

Answering A Skeptic

By

Barrie Schwartz

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This is the complete text of the e-mail I received from Gary A. Kentgen on January 6, 2014:

Your bibliographies should include at least some of these papers by Dr. Walter C. McCrone:

189. McCrone W.C. (1980g) Light microscopical study of the Turin 'Shroud' I. *Microscope* 28, 105-

190. McCrone W.C. (1980h) Light microscopical study of the Turin 'Shroud' II. *Microscope* 28, 115-

191. McCrone W.C. (1981a) INTER/MICRO-81. *Microscope* 29, 169.

192. McCrone W.C. (1981b) Microscopical study of the Turin Shroud III. *Microscope* 29(1), 19-38.

193. McCrone W.C. (1982a) INTER/MICRO-82. *Microscope* 30, 197-235.

194. McCrone W.C. (1982b) Microanalytical tools and techniques for the characterization, comparison and identification of particulate (trace) evidence. *Microscope* 30, 105-117.

195. McCrone W.C. (1982c) The microscopical identification of artist's pigments. *J. Int. Inst. Conservation-Can. Group* 7, 11-34.

196. McCrone W.C. (1982d) Particle characterization by PLM I. *Microscope* 30, 185-196.

197. McCrone W.C. (1982e) Particle characterization by PLM II. *Microscope* 30, 315-331.

These citations can be found indirectly through www.mcri.org.

[Editor's note: Here is a direct link to the McCrone Institute Shroud of Turin page:
<http://mcri.org/home/section/63-64/the-shroud-of-turin>].

McCrone was right when he said that no matter how much definitive proof is offered as to the artistic provenance of the Shroud, clever people will continue to invent reasons to believe. A book should be written describing how pseudoscience can take over the media and persuade millions that frauds like the Shroud, Piltdown Man and Cold Fusion are legitimate. All the papers that I have read show that misapplied technology, misinterpreted data and mishandled materials account for 80% of the Shroud's "validation". The other 20% consists of testimony from scientists acting far outside their field of expertise and with heavy bias or ulterior motive.

Gary Kentgen

(Cont'd)

Here is my response:

May 16, 2014

Dear Mr. Kentgen,

Thank you for writing and my apologies for the long delay in responding, but your e-mail arrived too late for our last website update on January 21st and I was unable to address it until now. I intend to reprint your entire e-mail, including all the references you provided, along with a copy of this response in our next website update in early June.

First, please be aware that we have included a link to the McCrone Institute website and their Shroud related page ever since Shroud.com first went online on January 21, 1996. In fact, I will include it again in our upcoming update as an Editor's Note within the text of your original e-mail so that our viewers can find it easily. Anyone typing "McCrone" into our Website Search Engine will get more than 135 results. Viewers can also easily find the McCrone Institute listed alphabetically on our [Links To More Information](#) page. We have not ignored Walter McCrone or his work.

As for the references you provided, yes, I am familiar with most of them but chose not to list them on Shroud.com since eight of the nine were published in *The Microscope*, a journal owned and edited by Walter McCrone himself. It was my assessment that these articles did not meet the same standard of peer review that the STURP team adhered to. STURP submitted their work to a wide variety of highly credible, independent peer reviewed journals. You can find a bibliography of their work at this link: [Bibliography of STURP's Published Papers](#).

With all due respect, I believe the extent and diversity of STURP's research *clearly* demonstrates the in-depth nature and relevance of their testing. Referring to their work as pseudoscience is rather demeaning and petty, considering the time and care they put into planning their experiments, the qualifications of the team members themselves and the respected organizations they represented. Because of the truly unique and controversial nature of the subject matter and its importance to nearly a billion people around the world, they also understood there would be intense public scrutiny, so they had to execute even greater care in every facet of their work. In the end, they also had to break new ground as nothing like this had ever been attempted before.

The STURP team submitted the Shroud to a wide array of carefully planned and *very* appropriate non-destructive tests during our direct physical examination of the cloth in 1978 and afterwards. As you know, Walter McCrone was not a direct participant in our research nor did he ever examine (or even see) the actual Shroud. He was simply asked to examine the sticky tape samples lifted from the Shroud by STURP chemist Raymond Rogers from Los Alamos National Laboratories after we returned from Turin. (Consequently, Walter was required to sign a confidentiality agreement similar to that signed by all STURP team members, but he was never a formal member of our team, as he often claimed).

