

Mr. R.E. Gaensslen, editor
Journal of Forensic Sciences
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Harold Welsberg
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5/23/96

Dear Mr. Gaensslen,

Please excuse my typing. I'm 83, unwell and weak and just home from two weeks in the hospital.

Dr. Randolph Robertson and I have never met but we in the past were in correspondence. Today I received from him your truly shocking letter of April 15. I write you without his knowledge.

There is not a thing in your letter that reflects the dimmest awareness of the extraordinary significance of the assassination of any president. Whatever the intent of an assassin or assassins under our political system it is a de facto coup d'etat. It is the most subversive crime possible in a society like ours. It nullifies our cherished representative society.

At the time of the assassination your Journal was conspicuous in meeting its responsibilities, to the degree then possible, when others were silent. But what you write Dr. Robertson is a cowardly copout and that in an era in which your journal should have been heard from for many years. Yet you say of such a crime with such questions remaining that "the whole subject is best left alone."

Of all the innumerable great failings when the President was assassinated, if the opinion of one who is not a forensic scientist but who has studied that in this case as nobody else has means anything to you, the greatest failings were in forensics.

It is not merely, your words, "the various different opinions" nor is it a question of what is probably not possible, merely of "controversial issues." The real questions I believe exist for you have to do with the forensics of the so-called official investigations and how the Academy of Forensic Sciences has worked or not worked when faced with them. Or, as you say, with its determination not to face them.

The first book on the Warren Commission and the assassination was my Whitewash: The Report on the Warren Report. It dates to 1965. My ninth, NEVER AGAIN! (Garroll & Graf) is currently available in book stores, I have written severely and critically of those involved in the forensics on the Commission and in the FBI. To this date I have yet to receive a phone call or a letter from any of that multitude complaining of unfairness or inaccuracy. In a lawsuit that a forensic scientist should have filed and did not and I did, for the results of the scientific testing, when to force the issue of repetitious perjury by the FBI's forensic scientists I accused one of them of perjury, making myself subject to that charge if I lied, the preposterous but successful defense was that I could make such charges ad infinitum because I knew

more about the assassination and what surrounded it that anyone employed by the FBI. Copy on request. I state this not to boast but to indicate to you that beginning in 1965 there was dependable, factual information available to the Academy and its Journal if either intended to do what I believe the country has a right to expect of them when there has been such a crime followed by such dissatisfaction about the obviously fraudulent, impossible "solution."

If a crime like this is as unimportant to you as your letter represents, you have, I believe, abdicated your responsibilities. I mean this in the plural.

Given the purposes of the Academy and its Journal, ignorance is neither an excuse nor any kind of justification.

Through a dozen or more Freedom of Information lawsuits I obtained before the end of 1961 about a third of a million pages of once-withheld records. As a matter of principle I have always made them freely available to all working in the field, along with as unsupervised access to them and to our copies. In practice most of these who have examined those records have been those with whom I do not agree. But not one forensic scientist has ever come to look at anything in them. Or asked me from my knowledge of them where to look in the public reading rooms of the agencies or the national archives.

Age and health impairments have for some years denied me access to those records, which are in our basement. Beginning then and with what time remains to me I have been making what record I can for our history of the failures of all our basic institutions in that time of great stress and since then. I will add your letter and this one to that work, which by now is quite voluminous, as I will also add anything you may say in response to this.

Dr. Robertson understated the perjury of the autopsists. And you have been silent about that. Silent about the acknowledgment of destruction of records in an autopsy and that of a President? Did none of you read the prosecutor's Warren Commission testimony in which he testified that what he burned ^{was first holograph?} ~~was his notes?~~ Or his House assassination committee testimony in which he testified that he burned his notes? For which years earlier I ~~have~~ published the redprints for them in facsimile?

Did none of you read the autopsy protocol? It states that the X-rays show some forty "dust-like" fragments in the skull. That from hardened World War II ammunition? These and matters like them would not be for you any "re-examination of the evidence" because you have ignored it and ever so much more like it that your organization especially should not have ignored. If it intends to meet its responsibilities.

I do not know what you mean when you conclude saying "the ^aZapruder frames will not reproduce well in black and white." They have. The FBI made black-and-white copies for Commission publication. In a lawsuit against the Zapruder estate I got an agreement that copies can be made for scholarly, not commercial purposes. So you can make your own copies from the original. In studying the original, using the 35 mm frames LIFE made for the Commission, I blew them up on a screen at the Archives to where they were about five feet wide and were astonishingly clear.

I presume ^{my} from your letter you have had no interest in the subject and feel more secure with ignorance of it. This despite your responsibilities as the editor of the Journal. To give you a quick indication of how glaring some of the failings and ~~down~~ dishonesties that by your steadfast silence you protect are I suggest you look in NEVER AGAIN! which is currently available to you the FBI's picture of the front of the President's short collar supposedly transitted by a bullet on page 245 and the FBI's picture of the tie through the knot of which that bullet supposedly passed, on the next page.

You have heard of the magic bullet? This is a magic tie. It was self-healing!


There was even self-healing concrete, where there was an impact on a curbstone. See pages 332, 333 and 336.

^{if} These and ever so much more like it are "better left alone" after more than three years of silence?

What is important to your country, to you, your Journal and your Academy when you find this and so much like it is "best left alone" and you could not put such issues and more like them "to rest?"

I regret feeling a citizen's obligation to write you as I ^{do} ~~use~~ and I hope it leads you to give this some mature and responsible thought rather than the facile copypast I address.

Sincerely,


Harold Weisberg



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Dear Dr. Robertson:

Review of the manuscript "A Re-evaluation of the head wounds etc." (Mss # 96-031) has been completed. I regret to inform you that it has not been accepted for publication in this journal.

Some words of explanation to you are in order with respect to this submission. First, there appears to be nothing materially wrong with this work from a technical standpoint. However, the central issue for us, for some time, has been whether to reopen this controversial matter in this publication. This problem surfaces periodically, when we receive a submission such as this one. I have again discussed the matter again, at length, with knowledgeable people on our board, and we have concluded that the whole subject is best left alone. I am persuaded at this time that no re-examination of the evidence and data in the case, no matter how carefully done, will put the controversial issues to rest, nor convince the various different opinion holders of the errors of their ways. In addition, publication of any medical or technical item on the case would, in our view, open the doors to a flood of items, even the sum total of which will not in the end settle anything or lay the matter to rest.

We appreciate your interest in the journal, and the opportunity to have considered this manuscript. I apologize to you for the time lag in again revisiting the basic policy question I have described. A knowledgeable radiological reviewer points out that the x-rays will be extremely difficult for a non-radiologist to appreciate without extensive marking. Further, the Zapruder frames will not reproduce well in black and white.

Sincerely,

R.E. Gaensslen, Ph.D.