

12 May 1969

Dear Bob,

Thanks for your letter of the 6th. It was good to hear from you. You will be interested to know that the NY Times Magazine does not intend to print my letter, on the grounds that they will print a similar letter from Tink Thompsen. I wrote a second time, pointing out that while Tink's excellent letter demonstrates that Epstein is in error, my letter shows that the error was previously pointed out to, and admitted by, Epstein, and that he has therefore deliberately misled readers. I therefore appealed to the Times to publish at least the second paragraph of my letter; but I doubt that they will do so.

I hesitate to disillusion you any further but I would be remiss if I did not comment on Lane's book "A Citizen's Dissent." It provoked an angry editorial from The Progressive (a magazine very friendly to the WR critics), which challenged Lane's version of its "rejection" of his December 1963 article (a brief for Oswald) and published its exchange of letters with Lane of that time, which showed his account to be false. Further, two sections of his book are plagiarized from me--the critique of the Jenner broadcast is taken almost literally from my Minority of One article "Post-Assassination Credibility Chasm;" and the critique of Louis Nizer's broadcast is cribbed from an unpublished article I wrote and copy of which I gave to Lane when I heard that he was going to have a TV debate with Nizer. He wrote at that time, to thank me for letting him have this material and promised that he would "make good use of it"--by which he seems to have meant that he would plagiarize it.

But unethical behavior and plain invention and falsification unfortunately are not the exception but more like the rule in Lane's whole history as a WR critic. I could fill up several pages with chapter and verse, starting with his appropriation of an enclosure I had sent, together with a personal letter, to a member of Lane's old Citizen's Committee (1964 vintage), and his discard of the letter itself, without showing it to the person for whom it was intended. Later, his deliberate use in a public lecture of allegations (about the Stemmons Freeway sign "stress marks") which he knew had turned out to be mistaken and unfounded. When taxed with this, he said that the audience wouldn't know the difference. More recently, his widely-disseminated story of "emissaries from RFK" (conditionally "verified" by Garrison) is a cheap fabrication from beginning to end, as was also his earlier claim that RFK had sent a friendly cablegram to Trevor-Roper (which Trevor-Roper immediately told the press was untrue). So much for Lane.

Which is not to say that the press has not been exceedingly biased against WR critics (partly because of their contempt for Lane, for the Penn Jones' "Death Count," and for the rather hard-to-take personalities of certain other critics), and very unfair in coverage, almost always torturing the facts in favor of the WR. What better example is needed than the lavish "lead story" treatment of the 1968 panel report on the autopsy photos and X-rays, and then the almost total black-out of the Halleck hearing at which you and Wecht testified.

I think it is this preponderant bias against criticism of the WR, combined with the rather technical character of your paper, that has caused its non-publication. And what a great pity that is. I am glad that you have decided to make it available, and enclose a list of various individuals who would be interested. Ordinarily I would urge you not to despair; but frankly I am completely discouraged myself, about the whole WR and things in general. All the best,

Source: Robert Forman file

Re Eva Grant and the "like brothers" story: as you are going to Paris, why not look up Duchanan while there? He works for the Paris municipality, I believe, and it would be useful to know what if anything he may be doing on the case. I've seen no news of him for ages.

About Roy Truly's reference to the WPA project: I have always assumed that he was referring to the original construction and "beautification" of the monument area on the grassy knoll, probably in the 1930s, when the WPA was extant and doing this kind of municipal project in many different cities. I doubt if he could have meant a contemporary WPA project, since that agency has been out of existence for a couple of decades, probably. You will notice on 4H 212 that Truly settled in Dallas in 1925 and that he believes that he "even worked for the WPA" during the depression. Younger people of course would not identify Dealey Plaza's decorative features with a WPA project--prehistory for them, no doubt. I really don't find anything to suggest that there was a current engineering or construction works in progress 11/22/63. Sorry if this is deflating to Dave--but it will probably do more good than harm.

Finally, re Ford, I seem to recall that someone raised the same point with me not too long ago (perhaps even you?). At that time and again tonight when I got your letter I looked through the Ballantine book "The Un-Americans" by Frank Donner (an ex-boyfriend of mine). Unfortunately it is not indexed (which I begin to think is a capital crime, whatever the book) but I ran through the pages without glimpsing the name Ford. Maggie, why not write to Ford himself? He answers letters, apparently sensitive to voters, even answered my baited letter in re Ludkins, and as it is surely a matter of public record (if one knew which record to consult) he is bound to reply--especially if he believes it is a friendly inquiry. Barring that, have you tried the Almanac or the Encyclopedia Yearbook? Or a letter to the current HUAC?

Maggie, need I say that I am looking forward very much to your visit to New York? At the same time, I should warn you that I am turning into some kind of monster--I find myself at times alien to myself, and understanding for the first time the kind of cold arrogant ruthlessness of men like Gaugin and others possessed by a force so compelling that they submitted willingly, and sacrificed themselves and others indiscriminately to that overriding obsession or compulsion. Today for example I gave the scantest attention to one of my dearest closest friends, a colleague of 19 years' close association whom I had not seen for two years (since his promotion to a job in Geneva)--I actually manoeuvred him out and away, so that I could revert to my own preoccupations without losing another minute. I am beginning to have impulses to take advantage of people, to give orders and impose my will or decisions, to resist and resent anything like advice or interference, to lose interest increasingly in friends and family alike, and to experience or even betray a cruel impatience with people I love dearly and who mean a very great deal to me. I am confiding this against the impulse of self-protection, because I think that in your own way you are feeling similar stresses and strains, and above all a corrosive weariness and sometimes hopelessness that is black and evil. So please do be lenient with me, when we meet, understanding that I have become part savage from the exigencies of this ultra-civilized society in which we live, fundamentally outraged almost to the brink of dementia by the depravity, the injustice, the indecency, and the decay that advertises itself in such lofty pious arch-hypocritical hyperbole. We have a foul murder almost once a week, usually by a sheriff or a part-time sheriff, and the scenes of torture of Vietnamese children by beefy Marines, and the private report we had at UN on the atrocities by "our side" in the Dominican Republic, and the nightmarish scenes of pure hell in the streets of Watts...and always the intolerable memory of those three beautiful boys last year in Mississippi. Those who remain sane and undisturbed are the really sick ones--we who are crumbling before the utter horror at least have that much of sanity.

Excuse the discourse; I'm sure you don't need these reminders from me of the world around us. The few of us who are bound together by the WR must hold hands for comfort and we proceed deeper into the night of our discoveries. Love, as always,