

MEMORANDUM

000970

TO: File  
FROM: Andy Purdy  
DATE: August 17, 1977  
RE: Search for missing autopsy materials

I spoke with DR. JACK C. HARPER on August 8th (office: 214/942-2878), the uncle of the pre-medical student who found the skull fragment in Dealey Plaza. DR. HARPER presumes the skull fragment is with the other skull fragments and said that his nephew gave it to the FBI. DR. HARPER saw the fragment on the Sunday following the assassination and took it to Methodist Hospital on Monday at which time he contacted the FBI.

DR. HARPER said the consensus of the doctors who viewed the skull fragment was that it was part of the occipital region. DR. HARPER said he retained a photo of the skull fragment for about a year at which time the FBI took it from him. He says he believes his nephew still has such a photograph. DR. HARPER said the skull fragment had relatively fresh blood on it.

I spoke with DR. A. B. CAIRNS on August 9, 1977, regarding the HARPER skull fragment. DR. CAIRNS has retired from his position as Chief of Pathology at Methodist Hospital and is now living at 2303 Post Oak Road

000171

in Rockdale, Texas (mailing address: P.O. Box 589). I spoke with DR. CAIRNS (512/446-2810) regarding his recollections of examining the skull fragment. DR. CAIRNS said the piece of skull fragment came from an area approximately 2½ to 3 inches above the spine area. He said it had the markings of a piece of skull fragment from the lower occipital area, specifically: suture and inner markings where blood vessels run around the base of the skull. DR. CAIRNS remembered a small area of the skull fragment showing grayish discoloration suggesting metal had stained the bone. He said he had had experience with lead-caused damage in the past which looked similar to this discoloration.

DR. CAIRNS said he could see blood markings which indicated the skull fragment had been dislodged recently. DR. CAIRNS added that he wasn't very interested in the skull fragment but did believe it was part of the assassination. DR. CAIRNS said the skull fragment had no indication of being an entry or an exit wound. He said (in other words, the edges of a wound did not show. However, he said he believed the skull fragment came from an area close to the entry wound by virtue of the way the "tables" were broken. DR. CAIRNS said that he was interviewed by an FBI agent from Oklahoma City with a Spanish surname.

Belford Lawson referred me to a report that a woman named IVA CATE had information concerning a retired Air Force man who allegedly had photographs from the autopsy. I spoke with IVA CATE on August 11th and was told that approximately four years ago in the summer she attended a picnic in Stafford, Virginia near Route 7 in Fredricksburg where a man in his early forties was boasting that he had photographs connected with the assassination (no mention made with the autopsy). She felt that he was possibly on duty on the plane which returned the President to Washington or had a photograph of the swearing in ceremony. She said the man had a woman with him and was the guest of a woman named ANN HOGGUE RICHARDSON who presently lives at Route 6, Box 249, Falmouth, Virginia. I mailed a letter to her on August 15th asking her to call me. There seemed to be no working phone under her name. I spoke with HAROLD WEISBERG on the night of August 11th concerning the search for the missing autopsy material. He indicated to me that GEORGE HERMAN of CBS had been actively involved at one time in looking for the brain but that he couldn't remember the results of that search. Mr. WEISBERG said the Surgeon General of the Navy (above ADMIRAL GALLOWAY) ordered the autopsy doctors not to trace the tract of the neck wound. Mr. WEISBERG said that

he believed they were different versions of the autopsy report and that we should explore the changing of the wording of the autopsy report which alternately deleted and put in the word "puncture." MR. WEISBERG said he believed that DR. BOSWELL had made the notations on the autopsy face sheet.

MR. WEISBERG said he believed he knows a "weak link" in the chain of those people involved in the autopsy but refused to disclose who that person was. MR. WEISBERG said that the sections of his book Whitewash entitled "Number of Shots" and "Doctors in Dallas" should be thoroughly studied in addition to his book Postmortem.

I attempted to contact DR. (ADMIRAL) GEORGE BURKLEY at his temporary residence in California (213/816-1416) and reached his daughter or daughter-in-law who indicated that he was staying at the Jonathan Club in Los Angeles and that he could be reached at 213/624-0881. I reached him at approximately 9:50 p.m. He indicated any correspondence to him can be sent to 2798 McConnell Drive, Los Angeles, California 90064. DR. BURKLEY said there were no photographs taken of the interior of the chest. He indicated that he had possession of the brain and ~~the~~ tissue sections at the White House and that he took them to the National Archives. He said the only thing of interest among the materials was

000174

the tissue sections (which were taken of every major organ). He expressed grave concern about the misuse of these materials, particularly the adrenal glands. He said he felt the tissue sections of the wounds would be permissible to be examined.

