

June 2, 1969

Dear Sylvia,

Many apologies for not answering your two letters more quickly. Weeks ago, I drafted a reply, and it became lost in a shuffle of paperwork and file folders whose entanglement and disorganization sometimes drives me into fits of despair.

Regarding the Ball-Belin memo and the question of ~~XXX~~ Givens. I agree that the Ball-Belin memo sheds much light on how the investigation evolved, and of how very aware those two counsel were of the initial reports, what they said, and their implications. I have gone through the Ball-Belin report very carefully, and labelled each page or section with a file classification. I then filed the sections appropriately in my research folders, so that as I write on any area, I am able to reference (either in a footnote or in the text) to how such and so was handled by the Commission's staff. Collection and collation of information, however, is entirely different from evaluation, and---until recently---I have not been much of an expert on the question of the 3 negroes, the conflicts in their testimony, and how their individual ~~X~~ stories grew from what they first were. The reason is that a woman out here, Mrs. Pat Lambert, started a project of doing all my witnesses for me sometime last summer. Her starting point was the published research lists (such as Thompson, Lane, your index, etc.) I ordered all the documents from the archives that Thompson listed, and gave her about 20 specifics to look for in the record. Immediately, in our many phone calls each week, she told me how intrigued she was with the inconsistencies in the negro's testimony. I'd listen to what she said, but by that time, I was off on other things; and as you well know, this case is so filled with utterly unrelated "specialties", it is difficult to keep up. When I received the Ball-Belin memo and sent Pat sections of it, I happened to have used the table of contents to decide which portions might be relevant to her work with witnesses, and didn't realize, from its title, that the subsection (TSBD ~~X~~ Before Noon, or something like that) had such vital material.

When I received your letter, I ran that section off and sent it to her. Just recently, I sat down and carefully went through it myself, & reread the appropriate section of your book.

I agree that that section of the memo is very revealing; it tells us exactly what Ball-Belin knew as of that date. You can be sure that I am going to deal with this matter in some way in the manuscript; I can well understand your excitement over it. I, too, would like to confront Ball, and especially Belin. (I have probably told you that Ball is something of a dope). Their rational, should such a confrontation ever occur, I'm sure, would be that SS 491 "cleared up" inconsistencies in the earlier versions, and served as the basis ~~XXX~~ and justification for the creation of the one sided record.

I'll let you know if I get more ^{Archives} documents in of ~~a~~ nature ^{that might} ^{be of interest to you.}

My work is progressing very nicely. I am so excited over portions of this manuscript that I sometimes have trouble getting a full night's sleep. But I am discouraged that writing takes longer than ~~IX~~ would seem necessary. Some days, I can generate 30 pgs---then I suddenly run into something unforeseen ~~and~~ I find there is some fact I have inadequately researched, and I have to check back and throw some microfilm on the reader, or run back to my apartment and retrieve a file, only to find that that section of my cabinet is not organized properly.

I do not have definite plans yet for my visit to New York. I hate

to admit that, but it is true. I feel that it is very important that this manuscript be as close to finished as possible before I board a plane. I have hundreds of pages behind me, but I have more hundreds to go, and there is refinishing necessary.

I hope your editor recovers from his illness. I must admit to you that I am hopeful in the extreme that this work will get a good publisher, and want to be able to devote time to just that when I come east. A close relative of mine, by the way, was the Asst. to the division chief of the book publication section at Cowles, and should be able to perform introductions that will be helpful.

I agree with you on phone calls. They are just too expensive.

I read Epstein's article in the NY Times magazine. The only reason I am not discouraged, is that I know Epstein will look like something of a fop, when all this is over. I assure you, there will be ample opportunity for that. As I read his article, I was already aware of those sentences which I look forward to serving up to him for eating, with considerable relish. (HA?)

