

23 April 1971

Mr Robert P Smith
927 15th Street N W #409
Washington D.C. 20005

Dear Bob,

Thank you for your letter of the 20th. I am glad that you found Dick Bernabei's suggestions useful and I feel sure that your correspondence with him will be productive. Your remarks about keeping me in the picture are generous and I am not confident that I deserve them. In fact, I feel some guilt and embarrassment about the degree to which I have become hazy in my knowledge of the details of the evidence, which at one time was generally acute and exact, and the extent to which I have permitted inertia to overtake me.

I like your idea of a methodical, regular information exchange. Certainly it is worth a try. Most of us have always tried, on an ad hoc basis, to circulate copies of correspondence, press clips, and other material of interest to the critics and researchers (though, regrettably, some indulge in a "secrecy" fetish which I have always found childish and irritating).

About the yellow lined pad: I took a quick look through Marina's testimony but did not locate the passage where, as I recall, she described the burning of the notebook in a bathroom washbasin. You are quite right in pointing out that she referred at all times to a notebook rather than a pad. In LH 293, top of page, the comparison is made to the "legal size pad" and it is possible that this produced a misleading impression in my mind, based on the use in my office of yellow lined legal size pads. As soon as I find time, I will make a more thorough search to determine whether there is a more precise description anywhere in Marina's testimony or FBI/SS interviews.

Perhaps I have mentioned already, in one of my earlier letters, that in acquiring batches of the CD's from the Archives in 1969 and 1970 I was elated to discover corroboration for certain of the inferences I had made much earlier, on the basis of the published exhibits and testimony alone. For example, an FBI report by Hosty which stated that he had been told on 11/25/63 by the office of Capt. Fritz that Oswald had not been arraigned for the JFK murder; and CD's on Charles Givens which revealed that on 11/22/63 he had told the FBI that he had seen Oswald in the domine room on the first floor at 11:50 a.m., as opposed to his 4/8/64 testimony, in which he "remembered" for the first time the "forgotten cigarettes" incident which is embodied in the WR as evidence incriminating Oswald.

Last year I wrote up the new information gleaned from the WC's unpublished papers and documents relating to Givens as a 7-page article which was accepted by the Texas Observer and sent to lawyers Ball and Belin for advance comment. This week I received from the editor a 16-page "reply" by a very furious Belin, most of which was irrelevant, self-serving, abusive, and unresponsive to my charge that Givens' testimony was surrounded by the odor of perjury and collusion.

Belin's only "explanation" for his failure to challenge Givens' testimony was that the direct statements made to him were more reliable than earlier hearsay reports by third parties--the FBI and the SS, who will not appreciate that characterization. That hardly explains anything (including Belin's failure to place on the record the discrepancies between the earlier reports and the direct testimony, as was done for the 62 witnesses listed in my Subject Index under "FBI, Misreporting by, alleged"). In short, what he asks is that we should accept the preposterous notion that Givens simply forgot, in his affidavit and FBI interview of 11/22/63 and in all subsequent interviews before his April 1964 testimony, the single most important and memorable incident which supposedly had occurred--his alleged encounter with Oswald on the 6th floor at 11:55 a.m.--and that he suddenly "remembered" that encounter while being questioned by Belin. I doubt if even a WC lawyer can seriously buy the idea of such a prolonged, selective, and localized amnesia.

As things now stand, the Texas Observer is to publish my article together with Belin's "reply" during or after June. I will distribute the issue to everyone who might be interested, if and when it eventuates.

With kindest regards,

Yours sincerely,

Sylvia Meagher
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