

4/6/66

Sylvia:

I want to answer your letter as soon as possible, although probably not in as much detail as I should. Actually at the moment I am so discouraged (not with the case, because with work like yours and Vincent's to carry us along, I don't think the case will suffer), but with human nature in general. This is a pathetic admission for someone my age to make; I wonder how I lived so many years wrapped in so much cotton wool?

You ask me about Penn. How can I answer this after all his kindness? He loaned me his Thunderbird for the four days I was in Dallas; was enormously kind to me, my children and a group of friends who were in Dallas with me. He entertained us at dinner; yet, his stories on politics (and politicians) dismayed and disgusted me. I just can't survive in a world where everything is filth. I suppose this is an indication of prudishness; still, I am able to face up to a great deal of sordidness. (How could I have come this far in the Oswald case if I couldn't?) But Penn's stories weary me. Just as Deirdre Griswold (for example) wearies me. (I'm using her as a whipping boy this week.) Life is one long corridor of closed doors (bearing labels) for these people. What happens to them when a new and fresh experience crosses their horizons, I can't imagine. Is the world really made up of nothing but Red China and sex? I know these two items are important, but I hadn't realized (until Penn and Deirdre started in on me) that this is ALL there is.

I really mustn't comment any further. I can talk more freely on the Dallas police. This was interesting. The group of people I was in Dallas with went there anonymously. I went there (with Vickie and Teresa) under my own name, as I always do. We stayed (as a group) at the Tower Motel at my suggestion; it is where I always stay when in Dallas. The prices are reasonable. Also, the access to town on Stemmons is good. One night, while the girls and I and half of our group were at dinner in downtown Dallas (on Commerce), two homicide men (Captain Fritz's department!) called on the remaining members of our party who stayed behind in the motel. These individuals were questioned by the detectives as to what they were doing in Dallas (can you imagine this kind of treatment accorded to every tourist!). Finally one of the detectives spoke up to the effect that we had been expressing interest in Oak Cliff that day (and in the Tippit shooting in general)--hence, the interest of Homicide. My friends at the motel got the names of the two men--in fact, they left a card; I saw it next day, and I think one of the names was "Parks", but I'm not sure about this.

At any rate, the detectives freely admitted that Domingo Benevides contacted them after we interviewed him that morning. During the afternoon, I had talked to ^{the}va Grant, telling her openly that I was

staying at the Tower.

On the next day, the girls and I went to the Texas Theatre where I tried without success to see Julie Postal. The following day to this, we went back to Jefferson and parked ^{at the} OUTSIDE the theatre. We hadn't eaten since breakfast and, so, took 15 minutes to go nearby to Inky's to get a hamburger. (This is between the Texas Theatre and Hardy's Shoe Store.) When we came out we found two motorcycle policemen parked on the right-hand side of our car and two policemen in a patrol car parked on the left-hand side of the T-Bird. As we approached our car (the sight of 4 cops wiped away any thought I had of entering the theatre to inquire after anybody, although I had seen Butch Burroughs earlier in the doorway), the two motorcycle policemen got off their vehicles and went into the theatre; the two cops in the patrol car stayed where they were. The girls and I got into Penn's car and sat there laughing hysterically. Actually we outsat the patrol car which eventually pulled away. What they thought of three females with convulsive giggles, I'll never know. But it seemed so pathetic. Three women in a T-Bird (a highly respectable sight in money-mad Dallas) had brought out the gendarmes in force! Of course, it could have been a coincidence. But it does seem a funny one, don't you think?

This was my second police-escorted experience in Oak Cliff. When the girls and I interviewed Mrs. Clemmons in 1964, we got a motorcycle escort out of Oak Cliff. They sat on our tails until we pulled over the Houston Street Viaduct. And during the Clemmons interview, two motorcycles (with cops on board) went up and down 10th Street, up and down, up and down.

