

1/27/80

Dr. James P. Rhoads
Archivist of the United States
The National Archives,
Washington, D.C. 20408

Dear Dr. Rhoads,

Your letter of the 22nd., with enclosures, has just arrived. I am not well and cannot now make full response, but I will soon.

With regard to your last paragraph, dealing with the WDSU film just supplied by the Secret Service, I hope to be able to get to Washington on Friday, the 30th. I would like to see this film then, if this is possible. I should be able to get there about 11 a.m., which should permit viewing without interference with the lunch schedule of your employees. If you can arrange to have the WDSU original there at the same time, I would like to be satisfied that it is without splices. And, if my recollection is correct, there should be three separate WDSU films, not just one. If this is an exact duplicate of the film I have seen, obtained at the same time, there is no point in my seeing it. I should also like to have copies of all the correspondence and other records relating to this film, as supplied by the Secret Service and as between your agency and the Secret Service. I would appreciate being able to pick them up the same time.

As our previous correspondence shows in detail, there are still-missing still pictures from this film, made for and used by the government in the investigation. I would appreciate it, if this matter is not conclusively handled in the communications resulting in this new film being deposited with you, if you could establish, one way or the other, whether the Secret Service has them. If they do, I presume they also will be provided you. I know the FBI has at least some of them, but you appear to be reluctant to ask the FBI for what is supposed to be in your archive and is not.

When I originally requested a page of the Bringer handbook, referred to at the bottom of the first page of your letter, I also provided the page number. It is now beyond my capacity to search this out. If you cannot now find that record, it will have to await the time I can duplicate this work. However, I remind you that the FBI was the official repository of all Commission evidence, that it was to make photographic copies of each, and that, to the best of my knowledge, this was done.

With all the other responsibilities you have, I presume you have made no personal examination of the photographs of ORs 394 and 395 you made for me. Perhaps you may yet find the time to do this. The reason I asked to examine the originals is because these pictures are utterly without meaning. They do not disclose, to careful examination, what is testified to. My purpose is simply to be able to do this. I regard this as quite proper. I would also prefer that to enable this to be done is the purpose of preservation of such archives. I also suggest you might want to consider what you are really saying in this sentence, "We do not prepare special photographs of President Kennedy's clothing for researchers".

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If the originals are without meaning and you will not make those that can have meaning, are you not saying you are seeing to it that no one can have any meaningful access to this most basic evidence? I am reluctant to believe this is your personal intention. I am not without understanding of the reluctance of any bureaucracy to depart from what it has made its norm. And, of course, it is obvious that no cheap use should be made of such evidence. Therefore, I have his suggestion to make, one that may cause you no problem at all. I ask that you have your own lab make suitable enlargements of parts of these negatives for me and that you provide a simple statement that also should present you with no difficulties. On CE 394, my sole interest is in the slits that are the subject of testimony, the points where the bullet is said to have transmitted the garment. It is of these that I would like 8x10 enlargements, as large as can be made with clarity, two prints of each. With CE 395, the same, plus a statement that the other initial marks on the tie are not nicks of any kind. Here, if there are any other views already recorded in photographs, I would like to be able to examine them. It should be obvious to you that any proper assessment of this evidence, whether or not it was made by the Commission, requires consultation with at least one other view, that from the side.

I spell this out for you because I am anxious to avoid any unfair inference that the government is hiding anything, of which there are already too many such inferences.

You have not responded to my request that you duplicate the picture of the rear end of the bullet you did take for me long ago. It is a view taken from as close as possible to a right angle, with a millimeter scale along the flattened side of the bullet. I still want this, with two prints and a negative. I would also like a print of the picture you now say you took for Dr. Nichols, together with a copy of his order (assuming this is not improper), which will identify the time of the picture-taking.

I will address the other matters as soon as I can. I also remind you of existing unanswered requests I have made.

Sincerely,

Harold Weisberg