

Thursday night 26.8.65

Dear Maggie,

It is no joke, working on this until one breathe's one's last sooner than one thinks. I am sitting here, nauseated and sick, fearful of a real collapse, because I have been grinding out the index so mercilessly--and trying to give adequate attention also to a whole galaxy of WR-related matters that crop up almost daily. My friend Mari moved back to Dallas, thanks to which I received the article about the rifle and revolver. The story was NOT covered here wither. I think I wrote you that I sent a copy to Salandria and that he wanted to do a story; unfortunately he did not reach Lobenthal. Isabel had to call Lobenthal about something that came up on her suit and told him that S was trying to reach him. To my surprise L was indifferent and said that he would not call S--it is nothing more than a huge dose of overwork, I suspect, as L has been concentrating on the selections for dramatic reading.

But the current LIFE (for 27.8.65) has a long article on the rifle; I assume someone has called it to your attention and that you have read it, with the same exasperation at times that I felt (rage is closer). This kind of development is one of the things that has made me, for the first time in memory, neglect my work at the office, using my time there to work on the case and risking real trouble--neglecting important matters which, if there are aftermaths, will find me without any excuse. I couldn't let the LIFE article go by without a word but felt too busy to take time to write to the author--so this afternoon I phoned LIFE to ask where I could reach him by phone, and the switchboard immediately connected me with him. I had quite an interesting talk with him, calling his attention to the contradictions and misrepresentations of information on the rifle and the rifle ammunition (I won't repeat the specifics, which are just as familiar to you as to anyone). He was interested and I thought honest on the whole; his research in the H&E was limited to consulting the sources indicated in the footnotes--which of course is a trap and the very reason I am ruining my health and shortening my life by preparing the subject index.

Wheeler (the author of the LIFE article) asked how I had achieved such extensive knowledge of the case and the H&E; when I said that I was doing a subject index he howled or shrieked "What a ghastly job" but was interested and helpful, recommending his literary agent to me when it emerged that I was a novice. It may turn out to be a useful contact (Wheeler, I mean, rather than the agent).*

I have been meaning to remind you again to send me the charges for the photographic materials; also, to apologize for not yet having returned the tapes. I wanted very much to hear them; but the pressure of events and travels since I received them, and the fact that I had no tape recorder, immobilized me. Then Bill Crehan, whose wife has some kind of recording business, offered to play and retape them--he took several days off from his job (it is a wonder any of us remain employed), playing sick, rented a tape-recorder, and went through infinite trouble--only to find that for the last few tries, it has not been possible for us to arrange a conjunction of the bodies and the machine at the same time. It is now scheduled for tomorrow night--auditing the Lane/Ball and the Lane/Belli tapes--after which I can mail them back to you or, if it is all right, hold them until your visit to New York. Please let me know which you prefer.

I agree with you about S's impressions of the Zapruders--it seems to me that he places Gov G's wound much much too late. But I am suspending judgment, as you are, until I have the benefit of his complete notes and his reasoning.

*Perhaps in due time if the contact continues and develops I might approach him with a request to arrange a viewing of the original Zapruder film, projected as a motion picture and in slow motion. But that is entirely premature now.

I won't comment at any great length on Marina. As you know, I mistrust and dislike her (although at times I feel a momentary sympathy or rapport) and feel certain that she has falsely and coldbloodedly collaborated in the posthumous frameup (if not at an earlier stage). I suspect that we have not seen the last headlines where she and her marriage(s) are concerned. (Maybe Porter wants to go down into history too?)

I don't remember whether or not I wrote you about the emergence, at long last, of the May issue of the NYU Law Review with the symposium on the Warren Report. It finally came out about the 15th of August! Do get a copy, if you have not already --if you can't get it locally, write NYU Law Review, Washington Square, NYC, attention Miss Joyce Doll. There are five articles (one is irrelevant to the case), and I wrote to three of the authors. One has already answered, quite cordially; it seems my letter was his first clue to the publication of his article! That has much to say for the management of the NYU Law Review, as does the date of circulation of the May issue! He was chagrined to learn that Rankin had misled him by saying that the WC had never used its power of subpoena (I had pointed out in my letter that Hamblen, Surrey, Oliver, Andrews Weissman and at least one more witness had been served with subpoenas) but said "in defense of Rankin" that this is the kind of job one wants to forget as quickly as possible once it is over. However, he was annoyed that his article should have included such an error, albeit Rankin's, and said that he wished he had known of my work and had consulted me when preparing his review. (Very flattering.) His name is Cushman; an article by Preese of Los Angeles is also useful, in that it demonstrates the bias of the Commission, although in an apologetic and timid spirit. Of course, no public comment anywhere (so far as I know) on the publication of this not-insignificant symposium!

About the lay-off message: Maggie, as I said on the phone, I am inclined to put it aside, as there is no way to determine the accuracy or actuality of K's comment. I do not know who the intermediary was or whether he exaggerated or even invented the whole thing. Of course, if it is both true and precise, it is staggering and enormous in implication. I am glad that you are treating it with discretion, especially where Dave is concerned, because now that you have explained the mystery of the "new dimension" I am almost speechless and, frankly, I am frightened. If concentrating on the case can intoxicate and unseat one's reason, even momentarily, my prospects personally can't be very good. (Actually I find myself turning into a ruthless, rude, obsessed machine--some kind of steamroller that knows only that the index must get finished, even if blood flows.) What can I say about his ladder, trees, plus-or-minus helicopter???? One or even two men behind the wall--yes, it is possible and it seems to me to be recorded on the photograph. But could 150-odd witnesses fail to notice an army truck, equipped with crane-ladder, and a regiment of helmeted men???? Could the witness in the ER tower overlook such a concentration, or those looking out of windows? Or were they all supposed to be "in" on it??? Dear heaven, only let Dave keep this to himself (I am afraid he has already told Salandria); any public hint of this will consign us all to utter ridicule and contempt and will play right into the hands of the WC-faction. Nothing could do more harm. If it is of any value, please convey to Dave my personal and urgent appeal not to endanger us all or jeopardize the tiny slender possibility we have of making a responsible and credible attack on the official case. Whatever he thinks he sees, he must remember the attendant circumstances and realize that what he is suggesting could not have been true without traces being evident in many different forms--and I see absolutely nothing to support such a hypothesis. Between you and me, it is almost on a par with Thomson's theory of Tippit as stand-in for JFK; but Thomson was dubious to begin with, while Dave, as you say, has made a crucial and valid discovery --the men behind the wall--and continuing in his present vein will end up by destroying that, too.

Re Eva Grant and the "life brothers" story: as you are going to Paris, why not look up Buchanan 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 HH 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 Hudkins, 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,