a vis what he was about to do, inviting discussion.

When he saw my letter to Wecht, Harold suggested that there was a way that I could help Cyril conduct a productive, responsible examination, and he made several suggestions to me. What he suggested were things I had originally thought of, but then ~~was~~ abandoned as I became more and more convinced that Wecht did not have serious, responsible intents. Nevertheless, after receiving Harold's letter, I decided that I should speak to Cyril to find out what he planned to do when he saw this stuff, to see if he was willing to listen to me over those CTIA nuts, and, if so, to help him. I called his office; he was out of town, expected back the next day, so his secretary took a message. He never called me back.

In the meantime, Dick Bernabei had written Cyril, quite independently of me, and told him that he felt no briefing was necessary, and he strongly advised Cyril that I was the only person competent to give him reliable advice and assistance.

I learned from Harold, who got it second-hand, that Wecht had invited such experts as Jerry (who is in Europe, I think) and Dick Sprague to be among his trusted advisers.

In three weeks, Cyril never called me. I note too that he did not call me when you asked him to.

Judging from the Times article, there is nothing I could have done to stop Wecht in the pursuit of his craziness. Even the caution I expressed in my letter he did not heed.

The lies I expected are in the article, but there are also many unwelcome unexpected lies. Right at the beginning, we read that JFK's brain has been suppressed "apparently by the Kennedy family." And who spoke for the family? Burke Marshall, who is falsely ~~re~~ referred to as "a representative of the Kennedy family." More suppression is falsely heaped on the Kennedys.
~~XXXXXXXX~~

Marion Johnson is quoted as saying that the memo of transfer is being suppressed "at the behest of the Kennedy family." This is a lie.

This business with the tissue slides really betrays Wecht's competence. According to Graham, Wecht said the slides will show for sure if the shots came from the rear. That is at best an irresponsible statement. For how can Wecht prove that a slide labeled "Specimen from rear upper-thorax wound" really came from the area of the body, or that it is from JFK at all? Of all the things which could be faked, these are the most likely. And Wecht, of course, has nothing to say about the absence of a slide for the front of the neck. Suddenly he is more interested in trying to sustain the WR than in trying to point out legitimate omissions which do not support it.

The real shocker for me was Wecht's statement that the pix and X-rays "strongly support" the conclusion that JFK was hit by bullets fired from the rear. This man, whose competence we all had faith in, who was, according to some, going to come out with the truth at last, has done more to back the WR than any whore before him! For now a critical expert has put his stamp of approval on an untenable conclusion. I don't care what he says those pix and X-rays do; I'm talking about what they cannot do. One thing the can't do is eliminate the possibility of frontal entrance.

The only thing remotely true Wecht had to say was that the movies and 399 disprove the single bullet theory. He had to go through all this to say that? He doesn't even invoke the autopsy films to say this. Instead, he says "the angle of (the bullet's) path through President Kennedy made it unlikely that it could have struck Governor Connally..." Now he has put his stamp of approval on the conclusion that there was a continuous path through the neck. Nothing he saw and probably nothing in existence can do that, and I am not willing to believe that as a competent forensic pathologist he doesn't know this. Such a statement is irresponsible and dishonest.

And then, the coup de grace, in which Cyril so greatly advanced the cause of us average citizens who are struggling to make the world realize that Oswald was not the assassin: "Dr. Wecht said that Oswald could not have fired three bullets so fast on his bolt-action rifle." What business does he have saying this crap? We finally get a real, supposedly honest forensic expert go in to see the pictures and X-rays and he comes out and says they support the WR, but he is sure to mouth off about that which is clearly not his expertise.

There is no telling the harm to come from the irresponsible manner in which Wecht is trying to get access to the brain. It will now be easier than ever to label critics as sensationalists, intent on exploiting gore and hurting the poor family. And I would like someone to tell me what legal basis Wecht has for his demand to get the brain, since the contract under which he got access to begin with makes no mention of the brain and the tissue slides. He was granted access to only that which is listed in the appendix to the contract, which does not include the brain and the slides.

Needless to say, with just about every force in our society working against us, we really need great publicity like this. So, I guess it was a real brainstorm to give an exclusive to Fred Graham of the Times, who has been so generous to us in the past. With the Times' record, I suppose we could expect nothing but fairness and objectivity from them. And now look at the great story we have, quoting Burke Marshall more than it does Wecht, and then quoting Wecht as saying the pix and X-rays support the Warren Report. And what great publicity that ~~MM~~ Graham mentioned Wecht's transportation was provided by the CTIA "that includes...Jim Garrison..."

Hopefully, this will get no more press coverage, or as little as possible.

This is a sordid affair which, instead of making one iota of a contribution to the truth, has added to the lies and irresponsibilities which already abound in the case. It would be an understatement to say we have no need for this type of nonsense, and there is no telling how this can be used to hurt us. Yet, I need I mention that what has happened today, as well as Dr. Morgan's announcement last week, was foreseen and warned of? And, I note in sadness, almost no one even bothered to listen to or think about the warnings because this was our golden opportunity to let the people know the truth.

I sincerely hope this ~~XXXXXX~~ will not upset you in a way that will hamper your recovery. I know that for me this is upsetting, even if it is not unexpected. The more I think about it, there is hardly anything Wecht could have done that is more reprehensible and just plain disgusting than saying the pix and X-rays "strongly support" the WR.

Best wishes,

cc. Weisberg, Bernabei

Howard

P.S. Just now, at 1:55pm, the local news radio station reported that Wecht had announced that "based on his research" the single bullet theory was impossible, and the Warren Report must be invalid. No mention at all of the pix and X-rays. I presume this was off the wires. Of course, this does not nullify what he said about the autopsy films and, to be frank with you, it makes me a little sicker that he should take credit for the research which disproves the SBT. Quite a man of integrity and scholarship.