

March 24, 1971

Mrs. Sylvia Meagher
302 W. 12th St.
New York, N. Y. 10014

Dear Sylvia:

Again thank you for your cogent observations. Your reply of the 21st caught me in the middle of preparing a more deserving answer to your letter of the 15th, which I shall now incorporate herewith.

Perhaps it would be well to indicate something about my own point of view on this case, and why it is that I am asking your help, particularly in regard to the Walker affair. I am a relative newcomer to this research, and though I appreciate your kind remark about my grasp of the documentation, it is really still very incomplete and spotty in its coverage. I continue to be stupefied by the sheer magnitude of material to be studied, even when being relatively selective in the choice of topics, as I have been. More and more often, I find myself "rediscovering" something I had previously read and forgotten, as though the old information were leaking away almost as rapidly as the new is absorbed -- a common experience in this work, I suppose. One wonders what the members of the Warren Commission, with their obligations elsewhere, could have been able to comprehend and retain.

I read your book for the first time early last summer, and I have long since lost count of the number of times that started me off on forays into the Volumes, the Committee files, and sometimes the Archives. Yet you will have to forgive me if I now and then show lapses of memory as to what you have already discovered and published, either in Accessories or in your Subject Index.

One way to solidify one's grasp of any kind of material, of course, is to communicate it -- to write it, discuss it, even argue it -- anything to get it into some other channel of experience than pure contemplation. And if the communication is two-way, there are the further benefits of logical refinement and new insights to be gained. For those reasons, I should like very much to continue corresponding with you, on such topics and on such regularity or irregularity of schedule as you find convenient.

The intensity of my interest in the Walker incident derives from a number of considerations. First of all, I fully share your own well documented view that large parts of the case against Oswald are fabricated, and not just the Walker aspects alone. In attempting to go beyond this, however, toward identification of the true assassin(s), one is struck by the almost total dearth of any evidence pointing elsewhere. Frankly, I am not terribly sanguine about the possibility of a solution even if everything in the Archives, the FBI, and the CIA were to be disclosed. I think it entirely possible that the answers are simply not there -- in short, that the case is genuinely unsolved, so far as any top-level elements of government agencies are concerned (I do not exclude the possibility that individuals or low-level elements may know the answers, however). Admittedly, my only basis for this view is a kind of prejudice, an incredulity that so monstrous a secret could be or would be kept by any large number of responsible people.

Having adopted that view as a working hypothesis, tentatively anyway, I then wonder what might be deduced from the evidence of the fabrications themselves, i. e., might a study of the various instances of fabrication (including the several cases recognized by the Warren Commission itself) provide indirect evidence as to who the assassins were? This is a more complex question than I had once thought, for there can be various kinds of "innocent" motivation for fabricating evidence, in the sense that the fabricator may have played no part in the assassination itself or have any knowledge of it.

The fumbling Dallas cops are one group of fabricators for whom an "innocent" motive of this sort may readily be conceived: they want to "solve" the case, prove their competence, and clear the Dallas name, however miserable the tactics. A similarly motivated group, though more skilled if not more scrupulous, is the FBI. The top of this particular class, of course, is the Warren Commission itself. All the groups in this class, as we have seen, produce the same end result in their respective investigations, differing only in the amount of time (2 days; 2 weeks; 7 months) and the volume of paper required to state it. Again, the possibility that there may be individuals within these groups whose motives are not thus "innocent" has to be kept in mind.

There may also be some persons or groups so motivated by local or national "pride" as to act in concert with one or another of the foregoing groups, particularly if they sense such help is necessary, and even more so if they anticipate some kind of status award. Some of the rifle range "observers" of Oswald, for example, are likely to fit into this category.

Then there are the frightened, the cowed, the vulnerable -- Marina, as one obvious example, and probably several of the black TSBDE employees. Also the morbid and the malicious types who have it in for someone else, not necessarily Oswald, and report accordingly, usually anonymously -- one finds lots of these buried away at the Archives, a sad commentary on the "informant" syndrome in our society, and a massive impediment to anyone investigating the case, then or now. (Frankly, although I would not want this said publicly, I view the Garrison case against Shaw and Ferrie as having such an origin in all probability, the original culprit being a clever alcoholic named Jack S. Martin; but this is strictly a personal view, and if Garrison ever deigns to release his evidence, I would be happy to change my mind.)

But now when I consider the Walker incident, I find it not at all evident that the fabrication in this instance follows from the sort of motives discussed above. Walker himself is the original fabricator, but he lies about it persistently, even to the extent of denying it under oath in his testimony, with all the risks that that entails. Nor could it have been evident to an "innocent" fabricator, on the morning of November 24th, that a "prior similar act" or other evidence of Oswald's physical and psychological "capability" would depend uniquely on Walker's own experience. He is not frightened or cowed, certainly not by the Dallas Police or the local FBI. Malice, in some generalized sense directed at Communists, left-wingers, etc., is a possibility, I suppose, but even then I should think he would have to know a great deal about Oswald, particularly about the period of Oswald's life in April, 1963, in order to be sure of his ground before sending that allegation abroad.

