

21 October 1965

Dear Maggie,

Thank you so much for your over-generous and very welcome letter. I am so very pleased that my critique was helpful and may save you some effort. Unfortunately I cannot find the carbon copy--is it possible that I did not make one?--but I am sure it didn't really merit the thanks you expressed. I am most interested in your meeting with Buchanan, and I feel sure it is a real service to him to have your account of what has been brewing on this side of the ocean. Oddly enough, after than Sunday I did not hear a word from any of the guests. I did receive a reply from Ed Epstein to my letter pursuing the failure of the police to send a search party to the window; he politely said, "I agree with your conclusion that the time lapse in finding the rifle indicates that the police were preoccupied elsewhere," which of course is NOT my conclusion at all; and then proceeded to ask me to help him with a chapter he is working on by giving him references to witnesses whose observations indicated a different source of the shots, or two assassins, and asking me also for "any insights" I could give on the stretcher bullet and the Tague hit. In spite of my irritation, I did send him a long list of citations pointing to the grassy knoll or to a fleeing man or men, and, with some trepidation, sent him my own chapters on the stretcher bullet and the bullet mark on the curb. On balance, I decided it was more important to strengthen his attack on the WC than to protect my manuscript. I am finally beginning to think well of my MS, thanks to the events of last night, to which I will now proceed.

I phoned Isabel last night and she asked if I had seen the Fox book. Is it anything like the Cook book, asked I. No, she said, it is a book called "The Unanswered questions about the Assassination of President Kennedy," by a man named Sylvan Fox, a paperback she had noticed in a drugstore by sheer chance. In a paroxysm of excitement I immediately rushed over to her place and appropriated the book, rushed back home again, and sat down greedily with my prize. After reading 30 pages, I was so elated--needless to say, elated by the author's dissatisfaction with the Warren Report, the WC's conclusions, and the WC's composition, staff, methods, procedures, attitude, etc--that I nearly called you in Paris. I had been experiencing a period of anticlimax after than Sunday symposium, struggling with lethergy and unable to do any meaningful work. This was just the shot in the arm I needed, and I felt exhilarated and recharged. So I decided to call the author if I could--and checking the phonebook I discovered that he lives on WEST 12 STREET, perhaps a block or two east of me!!! He was not in, but I had a chat with his wife and left my name and phone numbers. Here is a review of the book, which is somewhat overgenerous. After speaking to Mrs Fox, I decided to share my elation with the others, those I could reach, so that they could rush out and buy copies. I spoke briefly with Sauvage, Salandria, Stamm, Bill Crehan, and Lobenthal. All were pleased to hear about this auspicious event for our side; but Lobenthal and I got on to Viet Nam and that was not a very happy experience for me. Again, as with his initial attitude on the WR, he was excessively detached and neutral--trying to equalize the guilt for all the suffering, atrocities, and destruction--as if by ANY yardstick one could absolve those who are wholly and horrifyingly guilty--and I was reaching a boiling point. Fortunately the hour was so late that I suggested we adjourn the discussion, which we did; and I then returned to the book. From that point onwards, it went downhill--not in terms of his attitude, which continued to be very critical of the WC, but in terms of his surprisingly superficial scholarship. For example, he discusses the Mauser in the same terms as we might have discussed it 18 months ago, making no mention of Boone or his testimony that Fritz called the rifle a Mauser. He makes the now-inexcusable error of treating James Martin as a single person who links Senator (and Ruby through him) with Marina--when the justification for such a mistaken notion, which resulted from the carelessness of the WR, disappeared with the publication of the H & E. He has nothing whatever that is new in the way of information, discovery, or interpretation; and wastes three or four chapters in mere narrative, paraphrasing the WR's version of the sequence of events or the backgrounds of the principals, with little or no analytical content. But you will read it for yourself when you return--I am afraid to mail it to Paris for fear it will not arrive in time to reach you.

Another book which you must read when you return is the latest Rex Stout detective story (Nero Wolfe), titled "The Doorbell Rang". Isabel irritated me (how often I use that word!) by insisting that I read it, which I thought was very frivolous and indifferent to my heavy calendar. But how grateful I was that she had insisted! The whole book revolves about the FBI, which is the absolute bad-guy of the plot, with Fred Cook's book as the springboard for the subsequent events! I could hardly believe my own eyes. That anyone should make so fearless an attack on the sacredest of cows AND get published seemed incredible. But it is true. When I mentioned that book to Sauvage last night and urged him to read it, he told me that he knows Rex Stout (they are both members of the Baker Street Irregulars!) and I hinted that he should find out how Stout feels about the WR and maybe enlist his razor brain and considerable prestige in our collective work. (I am delighted to learn that Sauvage did write to you.)

Maggie dear, I think this exhausts my news—I am not certain, but surely I would not have forgotten anything of major importance. Unfortunately I am incubating a migraine again, this time because of sheer bad temper about a petty contretemps at the office tonight—an infuriating if insignificant incident, to which I am dreaming up a diabolical counterattack.

But I will not close without telling you that I am a carbon copy of the feelings you expressed at the end of your letter, and look upon you as a very dear all-purpose friend in addition to a most valued co-worker and colleague; and that in spite of getting off to a bad start because of my ill-timed headache, I felt that we parted later that week with complete warmth, compatibility, and spontaneity—which makes me very happy, for it is infrequently that I feel so unreserved and uncomplicated affection and confidence for anyone, being, alas, critical and intolerant by nature.

With much love,