

## MEMORANDUM

To: File

From: T. Jeremy Gunn and Douglas P. Horne

Subject: Medical Evidence Related to the Autopsy of John F. Kennedy

### ***Background***

*Importance of medical/autopsy evidence in homicide.*

It should be clear, accurate, and well documented. Forensic autopsies and records thereof are critical to understanding a homicide.

*Controversies over Medical Evidence in the JFK Assassination. (short summary)*

Big question that has divided the country since 1963: was there a shooter from the front. The "official" position has been no, although majority of American people believe that there was a shooter from the front. Medical evidence should be the best way to determine. People who were present at the autopsy disagreed -- although the principal actors believed that the shots were solely from behind. It is not our job to answer such questions. It was our job, however, to obtain as much evidence and information as possible to answer these questions. Perhaps the most significant early problem was the sketchiness and inconsistency of the records.

*Prior Governmental Efforts to Collect information Related to the Autopsy*

- Parkland doctors
- Autopsy
- Warren Commission
- Clark Panel
- Military Review 1/67
- Rockefeller
- Church
- HSCA

### **Controversies Related to Medical Evidence in JFK Assassination**

#### **Problems**

- discrepancy in number of photos
- discrepancies in discription of wounds
  - particularly head wound
  - e.g. Posner testimony to Congress
- missing materials
- People who made records Riebe/Custer/O'Connor?
- witnesses with different stories
- witnesses making statements based upon copies circulating in public

allegations about authenticity of materials  
inconsistent statements by witnesses  
Connally material [Parkland hospital records]  
identification of location of wound

Difficulty in conducting research

locating witnesses  
obtaining cooperation of witnesses  
getting autopsy materials available  
fallibility of memory  
limitations (quality of) of autopsy photos  
**inconsistency of memories/weakness of eyewitness testimony**  
problem is that people pick and choose

Issue 1: identifying and releasing all records.

We attempted to get them declassified and out as quickly as possible.

Issue 2: completeness of records from autopsy

-- records we found (including latent images)  
-- testimony we took about completeness of records  
-- missing photographs  
    all witnesses  
    Belcher  
    Karnei  
    Sandra Spencer

Issue 3: authenticity of photographs

deposed all living persons associated with materials  
except for brain photos

results: all acknowledged authenticity  
we were surprised at Riebe

checked edge markings/etc.

Kodak enhancements

Kodak not asked to opine on authenticity. It is our perception that anyone who examines enhancements will conclude that they have not been photographically retouched.

Issue 4: authenticity of brain photos

Issue 5: authenticity of x-rays

Issue 6: authenticity of notes

Issue 7: accuracy/consistency of autopsy accounts  
deposed medical witnesses

deposed others  
asked Posner for his tapes (he declined)

## Conclusions

discrepancies among eye-witnesses

## Problems with the autopsy.

Not a complete autopsy. (Use manual)

Shrouded in secrecy.

Signed statements.

Custer's extreme version of this.

Other versions less extreme.

Without reaching any conclusion regarding the ultimate merits, the official position has not taken seriously the significant evidence that would suggest an occipital wound.

There also is significant evidence that there was not major occipital wound:

## Witnesses' original statements:

large defect in back

anterior throat wound

## JFK autopsy witnesses

Many of the witnesses have been interviewed many times. Their testimony has changed over time.

WC did a perfunctory examination.

HSCA more thorough, but left many questions unanswered.

## Goals:

To get testimony under oath for those who have not testified.

To ask all of the appropriate questions to the key witnesses.

Some of the people who created the records (Riebe, Custer, Reed) had not seen the original material since November 22, 1963. Each of these three had made public comments questioning the authenticity of the Archives records.

## Depositions

identify key figures

not to conduct cross examinations, but to do probing examinations

Person asking the question is of course fallible. Anyone who has taken a deposition has recognized a failure to ask a question.