

10 January 1966

Dear Shirley,

My grateful thanks for sending the tape of the Clemmons interview, which I shall listen to as soon as possible. Unfortunately it is the wrong speed for my tape recorder but my friend Isabel, who lives just nearby, as a two-speed machine and as soon as she arrives home from her office (on foot, no doubt) I shall run over there. I mailed you the first reel of tape of the Randi broadcast this morning but I took it to the post office together with the package of corrected proofs which had to be mailed back to the publisher and didn't have enough cash left after ensuring that package for anything better than book-rate ...so I am afraid it will be a while before it arrives. I kept the second reel so I will have part of the tape in case anything comes up, but will send that on to you by airmail when the first reel comes back. I will also return the Clemmons tape within a few days, once I get to hear it.

Your letter of the 8th (Saturday morning, first one up) is full of fascinations for me...Before I forget, let me interpolate a request for your telephone number with area code, so I can telephone you if the spirit moves me and the budget permits...I would love to talk with you as well as correspond by mail, because I think we feel the same way about the basic and haunting questions, not just the case but VietNam and all the other centers of ugliness and horror...I am surely riveted by your portrait of Ruth Paine...and by the tantalizing description of Vince's hysteria vs the Paines...How could Ruth Paine ever in a million years redeem herself for her abject failure as a human being with some semblance of fair play, when Oswald called her Saturday afternoon from jail asking her to contact Abt? She was affronted that he dared to ask her to do anything for him, offended by his presumption of his innocence! What kind of human being would condemn the man as guilty on the evidence available on Saturday? Even Michael Paine rushed home Friday mainly because he wondered if there would be an attempt to frame Oswald. And then the business of spying on Oswald, getting up furtively before the others and reading his letter to the Soviet Embassy about his Mexican trip, and copying it (if I recall correctly). Is that the standard of behavior among Christians or Quakers? And so many other instances of her malice and envy, and her unnatural or at least unwholesome possessiveness about Marina...About her sexlessness, I don't know whether it is apparent or real...there is a quality of repression and spinsterishness about her, judging purely from her testimony, which resembles cases in the literature of violent sensuality masked by a facade of chastity modesty austerity -- celibacy is the word I want, I guess. But nobody, nobody, not even Marina, gives press interviews in the nude (too cold).

I think you were absolutely BRILLIANT to catch RP on the "address." She didn't think very quickly--she might have said that she was interpreting the conversation for Marina. I quite agree that her improvisation when you caught her with her own contradictions stinks; and that there is considerable evidence to suggest that Marina at least understood English fairly well, and spoke a few phrases at least, too.

Although I don't trust RP for a minute and she did damage Oswald considerably, she also painted him as being at times a gay and gallant companion--perhaps she did so inadvertently, who knows...What angers me is her adorable picture of Marina, whom most other people recognized as a sluttish creature lacking aesthetic, intellectual or moral quality. Ruth paints her as unbearably virtue-ridden--this in March 1964, too, when any normal wholesome person in Paine's position would have been sore and disgusted by Marina's icy and inhuman disdain, and the humiliations to which she subjected a woman who had sheltered her (but obviously bored her to tears and made her play a part, since she could not be her real ~~self~~ self with the lachrymose and pious Ruth). Don't worry: Ruth really must have had it in for Marina, for those humiliations, and for Michael, for his desertion, despite her self-flagellating and seemingly-admirable "honesty" with the Commission about why Michael had left her. Her "purity" is as π phony as the Carcano and as dubious as Oswald's marksmanship.

About her unwillingness to let Oswald have the car, I'm not sure of her real reasons--but I suspect that she was willing to teach him to drive, because it put him in a dependent (and inferior) position, but chafed at giving him real freedom with the car, tantamount to independence from her. She wanted both Oswalds to need her, not to be a self-sustaining marriage from which she would be excluded, by definition--not needed, not able to exercise the power which pretended to be philanthropy....Now I have really indulged myself in the kind of psychological theorization which I always deplore and criticize in others--and I beg pardon for doing it. These are my impressions of Ruth Paine; and, even if they have validity, they do not exclude at all a clandestine role, with FBI or another group. But enough of her....

I don't quite remember now what papers I sent you, but if I didn't specifically mark them as papers to be returned to me, don't send them back. I believe that everything I put in the envelope was material for you to keep if you wish. I am curious to receive your comments on the Oswald/Jarman conversation, because I have made quite a point of it in my manuscript as a possible indication that Oswald was not even aware of the route or the visit before he arrived in Irving (I absolutely share your view of R Paine's testimony on the doorway conversation; I thought the moment I read it that it was an attempt to incriminate, as was Marina's gratuitous report of her own comment to him about the President's visit.)

Please clarify your remark about my remark that Lee apparently did not know what kind of weapon had killed the President. I don't remember writing that in any material. Perhaps I have misunderstood you. Or my memory may be buckling. Tell me in greater detail, please, Shirley.

Hudkins sounds like a poisonous slug. Why should Dealey finance him?? I don't know exactly what questions I would ask him, if I could--I'd like to hear about his being interviewed by the FBI, who must have been sore as hell at him; I'd like to know if he still believes Oswald was an FBI lackey and if so whether he has any information other than what has been printed and widely discussed. My interpretation of Oswald is that he would never, never have collaborated with the FBI except as a "cover" under which he was really working against them. I believe that his detestation for the Establishment was genuine and pervasive and truly motivated his life; that is a main reason why I can never believe that he would have wished to trade JFK for LBJ. And (I always come back to this) he couldn't shoot well enough to hit a sleeping elephant at fifty paces (or whatever).

I'm worn out. The transit strike has made life gloomy and irritating, though I am really lucky compared to most people, as I am not too far from my office and so far have always managed to get a ride most of the way. But the city is so full of anger and weariness and suspense that it is infectious. So I'll end it now, Shirley, with much love and many thanks. I feel as if we have been friends forever.