

College of Physicians & Surgeons of Columbia University | New York, N.Y. 10032

DEPARTMENT OF UROLOGY

620 West 168th Street

January 18, 1972

The Honorable Earl Warren,  
Chief Justice Emeritus of the United States  
U. S. Supreme Court  
Washington, D. C.

Dear Sir:

As you may have seen in the newspapers of the past week, I have been precipitated unexpectedly into the position of being the first physician not under government (or any other) auspices, to be permitted to review the Kennedy autopsy photographs and x-rays. I enclose a copy of the letter of authorization. I was startled to discover the tremendous interest in this matter by the media, both here and abroad. It is so great that I would like to ask for your help with at least one point, in the interest of accuracy.

One of the questions I am asked most often is why the Warren Commission did not view the photographs and x-rays of the dead president. Now that I have seen the photographs, I can certainly understand that someone with a sense of delicacy may have told you and the other Commission members that the color photographs would prove quite shocking and may have advised that they not be viewed by people who were unaccustomed to seeing that sort of thing.

On the other hand, perhaps there was some other explanation as to why the Commission members did not view these photographs and x-rays, about which I thought you could enlighten me. I do try to be as accurate as possible, whenever I can do so, and hope you can help me out on this point. I would not quote you, if you told me not to.

Hope you are getting some rest after your many years on the highest court.

Sincerely,



John K. Lattimer, M. D., Sc.D.  
Professor & Chairman  
Department of Urology

JKL/js  
enc.

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I, therefore, suggested that these photographs and X-rays be delivered to the Department of Justice with the suggestion that they not be made public except by permission of the Kennedy family. This put their authenticity in the hands of those who would be most desirous of having the true facts of the assassination.

February 3, 1978

Dr. John K. Lattimer,  
Professor & Chairman,  
Department of Urology,  
College of Physicians & Surgeons,  
Columbia University,  
New York, New York 10032.

Dear Dr. Lattimer:

This is in response to your letter of January 18th which was called to my attention when I returned from extended travel over the holidays.

I am very happy to answer your question, but only for your own use and not for public discussion because I do not care to be in any controversy with the likes of Mark Lane, Epstein, or some of the others who have played fast and loose with the subject.

I believe I should assume full responsibility for not making available to the public the pictures of the wounds of the deceased President. The Commission relied upon the testimony of the doctors at the Bethesda Naval Hospital as to their findings of entrance and exit of the bullet wounds and cause of death. At my suggestion, but with the concurrence of all the members of the Commission, the photographs and X-rays themselves were not introduced into evidence because everything that was so introduced went into the twenty-six volumes of exhibits and testimony.

My reason for making this suggestion was that scavengers were trying to buy everything that pertained to the assassination for a museum which they proposed to show around the country at County Fairs, etc. in a highly emotional manner. It was my considered opinion that if the guns and the clothes of the assassin and these horrible pictures of the President were shown to the public, including the children of the country, it would merely be a horror chamber that might not only degrade our assassinated President, but might even put ideas of similar conduct into some minds, and thus endanger future Presidents.

JKL/js  
enc.

Department of Urology

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College of P... I, therefore, suggested that these photographs and X-rays be delivered to the Department of Justice with the suggestion that they not be made public except by permission of the Kennedy family. This put their authenticity in the hands of those who would be most desirous of having the true facts of the case known.

I have not changed my mind on this subject, and I know that President Johnson did have a panel of distinguished doctors view the photographs and X-rays, and as I have been informed they agreed with the testimony upon which the Commission relied.

I trust this is the information you desire. If I can be of further service to you, please let me know.

With best wishes, I am

Sincerely,

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