Now, Ruth Paine: Oh, Sylvia, here you and I differ somewhat. As to the past relationship between Ruth and Michael, I agree with you on this. If it was as we've been told, then it must have been humiliating. (The situation still seems false. While we were there, Ruth talked at length about old love letters from Michael which she had just that day been rereading.) But the Marina situation is quite different in my opinion. Since I think that Ruth and Michael were a "surveillance" couple of some sort, and since I think that the diminishing rapport between Ruth and Marina after the assassination was all part of the psychological picture, I don't think Ruth felt any rejection or humiliation here. Actually it is probably Marina who feels more hurt and confusion over what she was told about Ruth than otherwise. In answer to your question, Ruth's children, Chris and Lynn, are delightful. Really lovely children. They are all four in their new home now, which is a vast improvement in both space and construction over the old one.

My surprise this trip was to find that Ruth dislikes me. Why not? I have pestered her time after time. I call when she least expects it--and within minutes I'm at her door. She never turns me away. Why not? I think if I were in her situation I would say: Look, Shirley Martin, haven't we had this out? No more, please. But she never does. Now Michael always makes it home for our sessions and he is charm itself. Tells me he is delighted to see me, that he really looks forward to our get-togethers. What a silly situation.

What did I say "to make Ruth Paine furious"? I told her that I didn't believe her. She is very accustomed to being believed, to have people treat her the way Jessym West treated her in that nauseating article in Redbook. I understand her fury. It can make anyone angry to be told they are lying. Still, it wasn't the challenge so much as what I coupled it with. I said: "Ruth, you thought Lee was just as innocent as I did after the assassination. You thought just as we all did that a right-wing group had killed Kennedy, not Lee."

Really she was terribly angry. Her voice rose, she shook, she said: "All I know there was a gun in my garage, the gun was missing and a President was dead." But it was the inflection of the lousy speech that got all four of us. (One other lady, besides myself, Vickie and Teresa, was there with us.) It was like amateur night in Gopher Prairies; somewhere, someone ~~was~~ keyed her on this, saying "This line is big, use it." And she did. But the reading was terrible.

It was worth a great deal to me to shake her, because I had never been in control before. It was always Ruth Paine, the schoolteacher, who had Shirley Martin ^{the Chief} in place. This time was different. I felt badly for a few days over my tactics, because if she is taping these sessions she came off badly. Everything, EVERYTHING, with Ruth Paine is an act. You have to see it time after time to get the full impact. And why? Why all the effort for me? At any rate, Michael was highly discomfited; he stood around as all men do when women exchange words, shifting from one foot to the other. She is rude, he is hospitality itself. Ruth said a time or two how anxious she was to get to bed; if it had been left to Micheal, we could have danced all night.

Yes; I spent some time at Reno's Speedwash (where Lee sat until midnight Wednesday night, November 20, 1963, until ejected by the night watchman); also, checked on markings in two or three Dallas (Oak Cliff) laundries and cleaners (including the one directly opposite 1026 North Beckley). The Reno Speedwash visit was productive in my opinion because it offered an explanation as to why Lee sat there doing nothing for so long. It has a pay telephone. Reno, himself, told me this ^(sitting in the washateria doing nothing) was not a common occurrence, not only not common with Lee Oswald, but not common with people in general. It is my opinion Lee used this phone in the evenings to call Marina (Mrs. Bledsoe kicked him out allegedly because he talked "funny" i.e. Russian, on the 'phone. Did he hesitate to use the Johnson 'phone too often for fear of the same consequence? The Reno Speedwash is directly across the street from 1026 (at an angle). I think Lee made soem calls Wednesday night and sat there in Reno's Speedwash until midnight waiting for a call that never came.

