

Wednesday night 18.5.66

Darling Maggie,

Your long handwritten letter was waiting when I arrived home from the office and truly, it made me very happy. You sound so good! It made me realize also how much I miss our first-stage correspondence of last summer, which of recent months has been impossible for each of us, in terms of available time, thanks to the new momentum of events. I had forgotten how closely your thinking reflects my own, and how perfectly you express yourself, so that it is a pleasure to read you, not only for the substance but for the absolute fidelity between idea and phrase.

I think I will divide this reply into two parts—first, comments on your letter of the 16th, and second, a brief report on developments since I last wrote, which I believe was just a week ago tonight.

No: I am not surprised that your commitment to the case remains compelling. It was never a sometime-thing for you, and never will be, and I suspect that neither you nor I will ever let up until the case is truly closed, and the whole truth spread out for the world to see, whatever the truth may be.

About Vince's burst bubble: Maggie, I probably would not say this to anyone in the world but you, but since I trust you completely, I have to admit that in my heart-of-hearts I believe that Vince was careless, carried away too violently and impetuously even to listen. As I wrote you last week, he told me his incredible news on a Tuesday at midnight, and I was so uneasy that I called him back the next evening, to make sure that he had taken into account the shirt comparison that was freely discussed in the H&E, including Shaneyfelt Exhibit No. 24. He said he had, and he said it rather impatiently, so I didn't press him any further. But let me clarify—it was not that he confused the Altgens photo with Shaneyfelt No. 24. What happened, and where he was misled, is that the WC, with its usual promiscuity toward evidence, attached the label "Yarborough Exhibit A" both to the Altgens photo, and to the entire Saturday Evening Post article in which the Altgens photo, and other photos, appeared. However, that is nowhere made clear except in Shaneyfelt's testimony in Volume XV, page 694, when Redlich states, "For purposes of identification, the photograph appearing in Yarborough Exhibit A has been designated as Commission Exhibit No. 1797, since Yarborough Exhibit A consists of the entire Saturday Evening Post article."

When Vince found in the archives an FBI report saying that the shirt worn by Oswald in Yarborough Exhibit A, page 26, was the same as the shirt worn by Oswald in G. Hill Exhibit or something like that (being a photograph of Oswald in the Dallas Police building elevator, wearing the shirt that looks quite the same as the "doorway" shirt on the so-called Lovelady), he leaped recklessly to his almost-fatal assumption. He knew that the Altgens photo was on page 24 of the SEP; but insisted that it was an error in the FBI report—that the FBI wrote "26" when it meant "24"...but that I did not even know until after I had discovered Redlich's statement, which in itself seemed to me to destroy Vince's case. I don't blame him for failing to take account of Redlich's statement, maybe he had never even read that part of the testimony—but I do think he was too facile, first, in assuming that there was a mistake in the page number, without even checking page 26 of the SEP article, where he would surely have noticed a photo of Oswald in the same shirt; and second, for ignoring the fact that the FBI report referred to the shirt as worn by Oswald in what Vince assumed was the Altgens photo. Since the identity of the man in the doorway was in dispute, the report—had it referred to that photo, as Vince assumed—would have said something like, the shirt on the man in the doorway thought by some to be Oswald...etc. In fact, the FBI report merely aims to prove that the shirt Oswald wore under arrest, whether in the jail or the theater, I forget which, was the same as the shirt in the FBI's possession. When all this is said, it still remains true that anyone might have made the same error, because of the use of "Yarborough Exhibit A" to designate a whole, and one of its parts, without

the smallest indication in the caption or the table of contents in Volume XXI that the identifying label was doing double duty.

I am not going to exhibit false modesty about the importance of finding the error in time—if that was the only contribution I made, or will ever make, I will still feel that it was a great deal. Arnoni, incidentally, has been completely generous, and delivered himself of such a prolonged tribute to my "logic" that he nearly embarrassed me...more of that later.

In your comments on Dave Lifton, you absolutely pinpoint what I have been thinking and wondering. Every word you say on the subject is exactly right—objective, responsible, perceptive, and fair. In his long and somewhat ebullient letter announcing this development, Dave had indicated that he would be going to Dallas for Ramparts. I shuddered slightly at the vision of him barging around without inhibition, and flooding information indiscriminately to those whom he encountered or sought out—in short, I felt the same anxiety and foreboding as you. However, on Sunday I had a phonecall from Welsh, from Dallas, and Lifton was not with him.

Interruption: At this point Welsh called again, now from San Francisco, telling me briefly the various dead-ends he ran into in Dallas; that he has an appointment tomorrow with Liebeler; and that they are now ready to start writing the issue. Maggie, the more I hear, the more worried I become—they haven't left much time for the actual writing, and still don't have a really good grasp of the case. But Welsh is keeping me in the picture, maybe any major errors can be caught in time.

Continuing—I feel very uneasy about Lifton; he is young, with unseasoned judgment, and too damned extraverted for comfort—This is a serious business, the stakes are indeed high, and it is all too clear that one misstep can be utterly disastrous—and, as you say, the recent episode provides heavy ammunition for anyone who wants to discredit Ramparts through Lifton. One of the greatest anxieties is that Lifton had that episode; Manchester; I won't even count that poor man George Thomson, who was way off the rails from the first; and now, I'm sorry to say, I am beginning to worry about Harold Weisberg, who seems increasingly obsessional and slightly paranoid at times—but who has found some defects which were otherwise overlooked and which constitute a real contribution to the discrediting of the WR. He has done a private printing of his book (Whitewash, available by request to Weisberg \$4.95, address, Hyattstown, Md. 20734), which is badly-written and very badly presented (tiny print, single space, minimal margins, no spacing between paragraphs, a real abuse of the eye). I was astonished to receive a copy in the mail on Saturday, without a covering note, or any advance notice that he was even planning to do this.

