

Sylvia: Would you mind very much tucking this in a drawer somewhere and keeping it, so that I, too, can be on record in regard to Garrison? I will keep your letter, of course, as have kept them all from the beginning. (I didn't make a carbon of this.) 8/2/67

Sylvia: I'm sorry about the difficulty with Penn. I still feel very badly about my sharp conversation with him. Actually he called me at a bad time; the divorce was just getting started and I had learned some unpleasant facts about my future financial course (which I have since learned to live with) and was a trifle unsettled in my mind. It wouldn't happen now. So I am mostly to ~~xxx~~ ^{financial} blame. Penn doesn't know what it is like to be female and worry about the future, thus the main fault in the disagreement between us was mine. I have been meaning for weeks to write a simple note, telling him how nice he is, but have not gotten to it yet. (LA and I have exchanged letters, however.) I think I'll write and tell him how good his editorial on the riots was.

Yes; I had just heard about Larry Schmidt when your letter came, but had only had a very vague line on Lovelady saying: "He (Lovelady) has cancer." From your letter, I am assuming this means rectal cancer. He seems young for this, but I guess it can happen at any age. I, too, am discouraged about the "shirt" business. I had a note from Harold agreeing with what you wrote, so I am assuming that Harold, too, is discouraged over the shirt business.

Now, let me detail my feelings on Garrison for the record, so that when he (Garrison) emerges as a big hero, I won't have a leg to stand on! (But I would rather be this than a "hedger.")

When I talked to you in February (the night Ferrie died) I told you that Garrison bothered me because of his friends, McKeithen, Russell Long, Tom Dodd, etc. I also foolishly expressed myself this way to Harold Weisberg who chewed my ass out for condemning a man on the basis of his associates. The letter I wrote in reply to Harold (of which I sent you a copy, I think) apologized for this and admitted my error. At the same time (as best I can recall) Bill Turner had an article in RAMPARTS praising Garrison. During this interlude, I ~~xxx~~ felt a vague resentment (expressed mostly around the house!) that Garrison could have begun his investigation of the assassination and his reading of the 26 volumes as ~~xx~~ late as November 1966 and yet be considered by the investigators (and by himself) an "expert" on the case. I told myself at once that this was jealousy on my part and not worthy of public airing. (At the same time, a letter went to Penn from Vince, with a copy to me, praising Garrison so excessively that I was stunned. I rationalized immediately that Vince had had the same "jealousy" reaction to Garrison as I had had, and rather than express it or bury it (as I wanted to do) had instead reversed it, ~~ix~~ with excess praise. I remember thinking this was typical of Vince, so generous, even to the point of foolishness.) With the publication of the Turner article, I felt a genuine change of heart. ~~xxxxxxx~~ This article convinced me that Garrison must be O.K. I had met Bill Turner, had him here at the house for a day or two, much admired his cool, logical approach to things, knew he was a former FBI man who must have had SOME training over and above what I had had! and so, accepted Garrison wholeheartedly at this point, still reserving, however my very real distaste for Garrison's friends, and also marveling at how the New Orleans investigation had done one very real thing: it had taken the eyes of the world off Dallas, in so far as the assassination story was concerned.

Since the hypnotism bit and the Russo-Bundy fiasco, in addition to the "code" crap, I have made a decided turn back to the "What-is-Garrison-really-up-to" days. But until I got your letter in regard to your argument with Vince (over Garrison) I had felt I was the out-of-step one and should not instigate arguments when I hadn't any real force to back me up. (Here again I am back to my old hang-out, that I have no education and therefore am probably not ^{as} clever as I should be.) At any rate, I DO agree with you, and I am delighted to have a partner in this unpopular adventure! It was the same principle involved in my argument with Vince at the grassy knoll. Vince swore up and down that a gunman hid behind the three foot abutment (slightly to the right--east--of the concrete stairway), jumping up at the last minute to kill Kennedy. Why didn't someone see this man? Zapruder was only a stone's throw away; Zapruder would have had to see the man crouching there before the motorcade approached. How could a man jump up so fast, shoot so accurately and then disappear so completely? It was unbelievable, I said. "Yes," Vince reported (demolishing me with a single line, "but it was an unbelievable assassination." He had me there.