DR. BURKLEY said the doctors didn't section the brain and that if it had been done, it might be possible to prove whether or not there were two bullets. DR. BURKLEY thinks there was one but concedes the possibility of there having been two. Says he was responsible for saving the brain after it was fixed in formalin. BURKLEY decided to keep the brain rather than put it back in the body as DR. HUMES wanted to do. DR. BURKLEY said he thought they could do serial sections of the brain of both the damaged and undamaged portions. He was particularly interested in examining the normal portions because he thought the President was of exceptional intelligence and that this might be reflected in the extra development of the brain. DR. BURKLEY then indicated that he had all of this material in the Executive Office Building.

DR. BURKLEY said he took the brain and tissue sections (and presumably the paraffin blocks) to the National Archives and personally gave them to EVELYN LINCOLN. She mentioned without explanation that GIORDANO who is currently working at the Capitol as a doorkeeper, was working under MRS. LINCOLN's

direction at the Archives. When asked about this unsolicited comment, he said that he did not give the material to GIORDANO, rather he gave it personally to MRS. LINCOLN.

Regarding the skull fragments, DR. BURKLEY said the one which was found on the street had been given to the FBI. He said he'd received a letter from the uncle (presumably DR. HARPER) and that the fragment came to him at the White House and he then gave it to the FBI. Regarding these three skull fragments which were used to reconstruct the defect in the skull at the autopsy, they were not saved. He believes they were put back in with the body. DR. BURKLEY does not recall who he gave the single skull fragment to (associated with the FBI), but remembers having it taken to the FBI.

I contacted DR. JAMES J. HUMES at the Drake Hotel (312/787-2200, Room 606) on the evening of August 10th (10:00 p.m.). Dr. HUMES was attending the American Medical Association Convention in Chicago. This information was gleaned from his wife who was contacted at their home at 1336 Lochmoor Blvd., Grosse Point, Michigan 48236 (313/886-7372). DR. HUMES' wife had indicated that her family was going on vacation beginning August 11th which is the reason I contacted him at the convention before he left. He is due to return from vacation on August 29th.

000176

DR. HUMES said he had no information regarding the skull fragment found on the street and that he had in fact never heard of it. Regarding the other three fragments, he said they were put back in the President's head (note: embalmer should be asked about this). DR. HUMES said the autopsy doctors waited around through the embalming until about 4:30 or 5:00 in the morning.

DR. HUMES specifically recalls that Kodachrome photographs were taken of the President's chest, one of which showed a relatively significant part of the tract of the first missile.

DR. HUMES said he accompanied the other autopsy principals to the Archives in 1966 to view the materials and said it was the first time that he'd viewed them since the autopsy. (He was not specifically asked whether he saw X-rays during the autopsy.) DR. HUMES said he had no information with regard to X-rays of the extremities. When asked if he remembered that FINCK ordered such X-rays taken when he arrived during the course of the autopsy, DR. HUMES said he "vaguely recalled" all X-rays being taken. DR. HUMES recalled that sections were taken of the points of entrance of the bullets. He said the bullet wound in the back was found right away and not discovered in the "later stages of the autopsy". This was discovered during the complete examination that was made

of the body before the autopsy work began.

DR. HUMES said that no major blood vessels were struck by the bullet passing through the President's neck. Regarding his assertion in the Warren Commission testimony that the bullets entered at a 45° to 60° angle, DR. HUMES said it was a "guestimate". He said he came to that conclusion because of the nature of the abrasion collar.

Regarding the location of the entrance wound in the President's head, I asked him whether the wound was in the upper or lower part of the head. DR. HUMES said that it was in the "lower head" area. I asked DR. HUMES about his knowledge of the Clark Panel Report. He said he knows some of the people that served on it and said his understanding is that they confirmed the essential findings of the autopsy doctors. I cited to him the Clark Panel's recitation of their determination that the autopsy doctors had miscalculated the location of the head wound by a vertical distance of approximately 100 millimeters (they said the autopsy doctors placed the wound that much lower than it really was). DR. HUMES stated categorically that his physical measurements are correct and emphasized that he had access to the body itself and made the measurements of the actual head region. In addition, he said that photographs and X-rays have inherent limitations which are not present when one is examining the subject.