The laundry-dry cleaners next door had no record of ever doing any dry cleaning or laundry for Lee Oswald. The lady was perfectly sure of this because the FBI had spent some time going over her books. She admitted that many of the young men who lived at 1026 at that time used her laundry. The marking system for jackets, etc., there and at two other laundry centres in Dallas does NOT fit the

marking found on the jacket behind the gas station. I very much doubt that this jacket had anything to do with Lee Oswald, but you have as much, if not more, background on this as I do. The police were very eager on November 22nd to trace that jacket by its "B" marking; then, of a sudden, this interest petered out and we heard no more about it. At any rate, if the jacket had been laundered in a Dallas ^{establishment} (or Oak Cliff) (or a Tulsa laundry for that matter), it would have born two initials at the very least. (All the laundry employees I have talked to both in this ~~xxx~~ state and in Texas are ~~xxx~~ aghast at the thought of a single marking.) If Lee Oswald had used his own name (or a variance of it), the jacket would have been stamped "LH" or "LHO" or "OHL" or "OL"--- but certainly NOT just "L" or just "O." So where the "B" comes from, whether from the mind of the Dallas police (this I doubt unless the police logs were tampered with later) or from ^{an} obscure laundry in Alaska, we will probably never know. But Marina, as you recall, said she did all the laundrying of Lee's jackets. However, I can't always accept what Marina said. Lee was considerate of her; he might have felt the home-ironing of such a garment too difficult and had it cleaned in New Orleans, Mexico City? On the other hand, why in hell didn't the Dallas police trace it? They were so eager on Nov, 22nd to do just that (see police logs). Imagine if they had traced it and found it had indeed belonged to Lee Oswald, what an enormous triumph! Can't you imagine ~~with~~ what divine glee Henry Wade and police chief Curry would have felt as they stood before television cameras on the 23rd and 24th blathering about maps and Communist literature, to have been able to add this definitive morsal to their pack of propaganda goodies?

Sylvia, I am often as wrong as anyone (more often), but I don't think Manchester has had a breakdown. Incidentally, Manchester has a small office on the 4th floor of the Archives Building in Washington. Why not try to stop in and see him?

No; I would never be so gross as to ask you to leave the case alone. What in the world right would I have doing that? But I have some funny ideas about this thing, ~~which~~ I think we all do, ~~which~~ ^{which} at times, and particularly immediately after I got home, frightened me so badly that I wondered if we wouldn't be better off for awhile with our hands off everything. Again and again I return to Robert Kennedy. Deirdre and Mark Lane are always yelling and screaming that Robert Kennedy doesn't care about the case, that all he cares about his his own ambition and getting to be President. But it never seems to occur to these ~~stupid~~ dear dolts that "getting to be President" might be Robert Kennedy's only way to avenge his brother's death. As far as ambition is concerned, it is all right for Mark Lane to have run (and won) for Assemblyman in NY (and to have posed in great, grinning pictures with all the Democratic politicians he felt could help him in his race), but when it comes to Robert Kennedy wanting to be a Senator (or more) and posing for pictures with LBJ, it is a dirty sell-out in the eyes of "long~~g~~ corridor" inhabitants such as Deirdre. What is O.K. for Mark Lane is dark and dirty pool when practised by Robert Kennedy. Well, I

have no such double standard. I like Mark Lane and I love Robert Kennedy. I don't hold what he did to get elected against Mark Lane and I don't hold what he did to get elected ~~g~~ against Robert Kennedy. I think some of my friends on the left are childish and boring, but I value my contacts with them nevertheless. However, when they become too boring---

Penn feels (and I do not say I agree with him) that a military coup was accomplished with Kennedy's death, and that these same men killed Kennedy because "there was no spot on his garment"; i.e. no blackmail possibilities. But with Johnson the potential was enormous. I am told there is a film in existence (the negatives too which are in the hands of the men who killed Kennedy) that involves LBJ in homosexual activities; it is this film which keeps Johnson running the Goldwater course. What can I say to all this? Really I shouldn't repeat it, I suppose. But as with the rest of this letter, nothing I am sending you will be sent to any of the others in our group. I have written to Harold and Vince telling them I am taking a few months off to build a new home--and I would appreciate in conversation with any of these people (including Sauvage, Joesten, Buchanan, etc.) if my name ever does come up that you will please repeat my little social lie. I would very much like to keep contact with you. And if you can, perhaps you can keep me abreast of things as they develop and of which I never would hear without someone thinking of me. But for the rest, I would like to pretend for awhile that I am taking a little vacation. After all, regardless of the fact that I haven't accomplished anything, I have been working pretty steadily on the Oswald case for the past 2½ years. It isn't too absurd to imagine a rest, a chance to be just a housewife and mother. Of course, there are always the volumes and the chance to keep on learning from them. This never stops for me anymore than it does for you.