I think Weisberg panicked when he realized that Epstein, Lane, and Sawage would have their books out by October. He has very grandiose notions about his own book and wanted very much to be "first." His great failing is his utter obsession with his own work, so that he is barely aware of the existence of many other researchers—whether or not they have published—nor aware that many of us have made parallel discoveries, including some he has overlooked. He just takes it for granted that his is THE book—what is even worse, he takes it for granted that everyone feels the same way, and is just panting to hear every last detail of his negotiations with publishers and editors, etc., in short, that he is the Center of the Universe, and we are all present merely to admire and assist him. The sad thing is that he is not malicious, ugly, or savage—merely childish, naive, and pathetic in his total self-absorption. But the net result is that he is without consideration for others, gives no one credit, and finds it hard to remember the very existence of others, except as adjuncts to himself.

Maggie, many thanks for the photocopy of the article on the Lane and Epstein books. I had not seen it. My confidence in Epstein's book is so great that I invested a goodly sum in press clipping service, effective yesterday, in anticipation of a flood of reviews, articles, interviews, and stories which I expect to follow publication. As for Lane—everything I hear about him is so ugly and disgusting and vile that I am now convinced that he is a truly evil and monstrous creature. Not only in the context of the case—but the other night I heard about some of his performances long before 11/22/63, in civil rights and civil liberties cases, which served to corroborate the ugly reports of his behavior in more recent months. In addition to attempted theft and blackmail, he has also plagiarized whole-hog a whole chapter written by someone else, as the victim can document in absolute and irrefutable terms.

When the press clippings start coming in, I'll try to figure out some way to be sure that you get to see everything of importance. The book-clerk that told you that Epstein's book will blow the lid off was not exaggerating, Maggie—I, too, am on needles of impatience, even though I have already read it, and you must promise ~~me~~ here and now to phone me the minute you have read it and tell me what you think. Be sure to get the Atlantic Monthly, July issue, I think it will have an article on Ed's book; also, I think the New York Review of Books will have a write-up on a group of books on the WR, but I don't know when.

I love the way everyone is seizing credit for the FBI report actually found and published by Salandria! Weisberg, who learned about Salandria's article and the excerpt from the FBI report from me, just as he was about to leave New York for home, hot-footed it to the Archives instead, read the FBI report, wrote a "post script" chapter which he tacked on to his book, as if it was his own discovery, without the smallest hint that Salandria had any role at all. This really shocked me—and maybe Weisberg is not so naive as I said a few paragraphs ago—for he then sent me a copy of a letter he had dispatched to Lane's publisher, in which he disputed Lane's claim to being first with the FBI report. It is almost hilarious to see one pirate accusing the other, while the real "finder" Vince, whose self-abnegation sometimes seems cloying, sturdily maintains an attitude of non-resentment and unconcern.

On Saturday I was invited to the Arnonis for dinner, mainly because Vince was to be there too; and we had quite a good day of conversation, all around, but had to get off the WR when some other guests, with other interests, arrived. That was the occasion for Arnoni's tribute to my undeviating, pure logic and other extravagances, which I mentioned earlier. I discovered during that evening, by the way, that Vince's intimates sometimes refer to him as "St. Vincent," to his great irritation; but I must say that I sympathize with them, though with affection.

(I see that I am mixing the two parts that I planned to keep separate, sorry.)

Your inferences re Brown and Root are exactly the same as Shirley Martin's, who wrote to me in the very same vein at some length, not long ago. It is exactly the kind of thing that must be gone into very carefully in the real investigation, which is still to take place, and which may well become a reality sooner than we might have expected.

Now, briefly, on the developments since I last wrote, most of which I have already mentioned. Joe Lobenthal called, after a very long mutual silence, saying that he has finally approached the completion of the script for the "readings." I had more or less crossed the whole project off the list; but it seems that he and the producer are still passionately interested and intend to go ahead. I am g to get a copy, if one becomes available, or to attend a "dry run" (more likely, take part in one—he thinks I will do well as Mrs Markham, and who would not? She has such fertile testimony!) Yes, all I need as an extra-extra-curricular activity is to go on the stage! Even for one dry-run, it seems utterly hilarious and fantastic, as still another strange new demand imposed by this indescribable case.

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Forgot to mention one odd thing Walsh mentioned in the phonecall that interrupted this letter—he said that Penn Jones had ordered a whole slew of copies of my index, but was unable to tell me why Penn should need more than one. A minor mystery. Incidentally, I still haven't heard a peep from Penn—it is now months since he became mute. I wonder why?

Just a few items of non-WR news, none of it very pleasant, except one item—my niece of 18 will be married on June 8th, and maybe I will even manage to buy a dress for the occasion. (I am almost resenting the loss of a day, even for so worthy an event—which I would not admit to anyone but you, Maggie, since I suspect you are equally fanatic.) The other items—an acquaintance of mine in the building where I live was found dead this morning. I am friendly with her roommate, and greatly distressed for her, as this was surely a terrible nightmare (there is every evidence that it was a suicide, climaxing fairly serious depression and lethargy which developed in recent weeks). Also, Allegra the cat and amateur investigator's ideal companion became quite ill on Sunday; by Monday she was worse and I was frantic; called the vet; he gave injections. I had hoped she would be okay by now but she is far from her normal self, though no longer heaving and upchucking all over the rugs, and I remain anxious about her.

Maggie, dear, I am flagging, and I see that it is past midnight. I will quit now...I think I've covered all the news anyhow...My complete love and affection to you, friend and ally—And if you will forgive an effrontery, I just have to say it, Maggie—I am proud of you. You are a truly wonderful person, in every way, and I treasure our closeness.