

7 July 1967

Dear Tom,

Thanks for your letter and the States-Item article, which I had received already (I am subscribing, since the New York press gives extremely limited and highly selective coverage to l'affaire Garrison). Before I forget, do let me have your telephone number, Tom, in case I should need to call you--both apartment and office.

The States-Item story, despite the inaccuracies you annotated, seemed to me more substantial than some of the stuff that appears in that paper out of the Garrison establishment. What an innovation: facts, numbers, lists. I think that your presence there is already making itself felt, not only in terms of press coverage but also in the remarks of returning pilgrims. Eric Norden, who had called me several times before his trip, but whom I have never met, called me when he got back and had some especially favorable comments about you. Norden was aware of my criticisms of the Garrison "case" but even so, having more or less agreed that my points (re: the encoded phone numbers and the value of testimony from such as Russo, etc.) were indeed valid and serious, he returned quite mesmerized by the Jolly Green. Like others before him, Norden passionately vouches for Garrison's honesty, sincerity, and other virtues--as though a personal impression should somehow outweigh or nullify demonstrable proof of irresponsibility and unfounded evidential claims. Norden, by the way, wrote a piece on the Dallas events early in 1964, before the WR was published, which stands up quite well today. He also wrote a very impressive full-length study of the death (possibly by suicide and incidental murder of other passengers) of the late unlamented Dag Hammarschuldt.

Jones Harris also called me upon his return from Mecca, having decided long ago to disregard my written request to him not to call me any more (although he has at least reduced the frequency of his phonecalls). Jones is a mixture of the pathetic and the obnoxious, a very mischief-making malicious and sometimes dangerous person. As a student or researcher, he is hopeless: lazy, disorganized, illogical, utterly capricious, and immersed in all kinds of incidental trivia likely to lead only to a cul-de-sac. He has strong cold-warrior proclivities, and has at times a foul and ugly tongue, especially towards the likes of Mark Lane. One of my first glimpses of what Jones Harris was capable of was he gratuitous and malicious interference with Lane when both of them happened to be in Dallas, when Jones was nothing less than a dirty little informer and saboteur. He tends to divide his time between trying to discredit certain critics, championing others, ingratiating himself with Liebler and his ilk, brain-picking, and intrusion where he is not wanted. He sees himself as the master-strategist of the fight against the WR, and it is a sad fact that his strategy almost invariably has led straight to one or another minor disaster. He quarrels with everyone, sooner or later, and is anathema to a great number of people, some of whom have nothing in common with each other except an antipathy to Jones. He is also a big-mouth, in whom it is dangerous to confide--not only mischievous but indiscreet--yet infuriatingly secretive, in a gloating way that must feed his sense of power, about the most trivial, non-confidential matters. In the days when I was in regular touch with Jones, he was often smugly mysterious and deliberately secretive about matters I knew already from a different source, and it used to amuse me to listen to his heavy-handed and broad hints and allusions, which were designed to bring me to my knees begging him to disclose his delicious secret.

Well, I am certainly not reassured about Garrison when I learn from Jones and others as well how intimate and mutually trusting they have become, and that Garrison is so indiscriminate as to trust Jones as a so-called researcher, even when Jones comes up (as apparently he did, in the first instance) with the now-notorious "PO 19106."

I share your views on Bill Turner, completely, and I agree with your remarks about Popkin. As I am no longer in touch with Epstein (our association lapsed last fall, when he no longer needed my services in connection with his book, and became unrenowable when he told a verminous pair of "interviewers" that I had books on flying saucers on

my bookshelves but said nothing about the fact that he had asked me to review his ms., had accepted certain suggestions, had later expressed chagrin that he had failed to act on certain other suggestions, asked me to index his book, asked me to advise him on points of evidence, or on refutation of attacks on his book, and, finally, that he was such a cheap-skate as to allow me to bear the full costs of \$200 press-clipping service taken to be sure of getting all the reviews of his book, without honoring his own offer to pay half) I have no personal knowledge of his views on Garrison. I would be paralyzed with amazement if Epstein took seriously anything that has been going on in New Orleans. I did hear from someone, months back, that Epstein had returned from his first pilgrimage there, saying that Garrison had nothing. Jones Harris later denied this emphatically; but that does not mean that it was not true.

Let me be clear, however, that I make a total separation between Epstein personally and Epstein's book, which I consider to have high historical importance, as the book that really broke the national silence on the WR and led to such reconsideration and changes of position as were manifested last fall by many publications and many writers previously committed to the WR. Without his book, I doubt very much if the books by Lane and others would have made very much difference. Epstein is very gifted as a writer, who was able to make his statements on highly complicated and sometimes technical matters in highly concise and easily understandable language. He is, as you say, a logician--up to a point. He is handicapped by a lack of spine, falling apart at the touch of a "respectable" spokesman or a member of the Establishment. He is no crusader--I think he lacks even a sense of outrage or a commitment to justice or truth, except if he himself is the victim of injustice or falsehood. He is looking to his personal future, perhaps a career in the brain trust of the second Kennedy presidency, is therefore "discreet" in his attack and in his associations. Most of the critics regard him with total contempt, as a man. He is handicapped also ~~but~~ by a less than thorough knowledge of the 26 volumes and of areas of evidence other than those covered in his book.

If at any time you feel free to write about the defection of ~~Gurwitz~~ Gurvich, I would love to know your own impressions of what happened, and why. On the day the story broke, I tended to think he was merely acting on conscience, although I felt it unethical for him to take his views privately to RFK instead of first to Garrison and then to the public at large. A few days later, he began to seem more like a rat leaving a sinking ship; and after another few days, I began to wonder if he was not even worse, a man for sale to the highest bidder. Whichever the correct explanation, it does not speak well for Garrison's judgment that he allowed Gurvich aboard in the first place. Now Garrison is trying to run an investigation and a propaganda struggle simultaneously, heaven help us. So far as I can see, his greatest accomplishment to date has been to drive a bitter wedge between those critics who are dazzled into a kind of holy faith (which they despised when others displayed it, for the Warren Report) and those critics who see him as an undisciplined and sometimes unscrupulous pseudo-researcher who may deal a death blow to all authentic opposition to the WR. I am glad you are there to inject some influence in the cause of scrupulousness and good sense, and personally glad to have someone in the Jolly Green Wonderland to contact in case of need. My impression from your letter is that two weeks in New Orleans have not allayed your misgivings about the whole thing. I've been keeping busy on the CBS extravaganza, writing a review and a letter to the CBS brass with copies to the press. My page proofs are due on the 20th, which is not to say that they will arrive on time. Meanwhile, I am spending this whole month at home, on leave from the office but finding more than enough work to be done here to destroy any semblance of "vacation." Please do write as often as you can manage, and I will be in touch if anything of value to you should turn up.

All the best,