Actually, Sylvia, the entire crux of the matter may rest on the fact that we, as women, are just smarter than the sweet, dear, bamboozled darlings (men) we work with. Let us keep this thought at any rate!

Harold Weisberg writes that he will be in NY soon and see you. Got an amusing letter from Joesten explaining that many more booklets were coming my way. I surely enjoy reading everything he has written and he is brave, we must admit that! Each booklet that arrives from him (I have gotten two) is practically destroyed when it gets here. I used to receive mail of this shape and kind constantly from England (and from France) and it was never treated this way. I complained to my postmaster about it (each package was so frayed at one end that the manuscript could be worked out!) and he said well, the customs opened them. This was nonsense. He was obviously protecting the Post Office Service, because if customs opened it, they could do it legally, I suppose, stamping the process, and then resealing it. This looked just plain weather-beaten as though it had just happened due to the wear and tear of travel. Yet other things of the exact nature have come to me many times without such treatment. I think Joesten is on someone's shit list; someone who does not want or does not have the authority to use the postal services. At any rate, it made me mad.

Back to Garrison for a minute, if you will permit me to speculate only. Now, what in the world could possess a man to act as Garrison has done. 3 possibilities exist.

1. He really has the proof.
2. He has not got the proof but thinks he has, genuinely.
3. He has proof of "an" assassination plot, which he will pass off (with twisted facts on codes, etc.) as the real one. The majority of America will believe him. This will leave the polls satisfied; people will be pleased to learn that their gut-suspicions were right all along, and the little Pedro Villarreal and Pancho Gonzales were the assassins, along with LHO, who while not shooting the gun, did nevertheless play the judas goat as a member of the team. A few minor rightwing members of the regional CIA can be thrown in to make the potpurri boil. If this can be done, then Dallas will be out from under. No real onus will stick to New Orleans because it was the New Orleans D.A. who uncovered the dastardly plot. In addition, eyes will be off Washington and off certain Texans who may have been involved in the real assassination story.

As I say, this is speculation only. Garrison's reward would be tremendous, not only in national publicity, but by way of an already-promised political plum of some sort--on the national level. Because I know in my heart that anything Garrison does he does with the blessing of Messieurs Dodd, Long and MacKeithen, I find it awfully hard to believe that his (Garrison's) interests will in the long run align with ours--or with the Kennedys. On the other hand, it is entirely possible that Garrison is completely honest; I'll admit there is something likeable about him (but there is about Robert Surrey too). The men we like (Vince, Mark, Harold, Penn, etc.) who like Garrison have met him, whereas we have not. This might have a very real bearing on their reactions. (It is really hard to dislike another human being when we meet ~~him~~ in relatively pleasant circumstances, where we appear to have the same immediate interests at heart, and in particular when we eat together or have a drink together and shake hands and put our arms around one another's shoulders. (Just enough of this stuff, for example, has ruined Congress, and is the meat the lobbyists thrive on. I imagine Vince, Harold, Mark, Penn all had "the treatment.") (We poor liberal-leftists-radical slobs are the biggest suckers there are in the long run for this kind of approach; we are so accustomed to being disliked and in particular not listened to that we have a tendency to fall all over ourselves when a little attention comes our way. I write this broadly, of course, but there is a shred of tragic truth to it.)

Sylvia, I must close. As I told you before, I understand completely how busy you are. Write when you can. When I get a bunch of letters in one group, I always open your first, as an indication of how much I look forward to hearing from you. Will send you the comments rebutting Manchester (on MacNeil) next letter. I have to make a copy for Harold, so will send you a carbon. Much love, S. Please send my best to Maggie and Lillian.