I got a letter the other day from Joesten and one from Thayer Waldo in Mexico. But I'm not answering them. I think what I would like to do is see some of these people do a little leg-work for themselves. Everytime Joesten, for example, wants to publish an article and make a little money, he writes me and says: "What's new?"

Back to my topic: I am also told the Jenkins case was a "warning" to LBJ--to the effect: See; what we did to him, we can do anytime to you. Sylvia, I am so out of touch with things: what do you know about an attempt to link J. Edgar Hoover with homosexual activities and Hoover's frantic attempt to prevent the leak of this information by labelling it "a Communist attempt to frame me." This is all information picked up in Texas--and is part of the reason I have come home so heartsick. It occurs to me more and more that Bobby Kennedy may be trying to spare our country a hideous, historical blackeye. Is this wrong? I don't know. It is from Deirdre's point of view--the sillier she can make America look the happier she is. Really I don't understand her attitude at all.

I admire Deirdre her energy and ambition, but when she calls Robert Kennedy the "arch enemy of the oppressed everywhere," she loses me completely. The French Revolution has given us too many examples of the danger of putting ourselves into the hands of the Deirdres (or the General Walkers) of this world. But the strange thing is that the Kennedys were trying so hard to do all the things Deirdre screams she wants: Get the CIA under control, fire J. Edgar Hoover, make sure no Birch group could ever control a national police, have a general detente, avoid war for coalition, abolish nuclear proliferation, keep out of the affairs of other emerging nations, etc., etc. And what did the Kennedys get for their movements in this direction? They got assassination. Yet, Deirdre and all her kind hate them--scream they never did enough. Aroni (TMO) is just as bad. I suggest if by some peculiar miracle Aroni were elected President tonight and tomorrow put into instant effect all the left-wing miracles he advocates that he would be dead by that nightfall. Kennedy moved as slowly as wisdom and intellect directed him; he is dead. Aroni would not last 1000 days, not even 1000 minutes.

Yet it escapes the radical left that every minute of his life is potential death for Robert Kennedy. I wonder if they imagine he enjoyed the trip to Alabama and Mississippi where perhaps a black Oswald may have awaited him. A black Oswald would be perfect in the South. Still, he went. And he keeps moving, a dash forward here, a compromise there. If he gets to be President, will he have 2,000 days? And even then will the Deirdres of this world cry out: Not enough! Not enough. More. More. More. More. More. More!

Those people not in power, not accustomed to the pressure of power, to its dangers, accustomed only to mindless humming and buzzing like a score of sick, ugly little gnats, what contempt I have for them. What pity.

Does all this explain in any way why I sometimes feel we should leave it to the Kennedys. I don't mean by that of course that we shouldn't study. Really I don't know what I do mean. I know my primary incentive in all this has been President Kennedy; incidentally to this was my interest in Lee Oswald. I'm sure I could be criticized here by my left-wing associates and told: Ah! Have you no interest in justice for the human being, for the individual, separated from power? But do they? There are cases everyday of men and women harshly treated, jailed overlong, murdered in and out of prison, without the Deirdres of this world making a squeak. What they thrive on most of all is a cause celebre; so that I am often forced to conclude they serve some other master than the pure and heady Justice they name. What is Lee Oswald to them without the murdered President? Not a damn thing. They are not interested in him as an individual either. They are interested in a cause celebre. O.K. I have no objections. Their motives are just as sound as mine. But I am not going to cloak my motive in "mankind" and "justice," etc.; my motive was and is primarily President Kennedy--not Lee Oswald--with or without his martyr halo.

