

19 April 1967

Dear Tom,

Sprague is definitely not working for Life, where in fact he is trying to get an appointment to view their films and/or photos, and so far as I can tell he is really working on his own. He has by now inferred that you are doing research for G. and I merely said that that was a logical inference. About the woman on the 4th floor who was taking photos--yes, someone had told me that, maybe Sprague, maybe someone else.

I am sorry that you are feeling depressed about the whole question, although I admit that there are times when it is impossible not to become dispirited about certain aspects. G.'s reaction to the "missing" page 47, for example, rather disheartens me (to say nothing of the fact that I have never had one word from him or anyone on his staff in New Orleans to acknowledge any of the materials I sent there--chapters from my forthcoming book, my personal copy of the Subject Index (now out of print--frustrated would-be purchasers are having to xerox it from borrowed copies), etc.). The critics, or most of them, have been charging the Commission and its Report with inaccuracy, error, carelessness, deceit, misrepresentation, and suppression of evidence. I scarcely think that we can afford the very sins with which we are charging our adversaries. But even if we have more "right" to make mistakes, the unfortunate fact is that when a critic makes a flat statement which turns out to be erroneous, those who take the trouble to check will lose confidence in the purveyor of the error and perhaps in all the critics. When one is charging deliberate suppression of documentary evidence (of which there are numerous legitimate instances), with sinister implications, it defeats one's purposes if the material is indeed published and not suppressed, and it does give needless ammunition to Liebel and his cohorts.

As you say, the critical literature is basically a large collection of so-called "details" and we cannot afford to erode any one of them nonchalantly, as if it did not affect our credibility and our reputation for scholarship. For example (and this next part is confidential, although you can use your discretion as to the substance so long as you do not mention me at all), I heard just the other day something that really dismays me. Mark Lane had been citing a particular item of evidence as highly significant, in his public lectures, and had done so in good faith. With the passage of time, it was possible to establish that the point he was making, and the other critics were making as well (it had originated with another critic, not with Lane) was mistaken. A closer examination of this particular bit of evidence showed that there was not anything sinister about it. When I learned this, I immediately deleted mention of it from my manuscript.

Well, only the other day, I learned that critic "X" had taken Lane aside one night and explained that the suspect evidence was in fact okay. Lane acknowledged this and agreed that it was okay, saying that he would no longer argue this item in his appearances. However, I was told, he then continued to use it, just as if he had not received the new information, because "he knew that the audience wouldn't know the difference." Since I do not concede the Warren Commission the right to lie to the public, naturally I cannot concede that any critic has such a right. And I find it profoundly depressing that any of the critics should use such tactics--I do not believe that the ends justify the means, nor that any moral purpose can be pursued with immoral methods.

But now your depression and my own part company. I am absolutely convinced that the Report does not, cannot, and will not "hold up"--and I don't give a damn what that fink Epstein "now" thinks, nor will I change my mind if G. announces next Tuesday that he has changed his mind, there was no conspiracy, and LHO did it by himself.

The reasons for my absolute certainty that the WR cannot be rehabilitated under any circumstances are presented in detail in my forthcoming book. I cannot condense 700 pages into a paragraph--so I will only remind you of what you yourself said in your preceding letter about the frame 313 head shot. That leaves no doubt that shots came from at least two directions and at least two riflemen. For other reasons, I strongly doubt that LHO was one of the gunmen or that he had any role whatever other than a patsy.

I am not certain that shots came from the 6th floor window, although there is strong evidence which I cannot disregard--Evins, in particular, who is only a young boy. Certainly shots came from somewhere behind the car, as well as to the right and front of the car. But if shots came from that window, it is still important to establish all the other facts (prints on rifle, etc.). They are far from academic. You need not go so far as Weisberg goes or any other researcher goes--you need only go where the facts take you, without eliminating a priori any of the possible ultimate destinations. No one can dispute FBI incompetence, that seems already demonstrated beyond question. As to their being "rotten through and through," that still remains to be proved--but since not all the facts are in, we are not yet in a position to rule out this possibility.

Because I try to go wherever the facts take me, I do consider that the Commission is guilty of what is tantamount to a cover-up--i.e., they covered up the evidence of Oswald's probable innocence, or of his accomplices if he was indeed implicated. This, too, I believe my book will demonstrate beyond a shadow of doubt--deliberate, repeated misrepresentation and deformation of facts, always in order to bolster the untenable lone-assassin hypothesis. If it were simple incompetence and haste, the law of averages would have forced the Report to contain a few errors for Oswald, rather than "errors" which constantly work to his disadvantage.

I have never caught Ruth Paine in any lie; so far as I can see, she is truthful (though NOT half the saint she tries to appear). She never saw the rifle; she never handled the blanket package. Michael Paine did pick it up occasionally to move it out of the way; he thought it contained tenting equipment, or the like. He readily agreed, in his testimony, that it could have held a rifle. The rifle. Yet there is a whole complex of evidence, physical and circumstantial, which overwhelms M. Paine's inferences, and the Commission's. I have a long chapter on this whole question of the bulky package, the blanket, the paper bag, etc. ### Re: Robert MacNeill, see 3H 211. ### There was a get-together on Sunday, some of the critics had come in to take part in the peace demonstration, as I did, and they came here on Sunday for a drink--about 12, or twice as many as the room can really hold comfortably. Wives were present, only 4 critics in all. We talked half the time about the demonstration against the war; the other half, about the grounds on which Clay Shaw was charged with a serious crime. Sauvage and I were in a minority of two, while the others were proceeding on the basis of utter faith in G. They are certain (but do not know) that he has much better evidence than Russo and Bundy; they have FAITH (although we have seen the bitter outcome of the faith many had in Warren). And those present who are most identified with Mark Lane, they had the most ardent faith of all, for Lane hath endorsed the New Orls. probe, and that is all they know and all they need to know. Since I don't have one standard for accused Oswald and a completely different for accused Shaw, I am merely disheartened by that which has sent most of my colleagues to Bud Nine. I guess that sums it up. All the best,