"He (Oswald) said when he was standing in front of the Textbook Building and about to leave it, a young crew-cut man rushed up to him and said he was from the Secret Service, showed a book of identification ~~taxi~~, and asked him where the phone was. Oswald said he pointed toward the pay phone in the building and that he saw the man actually go to the phone before he left." WR, p. 629 Inspector Kelley, Secret Service, November 29, 1963.

"Dallas Times: 12:33pm (Oswald) Leaves Depository by front entrance, pausing to tell NBC's Robert MacNeil he can find a phone inside; thinks MacNeil is a Secret Service man." William Manchester's The Death of A President, p. 279; Interview: 6/15/65

The following excerpts are NBC tape published in There Was A President by The Ridge Press Inc., New York.

12:53 pm (GST) 1:53pm (EST): November 22, 1963; Frank McGee speaks with NBC Newsmen Robert MacNeil by telephone from Parkland Hospital, Dallas, where President Kennedy has been taken.

McGee: MacNeil reports that the President is seriously wounded--this from Senator Ralph Yarborough of Texas, who was with the President. The shots were fired while the motorcade was proceeding through downtown Dallas...The assassin is believed to have fired from a building overlooking the parade route. People fanned out and were asked if they saw anyone at a window. MacNeil says he was with the motorcade when the shooting occurred. When the shots rang out, people lay down and screamed...A white man was seen in a window with a rifle.

(Thus, exactly 20 minutes after MacNeil is alleged by Manchester to have talked to Lee, MacNeil is at Parkland Hospital having completed a relatively long telephone communication with McGee. Notice, please, that Oswald described the "crew-cut" man as having gone "to the phone." Therefore, we must assume if this man was MacNeil that he (MacNeil) went inside the book building to the phone, used it or did not use it, exited from the building, and in the melee outside found someone to take him to Parkland--the press bus on which he had ridden having long since motored on to The Trade Mart--gotten out at Parkland, joined the hideous confusion inside the Emergency halls of this building--where, by the way, telephones were at a premium--found a free phone, used it to call McGee, had a relatively long talk with McGee, hung up, making time for McGee to assemble his thoughts sufficiently to be on national television at 12:53pm and make the above announcement. I say the time is too tight.

In addition, I will make the point--sensible to me--that MacNeil did not at that time tell McGee that he had left the ~~the~~ press bus and sought a phone in or around the assassination site. This is strange behavior for a newsman. Naturally if it were he who spoke to Oswald, he would ~~be~~ have no inclination at that time to mention the fact that he had talked to an employee of the building. ~~since he would have no idea then that the man he spoke to was the alleged assassin~~ However, it is interesting in light of the information on the building as the source of the shots that MacNeil did not mention that he had entered a building near the area where the shots were even then alleged to have come from.)

At 1:36pm (GST) MacNeil reports from Dallas: "...The shots came from a building called The Texas School Depository." Even now MacNeil does not state that he ran into this building! Yet one would imagine that as a newsman he would have found this fact very pertinent.

At 2pm MacNeil is still commenting over his eye-witness view of the assassination scene: "Men and women were lying on the ground to escape the bullets...The assassin fired the ~~3~~ shots from a fourth floor window...I was in the reporter's car, three cars behind the President...There were very few people on the street at that particular point in the motorcade. The Texas School Book Depository is about eight floors high..."

MacNeil still does not mention that he jumped out of the press car and raced into the building in question!

MacNeil: "Oswald leaves the building (shot of TSBDB) and gets on a bus."
Yet MacNeil still does not say: "By a strange coincidence I was one of the first men to talk to Lee Oswald after he had brutally slain the President of the United States."
WHY doesn't MacNeil say this if he talked to Oswald on the steps of the TSBDB at 12:33pm as Manchester says he (MacNeil) did?

Is this another of Manchester's half-assed mistakes?

Why wasn't MacNeil called before the Warren Commission, since if the story Manchester tells is true, MacNeil would have been one of the Commission's most convincing witnesses in regard to the time of the departure of Oswald from Dealey Plaza. How is it possible that MacNeil, a newsmen, "sat" on this story for nearly two years until Manchester interviewed him (MacNeil) in '65? How can MacNeil possibly consider himself a newsmen and keep this story quiet for so long? How can MacNeil possibly consider himself a patriotic American citizen and keep this story from the Commission? It is all too much for me. Did Manchester make the story up? Then it should be challenged because it not only puts MacNeil in a poor light, but it also makes the Warren Commission (and the FBI) look even stupider than it looks already.