So, if MY feeling is this strong, can we imagine what Robert Kennedy must feel? Is anyone going to tell me: "You loved the President more than his own brother did." If I am unhappy, distressed, not content with the Warren Report, then do you imagine the Kennedys are at ease in its regard?

At any rate, this is how it comes across to me at times. I'm sure I could be proved wrong with a good tongue-lashing from my dialectic friends, but of course there is always the risk that they will bore me--

Penn is a dreadful letter writer. Don't wonder at not hearing from him. I do want to say again, Sylvia, that you are the only person I am writing all this to. Nothing to anyone else, not that it is particularly revealing, but I did want to keep in contact with you. You don't seem as obviously mad as some of the others do-- or as mad as I sometimes think I am! If anyone asks you if you've heard from me, Penn, Joesten, Vince, anyone, please say "no." Of course, I'm asking you to lie, and I know I can't hold you to that; but, at any rate, I'd appreciate it if you wouldn't tell them anything about the Dallas trip. There are a few spots I have yet to smooth out and I'd rather not discuss the trip with anyone but you yet.

I still have some things to say about the tape! Did you get the tape back, by the way? I sent it airmail and insured it--not that the insurance would replace it, but I thought they might handle it better.

Sylvia, how about a trip here? We have room, have many acres, no excitement, lots of fresh air and country. We could talk. Come and stay a few days, then go on down and see Penn. They are dying to have you come. LA talks about nothing else. And it would please Penn so much. They think a great deal of you already. A jet here is very, very fast. I can meet you in Tulsa anytime. Please, please come.

Love,
Shirley.

Had a small note to add that I forgot. Have been reading Capote's "In Cold Blood," which I find to be a very good piece of journalism-fiction, whatever he said it was. I was interested in his description of the interrogation rooms in the Las Vegas City Jail:

"In each room, in addition to an electric fan, a metal table, and folding metal chairs, there are CAMOUFLAGED MICROPHONES, CONCEALED TAPE RECORDERS, and, set into the door, a mirrored one-way observation window." (p. 215) Italics mine

All this is Las Vegas, but in Dallas--nothing. Remember, was it Police Chief Curry who said his office had never gotten around to getting a tape-recorder, or couldn't afford one? What crap.

Also interesting in the Capote book is the care the killers took to pick up all four cartridges. God knows, Lee Oswald was much brighter than either of these two boys; had he planned to kill the President from the building in which he worked, he would have taken time to plan the recovery of the three cartridges.

It is my opinion at this time that the linking of Lee Oswald to the assassination was not such a long-range plan as we supposed at first. The fact that there were no fingerprints on the rifle seems to indicate to me that Lee Oswald was an afterthought. I felt for a long time that three months at least were needed to tie Lee in with the assassination, which would run the effort back into August. Then, I switched to a six weeks thing; now I feel Lee Oswald was thought of and planned as a patsy from about November 1st on. This means that not more than three weeks was allowed the assassins to involve Lee Oswald in the crime. But of course this is only a guess--along with almost everything else I say.

I am convinced Lee Oswald was not a genuine Marxist. I am quite sure in my own mind that he had nothing to do with Tippit's death. I think Tippit was killed deliberately in order to "pin" Lee once Lee was seen to be safely in the Oak Cliff area. Had Lee stayed in the TSBDB where it was probably thought he would stay, another killing (perhaps a SSman) would have been required in order to hold him while the case against him in the assassination was built up. It was said the suspect (in the Tippit killing) murmured "Poor damn cop" or "Poor dumb cop." I am inclined towards the latter expression. Certainly neither expression fits Lee Oswald. But if someone went deliberately to kill Tippit, what might that man's reaction to his deed have been? Nor are we ever told what Lee's answers to the question "What did you do after you left 1026 N. Beckley?" were. Even if Lee lied (which the Commission says he did), we should hear that lie. Are they trying to tell us that Lee was never asked how he got from 1026 to 10th and Patton?

