

14 August 1978

Dear Sylvia,

I am writing to tell you of a potentially very important development in my investigation into the murder of Officer Tippit. I share it with you alone, knowing I can trust you not to mention it to anyone at this time, and also to get your advice on how I should proceed in developing the information I now have. It concerns what I perceive to be the probable reason Tippit was present on the street where he died, so far from his assigned patrol district.

When I first telephoned you several months ago we discussed this aspect of the case, and I told you that I had ascertained that Tippit was involved with a waitress at Austin's Barbeque, where he worked weekends. This woman was married but reportedly was separated from her husband at the time; according to one rumor which I have been unable to verify, the woman had a child fathered by Tippit. She is still employed as a cashier at Austin's. When investigators for the Assassinations Committee came to Dallas a few weeks after our conference in Washington, I gave them the information and they interviewed the woman; I don't know the results of that interview.

Recently, an acquaintance of mine who knows Austin Cook related to me details of a conversation he had with Cook several years ago. This person was told by Cook that Tippit in fact had been involved with two waitresses who worked in the restaurant; both women have the same last name. The second waitress also was married but apparently separated from her husband. But here is the important, perhaps key development: today I was able to confirm what I had been told by Cook's friend: that in November, 1963, the second woman lived in an apartment on East 10th Street, less than one block from where Tippit was shot.

Perhaps you aren't as stunned as I am over this news, but I'm sure you'll agree that it's deemed important. At the very least it accounts for Tippit's presence in that neighborhood; at the most it could be the key to the murder.

Too, it could be the reason for a Dallas Police cover-up of misbehavior on Tippit's part and what we believe to be horseplay with the radio tapes. By his own admission, DPD radio dispatcher Murray Jackson was one of Tippit's oldest and closest friends. That being the case, he probably was aware that his buddy was seeing this waitress who lived on 10th Street-- and this would explain why, when P.E. Bowley used Tippit's radio to notify police of the shooting and told them it was on E. 10th, Jackson immediately began calling 78 (Tippit), although he should have had no reason to believe Tippit was in the area or the shot officer. This, I feel, is the tip-off that something was amiss. Afterward, of course, it conceivably would have been little problem in getting Jackson to participate in fabricating the 12:45 order sending Tippit into central Oak Cliff in order to provide an innocent explanation for Tippit's presence in the neighborhood where he died; good buddy Jackson, I imagine, would have done it to avoid the pain and embarrassment to Tippit's widow and children.

Obviously the possible implications here are tremendous. I'm not quite sure how to proceed with the information I have. The name of the waitress appears in the 1976 city directory, but there is no address given. I'm advised that Austin Cook would likely give me a rude and possibly hostile reception if I approached him. I'm reluctant to approach the other waitress who still works at Austin's-- it's a hell of a sensitive subject-- but I suppose I have no alternative; I don't know where she lives, and if I try to talk with her at Austin's she might raise hell and have Austin throw me out. I feel sure that any of Tippit's best friends I could talk with, like Bill Anglin, would deny any allegation about Tippit's involvement with women. I'm trying to track down the couple who in 1963 managed the apartment building on 10th Street where the waitress lived; I've been unable to locate any of the other tenants from that time. I'd really like to know your thoughts on this and your opinion as to how I should handle it. You know, really, this may be really big; I've got to be very careful because this just might be the key to the truth of the Tippit murder. Hell, maybe-- just maybe-- if I could locate the right people and get them to talk, it just might be possible to identify the man (or men) who shot Tippit. As sensitive and as potentially explosive as this development may be, I can't play games-- this is deadly serious business. Please let me know how you feel about this.

Also, I'd like for us to put our heads together and see if we can come up with some reasonable explanation for all this funny business with CE 162, the jacket. Sylvia, I'm convinced that the police did find a jacket near the Tippit murder site on the afternoon of Nov. 22. I base that on (1) a broadcast on the Sheriff's Department radio between 1:31 - 1:33: "Report from City radio just now that jacket has been found at scene. Probably won't have a jacket on." (17 H 377). (2) the special late evening edition of the Dallas Times Herald on Nov. 22 has a story with the headline, "JFK, Patrolman Killing Linked"; that story quotes police officers as saying that a white jacket had been recovered near the scene of the Tippit shooting. Thus, I think it's apparent that they did find a jacket that day. But why all the confusion, discrepancies and so forth where the jacket is concerned? Why does no one want the credit for finding it? Why was there no mention of a jacket by police spokesman when they were constantly rattling off details of the evidence being gathered against Oswald? Why didn't police send the jacket, as they did Oswald's shirt, to the FBI on Friday night/Saturday morning?

Several possibilities come to my mind. I think it quite possible that when Oswald was arrested, police found he had a jacket with him, lying in the seat next to his. I think it even more likely that the police did trace both the laundry marks and the tag, and discovered that their white garment in fact belonged to someone other than their suspect. From my military police experience (or, more correctly, my training) and from conversations I've had with MPs I served with who have joined civilian police forces, it is clear that commercial laundry markings on clothing play very important roles in investigations. The ID bureaus of all law enforcement agencies in all large cities maintain extensive and updated files on the types of laundry marks used by each commercial cleaner in that agency's jurisdiction. I feel certain the police were able to trace the markings on the white jacket, and that the result prompted their silence and their withholding the garment from the FBI. In the Warren Commission's terminology, it is conceivable, even probable that by the afternoon of Nov. 23 at the latest, the Dallas Police knew the identity of the man who killed J.D. Tippit. Several months later, either the FBI likewise traced the markings, established the true ownership and covered up the result, or, were really unable to trace the markings because the Dallas Police by that time had confiscated the cleaner's copy of the receipt and/or other documents which might lead to the owner's identification.

It seems apparent that somewhere along the way, a switch in jackets made; I doubt CE 162 was the garment found on Nov. 22. But you would think that if police found it necessary to switch jackets, it would have been little or no problem in substituting a jacket Oswald actually did own. Could CE 162 have come from the police property room? It would have required little effort to attach the laundry tag and paint on the markings. But again, why use a jacket that could not be conclusively proven to be Oswald's? This jacket business leaves me more than a little baffled; I've given it a great deal of thought in the past year, and I still don't know what to make of it. What are your thoughts, Sylvia? Are you still inclined to believe that originally there was no jacket, and that the radio transmissions might have been fabricated after Nov. 22? Is it probable there was a switch in garments? I would really like to have your thoughts on this matter.

That's about all I have for now. I look forward to hearing your opinions on the two areas I've discussed in this letter. And I will really, really appreciate your taking the time to help me with it. I can't tell you how highly I value your opinions and advice. Thank you for taking the time. I will be in touch by letter and phone.

Very warm regards,

P.S. The title of my proposed book will be,
November 22, 1963: The Other Unsolved Murder
(subtitle: A Dallas Citizen's Inquiry Into the
Murder of Officer J.D. Tippit).

