

2 June 1970

Mrs Mary Ferrell
4406 Holland
Dallas 75219

Dear Mary,

On reading your warm and hospitable letter of the 29th of May, my impulse was to telephone rather than reply by letter, so that I could have the pleasure of talking with you personally and trying to express some of the feeling I experienced. I am not a particularly sentimental person and the mixed experiences of the last six and a half years have taught me to be as stoic and sceptical as possible. But such kindness from a virtual stranger, or, rather, a new-found friend, makes me realize how much I need contact with someone whose obsession with the case makes it always a welcome subject--the kind of relationship I used to have with various fellow-critics until our irreconcilable views and Garrison caused the friendships to lapse into silence and some bitterness.

In any case, I tried several times without success to reach Dallas "information" (or "directory assistance" in current terminology)--phone service grows worse all the time--in order to obtain your number. Please send it when you write next, unless you prefer not to discuss the case by phone.

Truly, I am greatly tempted and attracted by your invitation. Let's both give it more thought. What I would really like would be to find someone to care for her royal feline highness, so that I could visit Dallas without the burden of finding fresh liver and (lord save us) calf lung and spleen, or worrying about temperature, water and kitty litter. And madame's asserted neuroses (she is terrified of new places and people, and the hint of another animal--even another cat--sends her almost into convulsions). Then, I have some neuroses of my own--I have been living alone for the best part of 20 years, and I don't know if any family household should be inflicted with what I suspect are now rather fixed pseudo-spinsterish quirks. (Before I malign myself unduly, let me cite the mitigating factor of a sense of humor and a capacity for fun, at least I recall such characteristics in the pre-11/22/63 epoch.) Probably I should not push my luck and should stay in a hotel, if I do come in August.

I am an indifferent housekeeper and a worse cook, relying often on the cuisine of a pizza parlor that delivers and a delicatessen that sends up marvelous roast beef sandwiches, as visiting critics have usually learned. But I have a 2-room single bedroom place, so no one has had to put up with me around the clock. Let us see how things fall into place when we come nearer to August. It would be a bonus to meet the Newcombs (I correspond occasionally with Fred, as you may know).

Turning to "business": Needless to say, I would be deeply grateful for the transcriptions, which would save me trying to do what you have already done and what I would never do as meticulously as your sample suggests. But please do not think about copying the individual cards, especially as I will be able to consult them if I do come to Dallas. (Later I might ask you to copy 3 or 4 cards, if I decide to make my own set using yours as a model.) If and when I ever write anything on the subject, you may be sure that you and Arch Kinbrough will be fully credited for any material you make available (Speaking of which, I enclose a copy of my recent Texas Observer article, also a letter to the author of a singular piece of recent trash.)

Nothing will ever convince me that the signals to and/or from Tippit are authentic; they simply do not make sense, as presented in the WR and the Exhibits, in any of the versions. I feel almost as strongly about the ostensible discovery of the jacket "by Westbrook" or in his presence, for reasons which I won't belabor. They are in my book anyhow. It is only natural that you don't remember every point in it; in fact, to my chagrin, I no longer remember very well what I wrote and have to keep going back to refresh my recollection. In so doing, I often run into facts that I have completely forgotten and now read as if for the first time---such as the unanswered signals from Tippit to the dispatcher at 1:03 pm, which appear in CE 705 but not in CE 1974 or other versions of the police radio tapes.

I am intrigued by what you say about Harold Weisberg. I have a soft spot in my heart for him, even though I have to concede that he can be obnoxious with or without provocation. My own relationship with him over the years since we were first in touch, in 1966, has been good, on the whole and is certainly pleasant and even cordial nowadays---perhaps because our contacts are now only occasional. I have enormous admiration for his original work, e.g., Whitewash, and for some of his later work, but not all of it, while finding myself greatly exasperated at times by his secrecy (which is not total but full of elaborate and mysterious hints) and his generally quarrelsome nature. He has done himself infinite harm by excesses of rhetoric, shoveling out huge doses of insult when a single, more subtle jab can do the job so much better. But, to return to the point of departure, I have a real affection for good Harold (I've not met his wife). (Nor have I met Fensterwald.)

Newman, to his credit, is about the only apologist for the WR who has really studied the 26 volumes, and who also writes really well and with professionalism. I am about 140 pages into his book and it is enough to make me really regret, as you do, that he is not in our camp. He is quite creative in his thinking and if Oswald was in fact a "lone assassin" (personally I don't think he is an assassin of anyone, with or without accomplices, including Walker) Newman's hypothesis would be far more persuasive and coherent than the ineffectual fumbblings of the WC. But since Newman's basic premise is completely fallacious, his whole theory is merely facile and irrelevant. And he does at times strain the known facts quite unfairly---for example, when he seeks to demonstrate that Oswald methodically tried to conceal his presence in Dallas. Newman cites his registration as "O.H.Lee" at the Beckley Street rooming house but carefully omits his use of his real name at Bledsoe's, and the possible relationship between his eviction there and his resort to a pseudonym with the next landlady. Or when he builds a fanciful symbolic explanation of the imaginary "Drittal" on anagrammatic grounds, but renders the name incorrectly as "Drietal," which makes his analysis ridiculous and suggests that his other games with numbers ("206" vs the 26th of July) and letters are no less pseudological.

No, I have never heard of Shirley Orr---I am intrigued by what you say about her work. It is reassuring and refreshing to find in 1970 that there are still "unknown" researchers busily at work. Great! As for secretiveness and exclusivity by some of our colleagues: I have had many heartaches in the past, because of having the obligation of secrecy imposed on me, by several over-anxious secrecy-addicts. I am a blabbermouth myself and upon making what seemed to me a "discovery" I would rush to the phone and call everyone who would listen, in wild excitement and hoping they would agree that it was an important find. I was taken aback a few times and it gave me a small spasm of resentment momentarily, I must admit, when my discovery turned up (in one case) as the work of Gaeton Fonzi and (in another case) of dear, dear Penn Jones. (He is not on speaking terms with me, for my DARING to speak of Garrison without sinking to one knee in reverence.

One "discovery", if it was that, came as a sudden flash, the kind that you might get when struggling to complete a poem if exactly the right word emerges like a cannonball from your tangled subconscious. I remember it so well! It was a Sunday afternoon in mid-1966, when I was mulling over some part of the C2766 evidence, and like a bolt of lightning it struck me that no rifle-cleaning paraphernalia had been discovered anywhere among Oswald's stuff. I called every man I knew who might know anything about rifles, their care and cleaning, and what one used to clean them, and was exhilarated when most of them agreed that, yes, it was a real anomaly and might be quite significant (especially when the sainted Marina had described him, cleaning the rifle a couple of months before it was mailed out by Klein's).

This item got into my book without first appearing elsewhere, but remained practically unnoticed. The discovery preempted by Fonzi (via Salandria) was the imposter-Secret-Service agent(s); while Penn preempted what I had told him about Olsen, moonlighting as an estate guard in Oak Cliff near the Tippit scene.

Well, enough of this self-praise. I must find a balance between modesty and false modesty. It is really a moment of self-indulgent nostalgia, for, to tell the truth, I haven't found a thing in a year or so and that worries me--as if I was defaulting on my duty or something like that.

This is garrulous enough for one letter! Again, Mary, heartfelt thanks.

Sincerely,

Lybia

*(and Allegra - the - Cat
thanks you, too)*