DR. HUMES speaks very very highly of ARLEN SPECTER.

DR. HUMES said he stops in to see MR. SPECTER whenever he is in the Philadelphia area. He indicated that he went to Jefferson Medical School in Philadelphia and that he lived awhile in Upper Darby, Pennsylvania. It should be noted that he was very willing to talk to us and was surprised that he hadn't heard from us sooner. His attitude was much friendlier than his wife's had been. She indicated, without solicitation, that her husband and her family had been hounded with numerous questions and contacts over the years from people interested in this case and many who were critical of the job her husband did. DR. HUMES was very concerned that we not interrupt his vacation for our work. He indicated that he has lived with the after shocks of his participation in the autopsy all of his life.

Jim Kelly and I talked by telephone with JOHN THOMAS STRINGER, JR., the autopsy photographer, on August 12th.

MR. STRINGER said that he had been director of medical photography at the Naval Medical School. He said the head of the school at that time was CAPTAIN STOVER.

MR. STRINGER was called by DR. HUMES, the Director of Pathology, around dinner time on November 22, 1963, to come in to work. STRINGER assumed that the nature of the assign-

ment was to take pictures of the Kennedy autopsy. His equipment included a 4in. by 5 in. graphic "view camera" which had a standard lens and used film holders with one film on each side (two altogether). He said there were probably flood lights used.

MR. STRINGER said he waited along side of the autopsy table in the morgue waiting to be told to begin. He said DR. HUMES gave him the go ahead. He said DR. HUMES was the one who primarily told him what pictures he wanted taken during the surgery. STRINGER said the operation was like a three ring circus with so many people present including a number of flag rank military men. Some of these military men talked of bringing in metal detectors (possibly ADMIRAL GALLOWAY) to help in the search for any bullets or bullet fragments in the President's body.

STRINGER said that there was a school of Metal Photography there and one of the corpsman was on duty there that night. It was his film which was destroyed by a federal agent. He believes the man's name was RIEBE (possibly RABE) who had a designation of HM-3. He said RIEBE was a student there whose job it was to help STRINGER. RIEBE had a small camera which the agent opened and exposed. STRINGER does not believe the student was going to take any pictures or had taken any pictures. He says he didn't overhear any conver-

sation between the agent and RIEBE.

STRINGER said he does not remember how many pictures he took but he is sure that he exposed each of the two sides of each film holder used. He said (following STOVER's orders) that after each film holder was exposed he gave it to a Secret Service man standing by. He said that Secret Service man later signed a release to STOVER. STRINGER said he has a copy of that receipt at his home in Florida.

STRINGER said the first time he saw the photographs was in 1966. He said the photographs were not developed by his people so he has no information about what happened to them between the time he turned them over to the Secret Service man and the time he viewed them again in 1966 along with the autopsy doctors.

STRINGER said it was his recollection that all the photographs he had taken were not present in 1966. He noted that the receipt he had said some of the film holders had no film in one side of the cassettes. He said the receipt said this happened in two or three of the film holders where one side only was allegedly loaded. He said he could understand it if the film holders were reported to have poorly exposed or defective film but could not believe that there were any sides of the film holders which were not loaded with film. STRINGER said he did not take any black and white photographs and that

those that were made must have been from the color transparencies in the two step process. STRINGER said that his recollection that all the photographs he took were not present in the materials he viewed in 1966 was based on the receipt. However, STRINGER also said that he thought he had taken some interior photographs of the President's chest ("I believe so"). He said he didn't recall if these photographs were taken before or after the vital organs were removed. He indicated that he took no contemporaneous or subsequent notes of his recollections. He said he was present in the room where the autopsy was conducted between approximately 6:00 and 6:30 p.m. on the night of the 22nd and 3:00 to 3:30 a.m. on the morning of the 23rd.

STRINGER said he believed the X-rays probably included X-rays of the extremities because this was "...generally routine".

STRINGER said he took some photographs of the brain in the morgue two or three days after the autopsy. He said he was there with Doctors HUMES and BOSWELL. He says he gave this film to HUMES and received no receipt. He believes he took at least six color transparencies. He indicated he wasn't sure if he viewed these photographs when he saw the materials in 1966.