Re San Diego, and those like them. I simply try to ignore that sort of thing. To attempt to come to grips with it---philosophically or emotionally---gets me upset. I have had several shouting arguments with Prescott Nichols, on the ULCA-San Diego tie-line. (Worse than trying to argue with them would be to have to pay for the phone call when its over!) It is clear that not everyone who is interested in this case has brought the same type of standards to bear, either in judging evidence or people.

Re your letter of May 8

Thank you very much for the recap of your Orth conversations. I had become quite ~~XXXX~~ confused on those details.

We may get still another, totally unscratched print of the Z film. We'll know soon.

In this letter of May 8, you raised two basic questions. The film was not turned over to Life Magazine until sometime on Saturday. Bidding on it was held Saturday AM, with AP, UPI, and Time INC being the bidders. (The AP man out here, Richard Strobel, was the ap rep in that bidding, and I should be able to get more details as soon as I'm ready to go downtown and speak to him). Anyway, it is clear that the film was turned over to Life Saturday during the day or evening, and not any earlier. So there is approximately 24 hours before that event occurs. (Tink Thompson sent me some wonderful documents on where the film went, who processed it, etc. This came out during his court case. The information provides a very good starting point. I am trying to follow up where that film went; so, for the time being, Fred and I are just keeping that info to ourselves. It shows that another film company is involved with the original---a firm that takes possession of the original in order to print (not process) the three duplicate (Kodachrome II) cassettes, which are then ferried back to Eastman for processing. (Processing film and printing it are entirely different.)

This is fully dealt with in Tink's court-case documents, and somewhat less clearly in the Barrett FBI interview of Z.

It is very important, in tracing the film, to approach the film company involved (Jamison Co.), Zapruder, and Stolley (of Life) ---- completely fresh. (I know someone who is a friend of Z, and am trying to get an in person interview).

When time permits, I'd like to make a xerox of the documents Tink sent me; I'd like you to see what we have to start with. But I want to make sure to ask you that others not be told of this material until

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the research and interviews are completed. There is a tremendous advantage, of course, when approaching anyone for an interview, to be able to do it under a pretext, so constructed that the person is free with information and has absolutely no idea what it is you are really getting at. I want to be sure not to lose that advantage on this item, which I think is going to prove to be quite important.)

I would like to skip the technical details of how one might get their hands on that film in those 24 hours. I could advance several hypothesis---they would only be just that; and we're exploring for new facts.

But now let me get to your second question. You wrote:

"...above all, why in the immediate aftermath should such a sinister and fraudulent exercise be attempted, with all the attendant risks, when it could simply not have been known so early what kind of official "findings" the Zapruder film had to be brought into conformity with."

I really like the way you phrased that. (It is one of those sentences where a preposition really does belong at the end!)

But it puts me in something of a dilemma. Rather than support to explain, yet explain inadequately, I will simply say that the question you raised is more than adequately handled in my manuscript, and I want you to read it there for the first time without either foreknowledge, or hints. Now I know that what I just said might sound a bit preposterous, and boastful, but I am being very honest about it.

Sylvia, I have been making a list of items that I think you may be able to help me with. I can save them, or mail them to you. There probably will be no rush, and you will probably be able to locate certain things quickly for me, if you are as organized as I think you are.

One such item, which has been on my mind for some time, concerns a letter from J. Edgar which you mentioned on the Theater for New Ideas broadcast. In this letter, his holiness mentioned that there were no errors in any of his FBI reports, or that he had never had to retract anything, or something like that.

Would I be able to get from you a copy, not only of that Hoover letter, but also of the letter that elicited such a response? (Please feel free to block out the name and address of the person to whom it was mailed, as I did in my Hoover letter, which was addressed to my girl-friend.) I promise to use neither without showing you exactly where it will go in the work, and getting your OK. Hoover letters are few and far between. I have one, concerning the 314-315. Paul has one. And then there is the one you mentioned on that tape. letter

I am up here in the library writing away, and will now return to that activity.

Best regards

David

P.S. I have your new address, and will use it, during that time period.