

Mr. Bob Benn
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5/2/88

CONFIDENTIAL

Dear Bob,

We do remember your visit. If I am correct, just as we got to or left the country restaurant Lenn Sakata hit a home run for the Orioles - who sure could use a little of that now!

If you were here no more than six years ago you'll remember that I'm limited in what I can do, more so now because of additional complications following new surgery. So, aside from the fact that there is much to address in your letter, I have to get up and move around from time to time and I'd be skipping all over the place. I'm not taking time to try to organize a reply. It will be off the top of the head.

I've slugged this "confidential" and will so mark the separate file folder as a precaution. You may recall that I give general access to my FOIA files in the basement. I'll keep this in my office, to which I do not ordinarily give unsupervised access. Thus I'll not remove this file to show anyone.

Please tell your friend that I was in intelligence in World War II, OSS, so I understand how he feels. And if you want to show this to him, feel free. However, in addition to asking me to keep it confidential, I also encourage you not to let the other critics know because some are undependable, some flighty, some slackjawed. Not all but quite a few. And I know of only two ~~who~~ who have had any interest in this area. One, in fact, is working of the Keesler Field records, which appear to have been destroyed although Oswald's defection was prior to the time for destruction.

Everything your friend says is reasonable to me and I'll be making comments as I go through your letter again. It is in accord with what, in general, I've always believed. Too much was missing not to believe this, too much that has to have existed.

I'm sorry you gave him Tony Summers' book, though, because there is questionable material in it and it argues a point of view rather than making a dispassionate analysis.

Before getting to your letter, a few generalities, for you and for him.

When Oswald "defected," and the quotes are because he went through the motions only while being careful not to do it, there was an unreported but necessary and obviously necessary ONI investigation in which many but not all of Oswald's mates were interviewed. This was never reported to the Commission or the FBI from the records I've seen, and I've a quarter of a million FBI pages.

The first leaking or reporting of Oswald's past at the time of the assassination was by an Army Intelligence office in San Antonio, by 4 p.m. assassination day. His records were sent to near Harrisburg, Pa., and allegedly were destroyed. They did have Oswald information, at least on his defection.

When he defected, and I have the Navy cable, Navy told Moscow that his records show no security clearance but confidential clearance was possible. In fact this is all the disclosed Navy records reflect. The FBI's examination of the Washington records includes no mention of any security clearance. I have established by my own means that Oswald had Crypto, which required Top Secret. Please do not broadcast this but do tell your friend. I'd like to be able to carry this forward and don't want all kinds of nutty comments on talk shows, etc. My source is a Navy record not connected with the assassination and not his disclosed personnel file.

About 10 weeks after the assassination Yuri Nosenko, KGB, who'd contacted the CIA earlier, defected and the CIA then and much more later went crazy not to accept him and to destroy first his story and then him. The Hart/HSCA testimony for the CIA

was incomplete and quite understated. Before ~~Oswald~~ Nosenko left Switzerland, where he defected to the CIA, they were undermining him and making up what eventuated into a series of untenable reasons for not believing him. What Hart omitted, in detailing the terrible conditions of Nosenko's three years of abuse, is that he had been treated like a king until the CIA got copies of what Nosenko told the FBI. This included, among other things, Nosenko's statement, which I believe entirely, that the KGB suspected that Oswald might be an agent in place, a sleeper. That is when the CIA went ape.

Please believe me, all his short life Oswald was actually anti-Communist. There is enough in the first of the Whitewash series on this. Use the index.

Hart admitted that the USSR desk of Counterintelligence considered ways of eliminating Nosenko, from driving him nuts, which it tried, to dropping him in the ocean. The cover story to which Hart testified does not exist in any of the disclosed records and is untenable. (This will be long for me now, so if you or your friend want details I omit, please ask.) If your friend has any question about Nosenko's bona fides, he can make his own evaluation of the fact that Nosenko disclosed the existence and location of about 50 bugs in our embassy. This is not throw-away stuff. I believe one was in the great seal of the US displayed at the UN. The KGB kept Oswald's mail under surveillance at Minsk and shadowed him from time to time. They knew Oswald was anti-USSR after he'd been in Minsk a while. And the CIA kept the Commission from taking secret testimony from Nosenko, a project in which Gerald Ford was involved by intimidating the Commission at its executive session on this. I sued and got the transcript. There is no substance in anything Ford and then others alleged. Ford was an informer for the FBI while he was on the Commission, to Cartha DeLoach. I have the records. I do not suggest that the FBI ripped Ford and I have no reason to believe it did on this. However, the first of the executive sessions on reports that Oswald had been a government agent was never transcribed by the official reporters, whose records I do have and I published some, you may remember, in Whitewash IV. Yet the FBI had a transcript when it did not exist officially.

