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22 March 1968

Dear David:

Thank you for your letter of the 17th and enclosures. The spoof on Weisberg was delightful and may yet come true. It arrived at a particularly poignant moment, which made me enjoy it all the more--that is (and please regard this as absolutely confidential), just as I was struggling through one of his ready-to-be-published manuscripts, which Harold has done me the honor of offering me a chance to read. All of his advance "raves" notwithstanding, it has very little in the way of the explosive new material he led me to expect, and is a kind of extended commercial for his earlier works. The style is the familiar but inimitable quintessence of outrage and invective, sustained at book-length, stuffed with "He did not DARE!"s and the other standard phrases of Weisbergia. It is Whitewash all over again, with a few new crumbs, and overflowing with self-praise. Please, this is strictly between us, David, since Harold would go up in smoke for much less than having any reason to think that I mentioned his ms.

I am delighted to know that you were able to prepare the 398 pages, as we discussed, and will send you a check the moment you let me know the amount. Which reminds me--Ruth Fortel mentioned recently that she receives a kind of newsletter from you from time to time. I was surprised to hear that and wondered why I was not on your mailing list too. I knew about the one mailing, for which you had sent me a chart indicating who got which items, but I did not realize that there were subsequent mailings. Perhaps I misunderstood her, but if not, I'd like to receive anything mailed that I did not already receive from you, if convenient.

A lot of Finck's testimony was published in the New Orleans States-Item for 24 and 25 February 1969, in verbatim transcript. It is not complete, of course, but includes many of his damaging admissions about the presence of military/naval brass and their directives to the autopsy surgeons. I don't know the chances of getting a full transcript. Weisberg said in one of his letters that he would try to get it, as he did not think that Garrison had the money, which seemed rather strange: first, because I would think that as DA he would routinely and automatically get the full transcript of any trial he conducted; and, second, because Harold is always, but always, bemoaning his lack of cash and his huge debts and his inability to publish several finished books for lack of funds. I have no direct contact with Shaw's lawyers and I have no idea whether they would be cooperative. I'll keep your interest in the Finck transcript in mind, and will let you know if I run into any helpful information or suggestions.

With these items out of the way, let me turn now to the main subject of your letter--the Newcomb/Marcus imbroglio re the Zapruder film. I am really saddened and appalled by the whole thing. Perhaps I have been naive in my view of Ray--but he never tried to run you down to me, not in any premeditated or malicious way, though he did indicate that the two of you had had many clashes and mutual irritation. Still, I felt, perhaps mistakenly, that he retained a basic warmth and friendliness toward you. I continue to feel that Ray is pig-headed to the extreme, and that the advent of Garrison has exacerbated his poor judgment and his ruthlessness in pursuit of what he thinks is right. Newcomb was terribly misguided in calling Ray, as he did, to "steal" the Z. film. It is another example of the cops-and-robbers approach to this case which has typified the behavior of many of the Garrison-connected "critics." Ray's stated reasons for refusing to return the film seem like an echo of Vince Wecht, who is furious about it, says that Vince persuaded Garrison to wire the Justice Dept. and withdraw the subpoena for the autopsy photos and X-rays, just as they seemed on the verge of being made available to Wecht for examination in Washington, with the argument that they were a "plant" and that the Government had laid a trap. Ray and Vince, who have hardly been omniscient in the past (Vince, indeed, has made repeated errors which brought us to the brink of disaster more than once--his frightful mistake about the doorway photo, his long pursuit of Baganov, his gullibility when approached by transparent fakes and provocateurs), have no diffidence in pronouncing, and enforcing, what will "hurt the case," and thus obstructing genuine research by competent people. It is abominable.

I do not think that Salandria is likely to be helpful with Ray, since he has taken an identical stand on the autopsy photos and has blocked a promising effort to get them released to Wecht. In fact, it is possible that Salandria put the whole idea in Ray's head, of a "plant" and a "trap." As for any intervention by me, I think it would be the opposite of helpful. Apparently I am considered guilty by association with Thompson, Sauvage, and (in the past) Epstein; and any appeal by me would probably harden Ray in his refusal.

By the way, the Field daughter is a student at Haverford and introduced herself to Tink Thompson. He met her again recently and she told him that she had had dinner at the Salandrias, and how Vince was just overcome by the beauty, courage, integrity and honesty of Garrison's character! (This, mind you, was after the trial was over.) Tink then commented that Vince regarded him as a CIA agent, and the daughter blandly replied, "I know, my mother does too."

As for Newcomb's actual findings, the splicing of the "original" Z. film at several points, certainly this seems significant, although I am not sure of just what it signifies. As I recall it, Zapruder and Sorrels had the film plus 3 copies processed on 11/22/63 at the local Eastman Kodak, and the "original" was flown to New York and was in the hands of LIFE that same night. Is it possible that the Eastman Kodak technician in Dallas was shaken up and accidentally damaged (and spliced) the film? I don't want to be naive or to throw cold water; nor do I think that Sorrels or others involved were incapable of doctoring evidence. The only thing that bothers me is the time element: did anyone already know, Friday afternoon or early evening, just what had to be excised from the Z. film in order to conceal evidence inconsistent with the official thesis-to-be?

Of course, the doctoring of the film, even if inadvertent and accidental, is still of high historical, legal, and evidentiary importance, and it certainly should come before the public. Unfortunately, even if Ray returned the film and Newcomb was able to complete and document his work, there is no guarantee that it would get any attention whatever. His work on the photo of Oswald with the fifle, etc., which is certainly dramatic and explosive proof of fabrication to incriminate LHO, for all practical purposes is buried and ignored, which dismays me more than I can say; and the same is true for Wecht's testimony and many other significant items which, in terms of inherent meaning, should have broken the case wide open long ago but remain crushed under the massive indifference of the press and the official agencies. The wide-spread disgust and impatience with Garrison will further handicap any attempt to re-open discussion, however compelling the new evidence that may be developed by Newcomb or others.

I am very curious to know how the Garrison-lovers are treating the fiasco of the Shaw trial in their columns—that is, the L.A. Free Press, Bill Turner, etc. To my surprise, I have not received a single copy of the Midlothian Mirror since the trial began, though I was looking forward with great interest to Penn's editorial treatment of the proceedings and the verdict. Nor have I yet received the various homemade newsletters of the Garrison-loving "committees" in San Diego, Seattle, etc. How silent they all are, suddenly!

That's about it for now. I am very sour in mood, as you can probably tell for yourself, but I don't want to infect anyone who can still summon some optimism.

Yours ever,