

7 March 1968

Dear Tink,

As you suggested, I have re-read your account of the Julia Mercer incident. When I read the ms. and later the galleys, the illustrations and documents were not included, as you may remember, and I did not then read Commission Document 205 (page 219 of SSD)—at least, that is my best recollection.

Having read it now, I note several serious contradictions between the Mercer affidavit of 11/22/63 and the Brown/Murphy interviews by the FBI on 12/9/63. All three describe a green pick-up truck but the officers do not confirm the lettering "Air Conditioning" which Mercer described very precisely. If she is correct, it is hard to understand why the officers do not corroborate the lettering; and, if the truck was being used in construction work, why it was so labeled.

Another serious conflict is on the location of the officers. Mercer says there were three policemen on the overpass; Murphy says, two policemen were with the truck. Perhaps they left the overpass after Mercer departed and stayed with the truck, which might account for the apparent conflict.


But the really serious contradiction concerns Mercer's allegation that a man took what appeared to be a gun-case out of the truck and went up the grassy hill with it, while the officers contend that the men were under observation the whole time and did not remove anything nor, by implication, go up the grassy hill with an object which might have been a rifle-case.

I would have to agree that while these contradictory versions of the incident remain unresolved, the incident cannot be considered as closed or innocent. The men in the truck should have been located; Mercer should have been asked to identify them; and all parties, including the police officers, should have been asked to give testimony in an effort to establish the actual facts.

At the same time, I do not attach any credibility to Mercer's recent allegations as described by Garrison during his stint on the Johnny Carson variety show. These very belated and lurid afterthoughts of witnesses, coinciding as they do with the escalations in New Orleans and hints of ulterior and pecuniary motives, can only be regarded with utmost reserve. And I note that the object resembling a gun-case, described by Mercer with such impressive precision and firmness on the same day, has now metamorphosed into "a rifle wrapped in brown paper."

Therefore, while disregarding entirely the new revelations by Mercer via Garrison and Lane, I would have to agree that on the basis of the 1963 documentation alone the question of what Mercer saw, and what actually occurred with respect to the stalled truck and its occupants, remains open and potentially serious.

As ever,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to be 'A. Lane', written in dark ink.