Oswald knew Russian although there is no record of his having studied it. There are suggestions that he'd been to the language school at Monterey, Ca. He was good in it.

There is no record of any CIA debriefing of Oswald when he returned although it then was interviewing all tourists.

It was not possible for Oswald to get to Helsinki by commercial planes the day he left England and by the time he got to Helsinki. I have the CIA investigation, which from what was disclosed was carried no farther.

Does any code identification of Oswald exist, to your friend's knowledge? The one Ronnie Hudkins gave the FBI and Commission is a fake he made up. There is a six-digit number I have.

Does your friend have any recollection of Operation Strongback, sometimes given as two words? This is solid. What is not necessarily solid is Operation Haylift. LHO was involved in the first one. The identification of the second was given to me by the alienated former wife of a CIA agent, employee, not contract.

For your friend's thinking, can the suspicion of right-wing Texas/oil involvement itself be a decoy? Does he think that if they, particularly the Hunts (and the sons are as likely as the old man), were behind it they'd have had the job done there? Assuming that Oswald was or was not an or the assassin, did those people know enough about him to deposit what points to him? (The evidence is that he did not take the rifle into the building that day and there is credible evidence that he was not at the window to fire the shot. There are substantial questions about the bullet fragments and the FBI's testing, which I spent years in court to get.)

On Hunt, I enclose a copy of a letter sent from Mexico to most critics, including me. This was sent to another, no longer at that address. The FBI's conclusion is that

where - SI file?

the letter is a fake. I agree. The late Martin Waldron, a friend and then a New York Times reporter, had their Mexico City people check the address. He asked me what I thought they'd find. I said "safe house" and he laughed and agreed. I wrote when I got my copy, which is in a basement file and thus I use this one, and I got neither an answer nor the return of my letter.

There is a mystery about Oswald's return - and he was not prosecuted for giving secrets away, which he told the embassy he had done. On this, he spoke to Richard Snyder, who later admitted that he had been CIA but claimed he then wasn't. The mystery is a few words in an executive session, not in any Commission hearings or records, and they were, as I recall, by Allan Dulles. He said that the Oswalds had spent three days in an apartment in Rotterdam while awaiting the ship. They could not have made those arrangements themselves and they left Moscow by train.

On the second page, you numbered it XX "1", you refer to the Maurice Bishop story. I never believed it and even if your friend was never in other than office jobs I think he knows that no case agent would ever bring two of his sources into personal contact in public and daylight. I also don't believe it for other reasons, one of which is that Veciana's known CIA connections were not direct but through the AFL/CIO's Serafino Roumaldi. He handled their western hemisphere stuff, including the overthrow of Cheddi Jagan in Guyana. I know that Veciana worked for them from their files. This does not, of course, preclude subsequent changes.

I examined the disclosed ONI file, which I also have, years ago and recognized immediately that it had to be woefully incomplete.

What was the occasion for your friend's reading of the Oswald file in the fall of 1963 and what was it then doing kicking around? I presume this may have been after Oswald was detected in Mexico City.

How did he get to read this file last week? Oh, I see that is the disclosed crap.

That your friend recalls "Top Secret material in the file is interesting because there is no record disclosed other than what got through a back door from the Navy that indicates Oswald had any connection with anything of that classification. You mention Atsugi. Tell your friend that Oswald spent some time, I think about six months, at Cubi Point, on the land, after Operation Strongback. His personnel records are good on his assignments, referring only to "maneuvers." His unit had a "crypto van" that then was ashore and had been on a carrier. He was one of only five radar operators who handled the crypto stuff. He was familiar with the then secret height-seeking radar. All of the foregoing could qualify for Top Secret.

What you say about the CIA having to be informed about any action to be taken against Oswald explains why he was never charged. In this regard, if you recall, tell your friend how calm Oswald was after he was arrested and that he told Marina and his mother not to worry, that everything would be OK.

