

302 West 12 Street
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Dear Shirley,

The one and only story in New York is the transit strike, adding prolonged insult to the injury New York sustained in the November blackout. I did not venture out until today, when I was fortunate enough to get taxis to and from the office, and therefore it was only this morning that I managed to mail you a manila envelope I had prepared some days ago, containing some odds and ends. Meanwhile, I have received your welcome letter of the 2nd, for which I thank you warmly. I was greatly moved by your letter to Senator Monroney. It is signed "A South Vietnamese Mother"—are you Vietnamese? How much greater your anguish, if you are. I think you disparage yourself unjustly when you complain about your writing—it is impassioned and very effective and you should feel no diffidence at all. I am taking the liberty of sending your letter to Monroney to Curtis Crawford, a renegade critic of the WR, and asking ~~you~~ him to send you his brochure on Viet Nam (in which he urges a total cease-fire, reunification, and return to the Geneva Agreement).

I am also enclosing a Xerox of the Dorothy Kilgallen story with the relevant passages indicated in red ink. Perhaps it will help you to determine whether or not the questions and answers correspond to your interview with Mrs Clemmons. I will also mail you the tapes of the radio broadcast just as soon as I can manage, under the present crippling and abnormal conditions in the city. Everything, but everything, is off schedule and out of kilter. We are terribly spoiled people, of course—imagine what London went through, or what Vietnamese cities are enduring now, and wonder how in blazes New Yorkers can have the effrontery to complain!

I didn't know whether or not Penn Jones considered Oswald possibly innocent but I have become philosophical (or tried to become) after my first shock at learning that Vince Salandria and several others whose work I greatly admired were convinced that he was involved in the assassination, but together with others. I was naively incredulous, because I have never found it plausible that Oswald knowingly could have conspired in any act of violence. (I do not accept the attack on General Walker, or most of the rest of Marina Oswald's gross and perverted fictions.) I have tended to identify with Oswald—at least with his rebelliousness, independence, non-conformity, reading tastes, and love for animals and children. One of the things that impressed me most was the degree to which his reading list corresponds with my own books—The Shark and the Sardines, and a large number of science fiction stories and anthologies, which I have been reading voraciously since the age of about 12. He read, for example, Arthur C Clarke's "A Fall of Moondust," one of my most admired favorites—and no one enchanted by imagination and ideas which burst the constraints of present time and present space to envisage a better mankind (so often the theme of science fiction) falls easily into the role of killer. Although I discount many of the defamatory stories told about Oswald, I was always bothered by the traits he exposed in his diary—I still am—but while he emerges as a scarcely-admirable young man, he does not seem a violent or murderous person, even at his least attractive. Anyhow, he could not shoot for beans, and however much the WC may rationalize and distort, they can't really make it an easy shot nor make Oswald a master rifleman. I never believed him capable of the crime, technically or morally, and I still don't; but he could scarcely be better qualified than he was for the part of the patsy, and that is what he said he was. If I have to choose between believing Oswald and believing the WC, I choose the former, because I know how many lies issued from the latter.

I don't believe that Oswald was a crackpot or psychotic; I don't believe he wanted to kill Kennedy or see him dead; and I surely don't believe that he shot Tippit. About Whaley: I am suspicious but I admit it is largely intuitive suspicion unsupported by anything concrete. But I have learned to trust my intuition, which is not mystical but the product of reasoning which takes place a notch below the level of distinct consciousness. I asked Penn Jones to think about Honest Joe (one of my "suspects") and David Goldstein of Dave's House of Guns, because I had "detected" (with unmerited self-satisfaction) a connection between the two. He wrote back that they were brothers, but that David Goldstein is dead--of natural causes. He said also that the two were not on speaking terms, they were just money-grubbing animals and would have done anything for a dollar. Hmmmmm.

No wonder Penn's wife is worried. What with the mortality rate in this case, and the firebombing of the Midlothian Mirror (someone called my attention to the reward offer in the June 6th issue) she has a right to worry. How far is Hominy from Dallas? I have been thinking of and retreating from the desirability of visiting Dallas, just to see the scene for myself, even though almost all the trails are stone-cold by now. I am generally reluctant to travel and frankly rather scared of being alone in Dallas. Penn has been good enough to urge me to come and offer me a roof...but it is out of the question for the moment. I've just received the proofs of my index, from the publisher, and should be getting to work on them. But I can't resist a few more comments in this already-excessive letter....

I am fascinated by your references to the Paines. I envy you the opportunity to have spoken with them and sized them up. So far as the printed testimony alone has created an impression, it is a bad impression--of Ruth Paine, rather than Michael. She is so bloody self-righteous, umble, "good" and pious--on the surface. Her malice toward Oswald and her sneakiness are clues to the real R Paine (to me), and I feel that the facade she presents is largely phony and calculated--although it may be that she deceives herself about herself, which may be worse. Maybe I would change my opinion of R Paine if I met her; but even if she was between a rock and a hard place, I am appalled by her collaboration with the WC and the FBI. If you had been in her place, you would not have played it that way--I am sure of that. And I would not, never. Yes, I had heard the Addison's disease rumors; some stalwart members of the AMA wrote bitter complaints to the Journal of the AMA about the silence of the autopsy report on the condition of the adrenals. They interpret the omission of findings on the adrenals as corroboration of their most sinister beliefs; I believe the autopsy is spurious and utterly deformed, but not for that reason--I think it was molded around the police theory ("lone assassin") and not objective, scientific, or truthful.

My opinion of Goldberg? A pompous bombastic and immoral man, like his late lamented predecessor, for whom I lost all respect after seeing him in action in the early days. In 1952 I had his picture on my wall and collected money for his campaign with stupid zeal, and gave up friends who were pro-Eisenhower. Ten years later, Stevenson literally made me ill and I had to avoid looking at or listening to him, as I suffered actual nausea. With Goldberg, at least, I will not have to experience the process of disillusionment--I had a small opinion of him to begin with.

I'm interested to learn about Thayer Waldo. I wrote to him on December 11th, sending copies of my unanswered letters (mailed to you this morning) to the WC lawyers, etc. but he has not answered. I think he is a very good person who is still doing his own independent thinking and who handled the Mike Howard business with enormous intelligence and realism. I like Waldo. Is he writing a book? Someone said so, not long ago, but I forget who it was. Yes, I was struck by his comments on Butler--he went as far as he could to alert the obtuse-and-deliberately-deaf WC, which avoided questioning Butler together with the other seven dozen key people they pretended did not exist and had nothing to contribute. Butler was one source of the insane rumor that Oswald was the illegitimate son of Ruby; also, he was the head of the police fund or collection turned over to Widow Tippit. That's all I know about him. Write again soon, Shirley, or as soon as you are able. Warm thanks and regards,