

MEMORANDUM

August 18, 1995

To: Anne Buttimer
cc - Jeremy Gunn

From: Joe Freeman

Subject: Dr. John Nichols
Associate Professor of Pathology
University of Kansas School of Medicine
(913) 642-9460 [circa 1978]

Testified for the prosecution at Clay Shaw trial.

Author of : "President Kennedy's Adrenals", Journal of the American Medical Association. July 10, 1967. Vol. 201, pp. 115-116.

"Assassination of President Kennedy", The Practitioner.
November, 1973 (London).

"The Wounding of Governor John Connally of Texas,
November 22, 1963", Maryland State Medical Journal.
October, 1977. Vol. 26, pp. 58-78.

[The above articles are in the HSCA collection]

Per your request of yesterday, I conducted a database search on Dr. Nichols and pulled the corresponding documents today out at NARA II. Those documents which appeared to be of most significance were copied and are attached.

It appears as if the HSCA had a long, somewhat tumultuous and (I think) ultimately frustrating relationship with Dr. Nichols. Nichols was active on assassination forensic and medical issues early on in the post-Warren Commission era: he filed various requests for documents and information with Hoover's FBI and initiated a suit relative to autopsy materials. He had been in touch with Congressman Gonzalez on assassination issues for several years prior to the formation of the HSCA, and Gonzalez -- in his brief stint as Chairman -- referred him to then-Staff Director Sprague.

Subsequently, Nichols initiated numerous contacts with HSCA staff. His most frequent correspondent was Andy Purdy (later I. Charles Matthews dealt with him, as well). When he was unsatisfied with these staffers, he didn't hesitate to pull rank and try and reach Blakey or even Chairman Stokes.

Nichols' early contacts with the staff seem intended to convince the HSCA that he had valuable information/research to contribute: he offers to testify, etc. When staffers ask him for his material, though, he repeatedly expresses concerns about his "literary" rights. This cat-and-mouse game goes on for months at a time. Purdy first speaks with Nichols in early February of 1977 (Agency File Number 000798). On 5/16/77 Purdy writes Nichols expressing great interest in obtaining his research (001393). Patricia Orr follows up unsuccessfully later that month (001573). Purdy writes again in August, asking yet again for Nichols' research (001976). In October Nichols publishes his Connally article in the Maryland State Medical Journal. As part of his work for that article, Nichols had enhancement work done on Connally's old X-rays. On the basis of his Connally work, Nichols again asks to testify before the Committee (002627 and 002885). Purdy demurs.

Communication apparently trails off at that point until April of 1978 when Nichols writes Purdy (007634) to tell him that he has "absolute proof that the first (neck) show [sic] was not inflicted from Mr. Oswald's window..." and that he has film footage (800 frames/second) of authentic ammunition hitting melons "and appropriate anatomical specimens." This footage, claims Nichols, does *not* support the work of L.W. Alvarez (the "jet propulsion effect" experiment, re: why the President's head moved backward even though he was hit from behind). This is the Nichols letter which generated the frustrated response of Purdy (008452) which first caught our interest.

From this point on, Nichols will also make recurring efforts to secure information *from the Committee*, and at one point even proposes to *barter* his research for information the HSCA could secure for him.

The relationship between Nichols and the Committee evolves from one of frustration to open confrontation in late June of 1978 over some slides which Nichols finally sent to Purdy (009642, 009662, 009740, 010086) under various restrictions that Purdy thereupon ignores.

In a 8/22/78 communication with Cyril Wecht (014056) and a subsequent letter to Dr. Joseph Davis -- both members of the HSCA's panel of forensic experts -- Nichols encloses an abstract for a paper he says he will be presenting to the Annual Meeting of the American Academy of Forensic Sciences in February of 1979. This paper incorporates his ballistics work with watermelons, honeydew melons and human cadaver heads, re: a refutation of the jet propulsion effect thesis. This work includes *film footage* of experiments. On 11/2/78, I. Charles Matthews of HSCA writes Nichols (012017) and requests that Nichols send the film to Washington, explaining that the Committee hasn't got the resources to send staff people out to Kansas City to view it. On 11/9/78, Nichols telegrams back

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(013064), saying that “serious or perhaps fatal” illness prevents him from coming to Washington with the film (of course, the HSCA didn’t ask him to *accompany* the film, only to send it). Nichols suggests the HSCA “hold” its report until after Nichols gives his paper in February of 1979 and references that “of course my studies on the assassination reproduction go far beyond the head movements.” This is the last exchange between Nichols and the Committee I found.

Possible Steps to Consider

- 1- Determine whether or not Nichols’ paper was, in fact, presented at the February 1979 Annual Meeting of the American Academy of Forensic Sciences (which assumes that Nichols’ illness of 11/78 did not prove fatal after all). If so, obtain a copy of the paper.
- 2- Do a search for post-HSCA papers by Nichols on assassination-related topics.
- 3- Find and contact Nichols about the film footage as well as other materials he may have. If he is deceased, contact the University of Kansas Pathology Dept. and see if Nichols’ colleague, Floyd Foltz (referenced on the abstract), is still around.
- 4- Contact Purdy and see whether he thinks Nichols has stuff worth pursuing.

Freeman e:\wp-docs\081895

File 4.0.2. Forensics and Physical Evidence

4.21.2.6