

2323 Ashmead Place, NW
Washington, D.C.
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Dear Sylvia,

Working in the National Archives is worse than looking for a needle in a hay stack; one doesn't even know what or where the hay stack is! The main problem is that ~~one~~ one does not know exactly what there is to look at. The list of basic source materials, 1555 Commission Documents, is hopelessly uninformative, and does not by any means represent all of the material in the Archives; for instance it omits the Commission working papers. The Secret Service documents are a real mess, which is a pity, as they are more informative than the FBI reports.. Let me outline the problem with the Secret Service documents, as an illustration of the general problem of working in the Archives.

There are apparently 1784 SS reports, given control numbers numerically. Only a fraction of these control numbered reports, (which may be anything from one to 50 pages long) are actually included in the 1555 CD's. Where are the rest? An answer might be provided by a letter from Rowley to the Archivist, stating which control nos are to be withheld from public scrutiny. Such a letter exists, but I have not yet been allowed to see it. However one of the archivists told me it is relatively short, and does not account for all the missing documents. These could be, it was explained to me, in one of 3 places: In the Warren Report, in which case the relevant control nos were not placed in the Archives, (but in some cases they were!). Somewhere in the Archives, but not included in the 1555 CDs, or, finally, not in the Archives at all, as they are possibly SS reports (again, in some cases; one doesn't know which) that do not refer at all to the assassination. I found out about all this confusion in attempting to locate the report of SA Vial, dated 12-3-63, which pertains to the New Orleans investigation. I keep coming across references to it in other SS reports, but have yet to find it. Perhaps it was actually published in one of the later 26 vols., in which case you might be able to locate it.

Which reminds me of my other main problem: it is very difficult to know, without the encyclopedic knowledge of the 26 vols which probably only you possess, whether what one is reading is in fact unpublished material. I can cope with the New Orleans material in this respect, as I am sufficiently well informed, but when I come across something else which looks interesting, I'm never sure whether it is startlingly important or old hat. Example this afternoon from CD 87, (SS), several pages of interesting material analysing the forged Hidell ID cards. This set me wondering how Oswald obtained, or forged these cards. Is this material on the cards (detailed physical analysis of them) in the WR? Let me know if this interests you at all.

I have seen Weisberg twice; he has now apparently taken up the cudgels in defense of the Secret Service. I'm afraid, however, he has a hopelessly uncritical mind. Ed Epstein was in here yesterday. I had not met him before, but had a coffee with him. I think he has a purely journalistic interest in the case, and is now quarrying the topic for lucrative articles. Says he is currently working on one for the New Yorker, (which also has one coming out soon by Calvin Trillin. No doubt it will be lightly facetious about the subject.) In view of my distrust of Epstein I did not tell him anything that I told you, so if he contacts you or Vince pretending I did, he is employing a ruse. I did deliberately arouse his curiosity, however, as I wanted to try and pump him. Not much luck in doing so, as he had to leave hastily. Vince seems to think he is working for the Kennedys in some strange capacity, but I rather doubt it. I asked him what he thought RFK's attitude was and he said the last thing in the world he would want would be a re-opening of the investigation.

I have found some new and rather strange information on Ferrie. Initially I found 40 pages withdrawn on him in CD 75 (Gemberling), but index escapes classification and so one can at least find proper names referred to on those pages. Then in last few days have found some interesting stuff in the SS reports. Fortunately they seem to be in fact less secretive than their name suggests, and declassify material which the FBI wouldn't dream of doing. The material I now have on Ferrie is very strange because it is hard for me to believe that the DA in New Orleans doesn't already know all about it. The man who called up

the SS on the night of Nov 24 63, informing them about Ferrie and thus accounting for their knowledge of "Farry" when they interviewed Marina that night, before Ferrie was arrested, was in fact an assistant DA. Also, I find the man who linked Ferrie and Oswald together was also some kind of a police informer, and later admitted to the SS that he had invented the whole thing. It is inconceivable to me that Garrison is not aware that this man repudiated his story, however a very uneasy suspicion now rests in my mind that he is going on nothing more than this informer's original story and does not yet know that he later said he had been lying. If this is so then the whole Ferrie episode, and I fear, the reason for the DA's interest is a gigantic red herring. Admittedly the question remains: why did Ferrie take off for Texas on the evening of Nov. 22, with apparently no better ~~reason~~ reason than to go skating in Houston. Ferrie also flew to Guatemala twice in October 63, though not in private plane. He in turn was acting as an investigator for someone else, he said, and that is why he went to Guatemala. All very strange. A group of investigators all investigating one another. However, I'm still not convinced Ferrie is involved in this thing, and I think I'll delay sending this information in until my next pay check has arrived!

Do you know anything about this Miami police story, having a recorded statement before the assassination? Do you think there is anything important here?

Mrs Light (Connell) turned out to be in New Orleans when I was in NY, so no doubt she was interviewed, though I don't know if she said anything interesting.

Feel free to show anything I send you to Vince Salandria, but, I suggest, no-one else. I enjoyed meeting him very much, and he showed me the Baganov material, which is very interesting though not quite conclusive. Epstein says Baganov has now accepted the Esquire challenge and they are going to come out with something about him, or by him. Epstein seems to be big buddies with Jones Harris.

Best wishes,
Tom Bethell

P.S. Do you know, exactly, when Oswald's "Hidell" alias was first publicised on TV?

Feb 14th: Definitely was a HYDELL (sic) in N.O. He's being sought out for bad check passing.

Vial Report is CE 3117 Is now find.