What was the occasion for ONI's surveillance of LHO and the time period?

After Oswald's outfit returned it was at Santa Ana. When Oswald was pulling guard duty he was relieved to talk to two men in civilian clothes. This was right before his discharge, and on that there was a cold case of fraud never prosecuted.

I know of no ^{Brewer} ~~Brewer~~ investigation. By the way, I've not read most HSCA stuff.

On the ONI's conclusion that the assassination was a conspiracy, from other things you say I presume this was analysis/political because they didn't go into the autopsy. The facts of the crime leave it beyond question that the assassination was beyond the capability of any one man, so obviously on a factual basis there was a conspiracy. So, what was the basis of their conclusion, this one, and that Oswald had been a "decoy," an interesting word when used instead of patsy or fall guy. And, unless they were political infants, the ONI would not have believed that the USSR

*from
Sewer
Marine*

preferred ~~the~~ hawk Johnson to the dove JFK.

When you say your friend was present during ONI discussions of surveillance ~~pix~~ photos of Oswald taken in Mexico, I presume you mean photos of Oswald, not the pictures the CIA later disclosed and could not have been taken for Oswald, ever. Does he know that the CIA claims the cameras were not working when Oswald was at the Cuban embassy? And as I'm sure he knows, they also took them at the USSR embassy but none have been disclosed and Oswald was there. When you say there was something in these photos the CIA was unwilling to identify, I presume this means more than the background, which would indicate the point from which they were taken. Which the Cubans at least knew anyway. (Maybe the wrong-man pix were at the USSR embassy.) However, the records indicate that Navy was asked for Oswald pix after these were taken, by the CIA. It asked, as I recall. Did your friend ever mention intercepted and taped Oswald conversations? Tell him that the CIA in more recent years did admit that it had a source inside the Cuban embassy. I've suspected for years that it might have been or included Sylvia Duran. The CIA got real concerned when it suspected that the Mexico police might beat her again, and ordinarily they don't worry about spk's getting beat up.

On a letter interpreted as threatening Cunnally, I go into this in White^e Wash I and the Commission did publish a letter that can be so interpreted. In it what has escaped attention is Oswald's statement that everything he did was known to our ~~x~~ embassy, a provocative statement that warrants thought.

DeMohrenschildt could figure in the preassassination file in at least two ways: he associated with Oswald and he had been a CIA source, if not more. He also was known to have associated with the CIA's Dallas Man, was it J. Walton Moore?

For you friend's thinking, early on the CIA prepared questions to be addressed to the USSR. They were ~~not~~ calculated to turn the USSR off and get no response or angry ones. It was not used or sent and no real questions were ever asked by State.

The CIA did have a great volume of information on Oswald and much of it had ~~y~~ disappeared by HSCA's time. Helms claimed no knowledge of how it disappeared and if I recall correctly, did not attest to any investigation of this.

All of Lifton's theory is untenable. Just a few indications: There were 3,000 people close to and looking at AF1 at the DC airport and before any other doors were opened Bobby Kennedy rushed into the plane and to the body. He was followed by the Fort Myer honor guard, who were, as Lifton knew, in the second helicopter, the first being Johnson's. They helped move the casket. So, there was no possibility of any tricky offloading on the not-blind side. Moreover, it was a physical impossibility for any ambulance to get into the Navy medical installation by the back gate because it had ~~earlier~~ been locked and the guard removed for security reasons, so it could not be opened. All ambulances had to enter from Wisconsin Avenue and it only.

Your friend's belief that ONI stayed away from the autopsy because it was by the Navy may be correct, but the fact is that Bethesda immediately and in violation of regulations gave the White House every piece of paper it had and the film. I learned this via FOIA request.

On the Hunt associate killed in an auto accident, should I ask friends, without telling them why, to check the ~~records~~ ^{CB} records and the newspaper morgues? I can do this without indicating why but on my own will not. I can't assure that I could get it done but I could ask.

Your friend's says that the truth may be stranger than fiction re who did it and I suggest that the truth will read like fiction.

When you next talk to your friend, please give him this information and see if it tells him what he didn't know, what he may have forgotten, or suggests anything else to him or triggers more recall. Best to you and to him,

Harold