Finally, what police department in the world waits six hours until AFTER arraignment to fingerprint a man? And what police department in the world fingerprints a man (with the highly questionable ink used in this process) BEFORE (minutes before) the paraffin test?

Nor are we offered a sensible explanation for the fact that after fingerprinting Lee Oswald at 8 pm, he was again removed from his cell 5 hours later (at 1am) for another fingerprinting session. I don't think Lee Oswald was fingerprinted again at 1am Saturday morning at all; in fact, it is my opinion the fingerprint lab was quite closed at this time; I do think, however, that peripheral agent Lee Oswald requested at this time a private interview with someone, and that he had it, upon which his death Sunday morning was inevitable in order to save the government the embarrassment of an employee being a possible assassin. In my opinion, Jack Ruby did what he had to do, not at the request of the Dallas police, but upon order of the Treasury Department, in whose debt he was to an enormous degree. Lee Oswald was expendable. He wasn't expendable to Robert Kennedy, who meanwhile in Washington had heard rumors of what and who Lee Oswald was; in point of fact, early the next morning, Robert Kennedy sent his personal representative to ~~xxxxxx~~ Dallas to see and talk to Lee Oswald and to protect his rights. The man, name unknown to me, never completed his mission. He was in a taxi on his way to the Dallas Police Station from Love Field as Ruby fired the shot that killed Lee.

Robert Kennedy has always been terribly kind to me (his office staff, really, I suppose, but acting on his general instructions, I'm sure). Every letter I write to Senator Kennedy is carefully replied to. In one or two instances, he has gone out of his way (as has Teddy) to inquire after certain aspects on the Oswald case for me with State and Passport. Their care and courtesy towards my letters has been much appreciated. Therefore, I was surprised (but not hurt, because I can forgive the Kennedys seventy times seventy) when I received NO ANSWER to my inquiry in regard to this man who went to Dallas at Robert Kennedy's request on November 24th. Is this man's name listed in the Report or in the Hearings? Have I just missed it? At any rate, it is terribly interesting to me that the Kennedys would ignore this question of mine when they have so uniformly answered everything else, even in regard to the Oswald case. What do you think?

Now I must stop. Your tape has got me back reading Fritz's testimony. Yes; Fritz is fascinating. I thought of this when the Homicide Division (Fritz's group) called on us at the Tower Motel. It is utter fantasy to imagine that Fritz had never heard of Jack Ruby, yet this is precisely what Fritz claims under oath in his statement. No one in Dallas believes this. It is my opinion that both Fritz and Lt. George Butler of the Dallas police knew in advance that Ruby was going to kill Lee. Interesting question which I never have been able to answer to my own satisfaction: How did they know for sure that one shot would do the job? Of course, I am aware that the shot was the old FBI-gangster favorite--right across all the big veins in the abdomen; nevertheless, wasn't it risky? Nor can I get over the feeling that poor Ruby was wearing a bullet-proof vest. Compare the famous shot-picture with Ruby's appearance half an hour later in the long-sleeved white shirt. There is a difference in girth and stockiness that one coat could not make. The first aide given Lee in the jail office makes me sick. Regardless of whether it was chest massage or mouth ~~massage~~ ^{breath} some chest pressure and abdomen pressure no doubt resulted. Lee's breathing was NOT affected. No artificial respiration is given a gunshot victim of this kind. In fact, all medical students are instructed in a case such as this that the victim NOT be moved at all, NOT handled over ~~much~~ much in any way. I can imagine why Lee was dragged back into the office; they were perhaps afraid of another attack. But I sure as hell can't fathom why anyone with a brain in his head would give the boy artificial respiration!