

19 July 1968

Dear Sylvia:

Thank you for the note letting me know you got the tape alright. Another thanks for the copy of your letter to Mr. Epstein; it let me know I am not alone in my confusion and dismay.

As you must know by now, you did just fine on the radio program. No doubt you thought of other things you wish you had said but I am very pleased with it. You need never have been concerned about disappointing me. You will also be pleased to know I have had a number of phone calls from listeners who asked that their appreciation be conveyed to you.

When you phoned after the program you did sound so depressed and I am always so inadequate at such a time. At the time I put it down to your being tired from the work you had done that day but on thinking it over I realize it was more than that. When you said you wanted to get away for a few days this week I very nearly said to come here and then realized how far it is. Too bad New York isn't closer to St. Petersburg. Anyway, consider yourself welcome whenever you are within a more reasonable distance.

The more I read the article on Garrison, the more disturbed I became. There are points that are not in keeping with what I think I understand. The prints on the rifle, for one. There was entirely too much doubt about the palm print - whether or not it had actually been found on the rifle.

The entire article, while damaging to Garrison, is more what would be expected from a member of the Commission. Two reactions I have heard here indicate the belief that one of the critics has now seen the error of his ways and is now condemning all the other critics. Both individuals were elated.

This reminded me of Harold Weisberg's remarks about Epstein and the "assistance" he enjoyed while writing Inquest, remarks I had more or less dismissed. There is a lot more wrong with the Warren Commission Report than mere failure to dot and cross. Yet the article on Garrison would leave the uninformed with an impression that the Report reflected a few minor oversights but was otherwise acceptable.

Only one possibility comes to mind. I can find nothing at all in the entire article that Garrison could turn to his own advantage, not even disagreement with the Report. It may be this was the intent. But the effect is to damn all critics although his only reference to you was as one who also tried to "correct the mistakes of the critics".

I know you had expected more of the article than it gave and I am familiar with the disappointment you must feel. I hope the reply to your letter to Epstein will be to your satisfaction. If it is not, better to know now than later.

Mr. Epstein is concerned that Clay Shaw might be found guilty if he stands trial. If he does not, if the trial is prevented, there will always be many who will be convinced of his guilt. There will be more who will have some doubt. It seems to me the only way for Mr. Shaw to be cleared completely is through the courts.



Epstein seems to fear that Garrison could present his "evidence" convincingly to a judge and jury. This might be true if there were not individuals like you who could testify for the defense. Wouldn't he also be willing to offer his own knowledge of Garrison's methods to Mr. Shaw?

There is another item in the article about which I would like to comment. That is the question of Oswald's connection with the U-2 program. Some time ago I was talking with a man who had been in the Marines at the time Oswald went to Russia. He told me he had never taken time to read any of the books or study the controversy over the Warren Commission Report. He did state that it was common knowledge in his outfit that Oswald was "in a U-2 outfit" and had knowledge that could be harmful if divulged to the Russians. He said they were also aware of Oswald's clearance classification, that it was "up near the top". According to this man, there was conjecture as to the meaning of the episode and how it could happen that a man with Oswald's knowledge of sensitive matters was able to go to Russia under the strange circumstances described. The feeling at the time was that Oswald had been on some kind of assignment and was not a mere defector.

There are several other things that make me wonder if Epstein may have been so bent on discrediting Garrison that he was willing to discredit the WR critics to do so. I could never agree that the Report is the lesser of the two evils.

I have sent Steffen Sorensen a copy of your letter to Epstein and I am sure he will have some very interesting comments, comments that could come from no one but Steffen. He can always find the weakest point and will continue to poke at it from all angles until it no longer holds up.

Recently some friends in California wrote asking about your attitude toward Jim Garrison and asked if I could give the reason. I suggested that they write to you since I know my limitations when it comes to explaining for another person and this is an important subject. I just do not feel capable and I had promised you I would not quote you or repeat your comments without first asking. I asked them to mention my name in writing to you so you will know how it came about.

It is very hot here - a typical Florida summer - and we are not air-conditioned. Except for the middle of the night, it is nearly impossible to concentrate upon any task and I would not like to risk the anger of neighbors by banging a typewriter while they are sleeping. Add to that our location in the thunder-storm capitol of the world and my fear of lightning - reinforced by having been flattened by it on two occasions in the past - and you will understand why I have not written sooner. A fan makes the heat more bearable but it also produces a paper storm that is a little irritating.

Please do not become too despondent. As you said, there is so much to be done and you are a vital member of the fighters. Always know you have a friend here.

As ever,

*Helen*

cc: Steffen