MR. STRINGER does not recall anyone giving orders to the autopsy doctors. Specifically with regard to GENERAL MCHUGH, MR. STRINGER said that while he kept coming in and out and manifested a great deal of emotional upset, he did not issue any such orders. On the day after the assassination CAPTAIN STOVER ordered all individuals involved to maintain their silence. (See National Naval Medical Center file)

MR. STRINGER said he saw no sketches being taken during the autopsy. He believes that when he took photographs of the brain two or three days later, the doctors sectioned the brain. In retrospect, he recalls something near the beginning of the autopsy which indicated discussion about them not doing the complete autopsy. He believed the President's physician (ADMIRAL BURKLEY) was at the center of these discussions and seemed to be acting at the instructions of someone else, presumably the Kennedy family.

MR. STRINGER recalled conversation about the pathway through the neck and specifically discussion about air in the throat. He remembers a great deal of discussion and concern as the doctor searched for a missing bullet. He believes HUMES instituted the call to Dallas.

Regarding any interior photographs, STRINGER said he believes he took at least one from the neck down and said

he thinks he saw it in 1966.

MR. STRINGER lives at 23 Dolphin Drive, Vero Beach, Florida 32960. He is currently staying with his daughter, MRS. ROSS, until about Thursday, the 18th.

On the morning of August 15, 1977, MR. STRINGER went with Jim Kelly, Colleen Boland and myself to the National Archives to view the photographs.

MR. STRINGER looked at all color photographs. Regarding photograph #38, MR. STRINGER said the ruler was placed by DR. HUMES or DR. BOSWELL to show the size of the defect in the head. He said he focused the camera on the lower side of the head to focus on the ruler. Regarding photograph #40, MR. STRINGER said the doctors were debating whether the hole was caused by a bullet. Regarding photograph #42, he said the little piece of matter on the lower rear of the head was "...a piece of bone or something." Regarding photograph #44, he said he was focusing on the bottom part of the picture. There was considerable discussion regarding the direction of the face in this picture of the top of the head with the brain removed. MR. STRINGER felt the face was going in a different direction than DR. BADEN's impression. The piece of skin area was likely a shoulder, while DR. BADEN thought it was the cheek. He

said he thought the pathologist would be better able to describe the photograph. Regarding the photograph #45, STRINGER said DR. HUMES took the measurements during the autopsy and would tell someone else what they were, "... because he was wearing bloody gloves." He said that generally in autopsies, a technician takes notes.

STRINGER said he didn't take any photographs of the organs before or after they were removed because none were asked for. He says he took the brain photos two or three days later. He remembers that in the examination of the brain, the doctors took some sections but said that he "...didn't section the brain serially." He said the photographs of the brain are before the sections were removed. He also said he believes the doctors "...cut some peices from the brain...while normally they would cut it right in half."

He said the photographs of the back were taken when the body was held up and the photographs of the open head were taken while the head was held up.

STRINGER was a little bit unsure as to whether or not he'd taken black and white photographs of the brain in addition to the color. He first indicated he had taken black and white and then said he had not. Specifically, he exam-

ined negative #19 which he said was a real negative (as opposed to one made from a color transparency). He said in the general autopsy, he only took color photographs.

STRINGER says that during the examination of the brain he "faintly recalls the doctors taking a little square like piece" from the brain. He says he left while the doctors were still working. STRINGER gave the film he took of the brain to DR. HUMES.

Regarding the possibility that he took interior chest photographs, STRINGER said "...I believe some pictures were taken of the body cavity..." He indicated that he "...exposed a film holder" of that area. He said the KELLERMAN receipt indicated that there were "...one or two empty film holders" which KELLERMAN received. STRINGER explained that the film in the film holders were silver on the one side when the picture was unexposed and was black when exposed. He remembers explicitly that when the film holders were turned over, both sides were black. He said he did not personally examine the film holders to see if there was actually film within them. In other words, the fact that both sides were black while indicating the exposure was made, did not speak to the question of whether or not there was film in there. STRINGER remembers taking "at least two exposures of the body cavity."

STRINGER recalls that during the autopsy someone was asked to call Parkland. He also remembers DR. BURKLEY discussing the fact that the doctors should not conduct a full autopsy, saying: "...shouldn't do a complete one if didn't have to." STRINGER said the doctors had to crack the skull somewhat to get the brain out, though they didn't have to saw it off.

STRINGER said he believed the X-rays were taken of the full body including the extremities.

STRINGER said there was a phone in the autopsy room and a phone in the back room.