In any case, of all the numerous indications of fabrication in the case against Oswald, I am more intrigued with the Walker incident than any other as a possible clue to the real assassins. Even the planter of CE 399 would be less suspicious to me in that sense, as he might turn out to be no more than a zealous cop.

Another fabrication incident, in my opinion, is the "Oswald" ticket at the Irving Sports Shop. I realize that in your book you advance some good reasons for believing that this incident may not have been a fabrication at all, but possibly an indicator of a second Oswald rifle, or of an Oswald impersonator. My view is largely shaped by the fact of Marina's initial denial (CE 2003, p. 48) of having seen a scope on the rifle, a view she seems to have maintained for some time, coupled with a whole raft of suspicious circumstances (anonymous phone tips, news leaks, etc.) surrounding Dial Ryder's story. Ryder, of course, might well be the "local pride" type of fabricator, but I wish I knew more about him and his associations. If he had a tie-in with the Walker group, I would be extremely suspicious.

Your comment about the chain of possession of the Walker bullet in your letter of 3/15 was well taken. You are (or were) probably aware of it, but CE 2001 contains a remarkable contradiction about the physical characteristics of the bullet when examined on two occasions separated by 8 months. Pages 24H39 & 40 (Dallas Police Reports) state the bullet had a steel jacket in April, 1963; in December, the FBI's Alchemy Division has transmuted the jacket into copper (24H46 & 47), a feat for which Bud Fensterwald is thinking of nominating them for the Nobel Prize. Comparison of CE 1953, p. 4 with CE 3114, p. 1, and CE 2011, p. 6 also suggest much confusion, as well as a splendidly cavalier approach to picking up and identifying evidence by Lt. Day. I intend to take a look at this bullet for myself at the Archives.

5H440 -
11H406 HX

I ran across another weird thing just yesterday. If you compare CE 1006 through 1012 against the itemized list of photos in CE 1953, pp. 6 & 7, you will find they match, item for item, for the first six photos. Not so, however, for CE 1012 (not at first glance, anyway). A check of the Table of Contents for the Volume containing CE 1012 also shows the discrepancy in the description therein given to CE 1012. But now look at Walker Exhibit 1 and compare with CE 1012 and item 7 in CE 1953, p. 7. Also look at Surrey's testimony about CE 1012 and Walker's about Walker Exhibit 1 (sorry, I don't have the page numbers written down, and the Volumes are at the office). It then should become clear that CE 1012 is an enlargement of a part of Walker Exhibit 1, but printed so badly it is barely recognizable as anything at all, though in fact it should correspond to CE 1953, item 7 on p. 7, the description in which is quite intriguing when compared with the Surrey and Walker testimony. It would appear that the Dallas Police had the wrong window in mind when they took their pictures in April, 1963! (Or else, as seems more likely, the FBI gummed up the works in their description in CE 1953). Note Liebler's careful questioning of Walker on this matter. He shows considerable suspicion, but never lets Walker know why, finally dropping the matter altogether. And the way CE 1012 is printed (deliberate?), the casual reader could hardly know what had been going on here.

It is also puzzling that Liebler let Walker off the hook in respect to Walker's telling Thorsten about Oswald's supposed shot at him, since there is every indication that Liebler had CD 1543 in his possession at the time he questioned Walker. Evidently Liebler had some deep suspicions of his own about Walker, but perhaps did not want to throw down the gauntlet.

On the Abt matter, I suspect you are correct. I hadn't noticed CE 1937 at all, and I had dismissed CE 2073 too quickly. I would point out, however, that the Hosty, Bookhout, and Clements (CE 1991) reports on the 11/22 interrogations make no mention of Abt, whereas the Bookhout and Kelley reports on the Saturday morning interrogation do. Also, that there is no Jailer's Checkout Slip at the appropriate time on Friday and that the Assistant Jailer's affidavit (CE 1999) places Oswald's attempted call to Abt on Saturday afternoon. Further, that Fritz' testimony (4H215) seems to refer to remarks by Oswald (Smith Act and ACLU representative) made on the Saturday morning occasion as described by Bookhout and Kelley, and that the TV interviews of H. Louis Nichols (CE 2165) and Curry (CE 2150) seem to place Oswald's first request for Abt on Saturday.

One other oddity I just recently noticed: CE 833, p. 5, Q. 8, coupled with V. T. Lee Exh. 1, suggest that Oswald's mail was being intercepted (or at least read) in Dallas in April, 1963, i. e., not long after he supposedly acquired his guns and before he moved to New Orleans. That is much earlier than I had previously believed, and I suspect it carries some implications, but I'm not sure just what.

Sincerely,

Bob Smith