

4/12/70

Dr. James B. Rhoads, Archivist  
The National Archives  
Washington, D.C.

Dear Dr. Rhoads,

I note the unduly long time in which there has been no response of any nature from you on a number of outstanding requests I have made.

You have taken exception to some of the things I have said about the David Ferris material and have denied me a copy of the list of documents relating to him that I told you had been made. You have, in fact, denied any such list was made. I told you that at the time Ferris was in the news I had been told otherwise by Mr. Marion Johnson, who also gave me a list of what had been released relating to Ferris. I have mislaid that list.

I believe I also told you that news account of the time would confirm what I said.

I have microfilm copies of two stories by Nan Robertson in the New York Times of February 24 and 25, 1967, pages 24 and 56, respectively. I regret they are too small to permit legible copying. However, I am sure they are readily available to you. You will find these stories relate the release by the Archives of 16 relevant pages and report the withholding of about 40 others, at FBI order. It is also reported that Mr. Johnson "pulled" this information "together", in response to request from the New Orleans papers.

At your suggestion, I did examine your Ferris files. There is nothing in them that in any way suggests what is here reported. It is inevitable that a listing was made. These stories also recount that you had requested the FBI to release what was still classified, again bearing very much on whether or not there was a list. Could you ask the FBI to declassify what you did not specify?

These stories further refer to Secret Service interviews with Ferris. There are no such reports in what you made available to me. These are directly quoted in the story. If you have such reports, I would like copies of them. I also renew my request for a copy of the list of documents relating to Ferris and I add a request for the communication to the FBI relating to their declassification and any reply.

I hope it is not again a futility to hope this can be replied to within a reasonable time.

Sincerely,

Harold Seisberg

cc: Mr. James Kelley, Secret Service

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Mr. Tom Kelley, Assistant Director  
U.S. Secret Service  
Washington, D.C.

Dear Mr. Kelley,

Enclosed is a copy of my today's letter to the Archivist relating to the Warren Commission Ferris documents.

Since speaking to you last week, I have heard nothing from the Archives.

I am aware of the possibility that the Times is in error in quoting Secret Service reports or may have confused those of the Secret Service and the FBI. I am also aware of the possible interpretation of this reporting that your agency supplied some of the information to the Times.

You may not be aware of it, but I am the first to have "discovered" and written about Ferris. At our conference, you may recall I did ask you about him and Secret Service knowledge of him, etc. I have been trying to obtain what I believe is improperly withheld of the Ferris material, and for a long time. During this time I have been made false promises by some government officials, including an Assistant Attorney General of the United States. These files are available to you should you desire to see them. Recently I have again taken this up with the Department of Justice, looking to taking whatever steps may be possible to obtain this material.

I have conducted what, for a writer, is a rather extensive investigation of Ferris. Again, if it interests you, you may see what I have. But I assure you there is virtually no record of his personal life and its character that is not public and well-known, largely published. This is also true of those with whom he had relationships. Some of this is recorded in various legal proceedings. As a matter of fact, the relationship between Ferris and others has been very well publicized, including in a book and in its serialization, by Milton Brenner, attorney for several of the men who are among the subjects of the still-withheld FBI reports.

So, I am writing to ask for copies of any such Secret Service data. I have the Jack Martin interview that was so well and I think so improperly publicized by the government when the Garrison story broke. The Archives copy is close to illegible. If you have anything of this character, I would ask not only that you provide it to the Archives, if it is not there, but, with the history with which you are now familiar, that you send me copies separately. This is in no way improper and at the very worst it would save considerable time.

Sincerely,

Harold Feisberg