McCrone based all of his conclusions solely on the examination of those tape samples using white light and polarized light microscopy. He failed to do any chemical or spectral analyses like those conducted by the STURP team. In the end, based solely on his visual examination of the tapes, Walter declared that the image and the blood stains on the Shroud of Turin were paint. However, in evaluating ALL the available data, I believe that the bulk of the credible scientific evidence disputes his conclusions. In 2000, we published an article by David Ford that independently evaluated and summarized all the available data titled, [The Shroud of Turin's 'Blood' Images: Blood, or Paint? A History of Science Inquiry](#). In 2008, independent Shroud researcher Thibault Heimburger, M.D., conducted an extensive review of the McCrone and STURP data and techniques, which we published that year in an article titled, [A Detailed Critical Review of the Chemical Studies on the Turin Shroud: Facts and Interpretations](#). You might find them both interesting.

I found your description of the media response to the Shroud to be somewhat humorous. Historically, the media has been mostly negative and inaccurate in their reporting about the Shroud. That is one of the factors that motivated me to build Shroud.com in 1996, as I was sitting on a wealth of information that needed to be archived electronically and made available to the public. If anything has persuaded the public about the Shroud's authenticity, it is the overwhelming amount of scientific data that in fact supports authenticity and is now readily available to everyone. It is certainly not the mass media who, left to their own devices, are still very happy to refer to the Shroud as a fake.

Frankly, I always gave Walter McCrone the highest marks in the Shroud world when it came to using the media. He was a very personable and articulate individual and highly experienced at testifying in court rooms and appearing in television documentaries. He had many friends in the media and was expert at generating publicity for himself and his business, the McCrone Institute. STURP on the other hand, was comprised of a diverse group of scientists representing a wide variety of different organizations. Many of them worked on highly classified government projects and most were very inexperienced at dealing with subjects as public as the Shroud of Turin. Thus STURP was rather inept in their public relations efforts and very wary of the media. However, when it came to the Shroud in the public eye, everyone knew Walter McCrone by name and simply referred to us as "the STURP team." I think Walter appreciated that.

I have no idea what papers you might have read that make you believe that STURP "misapplied technology, misinterpreted data and mishandled materials." The team spent seventeen months designing experiments using state-of-the-art technology (circa 1978) that would test various forms of image formation in a thorough and non-destructive manner and enlisted the aid of highly qualified experts in each appropriate discipline. After the data was reduced and evaluated it was submitted to and published in highly regarded, peer reviewed scientific journals. I would be happy to provide you with the complete collection of STURP papers if you would like to read them again. Just let me know. Of course, this was all done thirty-six years ago and technology has advanced dramatically since then. That is why many of us hope that another, multi-disciplinary team will be permitted to apply these newer technologies to the Shroud at some point in the future.

I must admit that I take the greatest exception to your closing statement regarding “heavy bias or ulterior motive,” at least when it is applied to the STURP team. You were not there. You did not know even one of these scientists, most of who are now deceased. I can assure you that they took their work as seriously as Walter McCrone did. To accuse them of personal bias or impugn their integrity and motives simply because you disagree with their conclusions shows not only a serious level of disrespect, but a total lack of knowledge about the team and its members. The STURP team represented some of the best scientists from some of the finest laboratories and facilities in the world. From the outset they maintained a very high standard of scientific discipline and honesty, and certainly no less so than Walter McCrone, who consistently failed to mention that he had never even seen the Shroud of Turin and was basing his conclusions solely on the visual examination of some sticky tape samples!

As for bias, I am assuming you really mean *religious* bias, since that is the commonest claim made by skeptics. Never mind that our team included three Jewish members (Al Adler, Don Devan and me), one Mormon, one Evangelical, several Catholics, several Protestants and some avowed atheists and agnostics. Had religion ever been a criterion for membership, most of the STURP team members would never have agreed to participate. Even the Church custodians and the emissary of King Umberto (the owner of the Shroud in 1978) did nothing to interfere with or influence our work. They did not want it to even appear that that *might* be the case and consequently gave us complete autonomy. The only bias I perceive is your dismissing a wealth of credible scientific data because it disagrees with your friend’s conclusions. No one is infallible, not even Walter McCrone. As I stated before, the bulk of the credible scientific evidence disputes his conclusions. Of course, you are free to dismiss that evidence on any grounds you wish, but I assure you there were no hidden motives or any agenda, other than to honestly try to answer the questions about the Shroud’s image.

So I guess we will just have to agree to disagree on these matters. Everyone has a right to believe whatever they want about the Shroud. Our goal has always been to simply provide people with access to the credible data and allow them to decide for themselves. Apparently, that is exactly what they are doing.

Thank you again for writing and sharing your thoughts with me.

Respectfully,

Barrie Schwartz
President, STERA, Inc.
Editor & Founder
Shroud of Turin Website
www.shroud.com