

6 August 1967

Dear Maggie,

I was just toying with the dial of the phone when I realized that I really had nothing much to report, not enough to warrant a call...so I decided to ramble a bit on paper...Back to the office last Monday, to find the expected stacks and stacks of papers, but also the unexpected surprise of a raise, upon completion of 20 years of service...The office is at one-quarter of normal staff...but it is very quiet, and even those of us who are on duty are not taxed by the trickle of traffic...and it is a joy to have access to the xerox machine again.

Dick Sprague asked me to have dinner with him last Monday night and this time I went to his place, the University Club, so I could see the DCA film and some of his photographic finds. Each time I see Sprague, a sense of fondness and confidence in him surfaces, together with the realization that I have not quite remembered his face or his personality during the interval between our previous meeting. He is not forceful or distinct, yet he is very likeable and somehow very vulnerable, on the purely personal level. This time he told me a little bit more about his personal situation, and it aroused all my sympathy. He is trying to get a divorce from a woman who has been unstable for 17 years of their 21-year marriage—even deranged. She is absolutely adamant in refusing to divorce him; worse still, she is aware that he wants to marry again, and is harassing and threatening the woman in question, and her children by a former marriage. (This is, of course, absolutely between you and me.) Need I even mention that this is notwithstanding some 16 years of pilgrimage to a head-stringer? I think Dick has become immersed in his pursuit of the photographic evidence just to get some relief from his oppressive personal dilemma, and he has undeniably done important and valuable work in digging up hitherto-unknown photo/film evidence.

When it comes to interpretation of this material, I cannot summon up great enthusiasm. Not that he is in any way a Lifter, dominated by a sick or deranged imagination that sees absurdities as probability or even reality. Dick sees what is actually there, but on quite slender evidence he builds far more than the structure can support. For example, he has turned up a photo taken between 8 and 10:30 a.m. on 11/22/63 which shows the whole Depository in the background. One window is open, on the 6th floor. Two men are at the window, hardly more than blobs, one of whom is wearing a bright red shirt. I suppose two of the crew took a smoking break, or just goofed off, or something like that; but Dick postulates the 2 assassins examining the window with a view to poking a rifle or a decoy rifle out. Taking it a step further, he says one of the men resembles Oswald. But both men seem unidentifiable to my eye. Dick, however, thinks that one is holding a clipboard. Shades of Jona Harris!

I did see, quite clearly, in the DCA film Billy Lovelady, "outside" the Depository after the shooting, wearing a checked long-sleeved shirt, a kind of mauve-red and royal-blue plaid. Penn has seen the actual shirt and says it is red and black with a blue line. The color film seems not to be absolutely identical with the actual colors of objects—in one sequence, the road pavement looks distinctly blue, rather than the lead-gray one expects. Although the photo-buffs are wildly excited about finding this film of Lovelady and insist that the shirt cannot be the shirt in the doorway, it seems to me that we have clearly lost ground, in getting Lovelady into long rather than short sleeves, and into a plaid rather than a wide-stripe shirt.

... (over)

So far as I know, Vince is still in New Orleans, but Sprague has a dinner invitation with him in Philadelphia on Tuesday, so I guess he will be back in 2 more days at the most. Needless to say, I am intensely interested to hear his assessment of what is going on there. I've had an indirect report, not from Vince himself, to the effect that after going through all the evidence he concluded that there was little in the way of a case against Clay Shaw.

Arnoni has been going through a difficult period, largely as a result of his financial crisis, but also because his lease is up in a few months and he must look for another house... Did you know that Barney Robin came here in May, to work for me in promotion of sales and subscriptions? He is another casualty of an unhappy domestic situation, although apparently he is chronically pessimistic and negative in personality. I am very much afraid that the arrangement is not working out, in terms of results, and may prove to be still another problem for Arnoni.

Of course, Arnoni makes or encourages some of his problems, as he would probably be the first to admit... He is inclined to be belligerent, perhaps because he is always examining himself suspiciously for signs of hypocrisy or compromise... he can be didactic and tactless in his manner, alienating people whose views are really very close to his own views. For example, he and Bob Dickens met here, once, and Bob took a strong dislike to Arnoni. This created a serious dilemma for me, because I wanted Bob to ask Arnoni to provide a jacket quote for the book... I almost had to blackmail him into sending a letter asking for a quote... and when he finally sent it, his lack of enthusiasm or cordiality was so apparent to Arnoni that he simply decided to do nothing. He realizes that regardless of Bob's feelings, I do want his name on the jacket, but that is not enough to overcome his reaction. Who is in the middle? Me, of course. I am greatly indebted to both Arnoni and Dickens, and am heart sick at the thought of offending either of them... but more especially, Arnoni, for whom I have an empathy born of being burdened with many of the same personality traits which tend to isolate and alienate him even from those he loves most and respects and needs. I have mellowed—I form a grudge less readily, and I hold it less adamantly... I even called my niece's husband one night, after more than a year of total non-communication, because I was a little worried when she did not answer the phone in their summer house... It turned out that she had gone to a drive-in movie, and everything was all right... But ten years ago or so, I would not have called her husband regardless of circumstances... I was glad I did, because he was thoughtful and considerate, and I don't want this alienation to continue forever, it isn't warranted despite what happened last year.

And if I have a special predisposition and protectiveness toward Arnoni, I have to admit that it springs also from a guilt feeling—guilt that he was in a concentration camp while I was safe, well-fed, and more preoccupied with dates and personal affairs than with the fate of people who were then undergoing the ultimate in horror and despair. A few weeks ago I saw Arnoni for the first time in a short-sleeved shirt, which revealed the hideous number on his forearm. I felt inundated with the realization that it was only a geographical accident that had left my arm without a number, or even a living limb. It is not my fault that I escaped or that he did not—it is not my fault that the woman who cleans my apartment was born with a black skin, and I not. I am not hastening to assume responsibility where I am not responsible; yet, how does one feel really detached and really blameless, for what fellow human-beings have had to endure? You and I have a special empathy in this respect, I think; I remember how you reacted merely to hearing about some of the problems I had during childhood. I think your eyes filled up... So I feel certain that you do understand what I am trying to say, rather clumsily...