On the other hand, Kelley had the story from Oswald. Therefore either Kelley or Oswald made up out of whole cloth that the "crew-cut" man was a Secret Service agent. This is hard to believe as it was the information from Kelley that he (Kelley) was a Secret Service man that sparked the memory pattern of Oswald in regard to the crewcut man who was also a Secret Service man. Lee Oswald had been in trouble with one agency after another for many years, both in this country and abroad. One doubts very much that he would foolishly mistake MacNeil's introduction: "I am with NBC" for "I am with the United States Secret Service."

These are my questions then on the Manchester garbage.

Harold, the remark by Allan Tippit in regard to his father is as follows:
8:54pm, Dallas, CST, Sunday, November 24, 1963: Allen Tippit: (the oldest son) My father always said --correction here: I read it wrong the first time. Forget it. Allen is saying that his father wanted HIM to be something besides a policeman. I read it too quickly and thought the boy was saying his father wanted to be something besides a policeman himself. Nevertheless, it is very mildly interesting from a psychological point of view that Tippit did not want his son to be a policeman.

9:05pm CST Nov. 24, 1963: Vanocur: The Justice Department says that the Oswald case is not closed, and they will not allow the Dallas police department to close it...It was bad practice in any case to permit anyone entrance to the basement of the city jail without a pass.

9:38pm CST McGee: The Dallas police force has ~~announced~~ declared the Oswald case closed. The Justice Department, however, refuses to accept this. (Tape of Wade: Wade: "Oswald's fingerprints were found on the rifle." Contrast this with Gurry's earlier remark. Wade: "Our office had not closed the investigation, as there is no concrete evidence...")

But the most conclusive evidence against MacNeil-Manchester seems to be the following:
2:32pm, Dallas time, November 22, 1963: ~~MacNeil~~

Ryan: "Robert MacNeil, who was three cars behind the President, reports that newsmen didn't even know about the shooting." Then why did MacNeil jump out and look for a phone? I have long maintained that whoever the Lovelady-Oswald figure is in the doorway of the TSBDB, a man standing in this alcove (I have stood there) cannot necessarily see plainly down Elm to where the limousine was when the shots were fired. If this had been Oswald in the alcove, he could easily have returned to the building without being thoroughly aware of what was going on. Apparently the newsmen three cars behind the President (corner of Houston and Elm and behind) had the same failure of recognition. Yet their view was uncluttered. Whoever the man was in the alcove, he could not see as clearly as one imagines.

(Small aside here: MacNeil attended Dr. Perry's press conference and reported on it at 2:32pm, CST: "Dr. Malcolm Perry reported...Dr. William Kemp Clark...said...The President died at 1:00pm Dallas time...He was wounded in the back of the head and on the right side of the head. A bullet struck him in front as he faced the assassinant.")

At 3:23pm (CST) NBC announced that Oswald had been arrested as the suspect in the Tippit killing and that he (Oswald) was also a "stockman" at the TSBDB. Films are shown of the TSBDB. No announcement from MacNeil, however, that this was the building he had run into to find a phone or that he may have spoken to ~~the~~ an employee of the building. Such announcement would be normal for a newsman.

At ~~3pm~~ (CST) pictures are shown of Oswald. No comment from MacNeil that he has seen this man or spoken to him during the day.

At 11:54pm MacNeil is on again talking about the cooks on LBJ's ranch. As he concludes this vital bit of information, he says: "Oswald has been formally charged with the murder of President Kennedy. A film clip then shows Oswald protesting his innocence. MacNeil still does not say: "I talked to this man only 3 minutes after he murdered the President of the United States!" Harold, this behavior is not typical of a newsman if MacNeil did indeed stop Oswald at 12:33pm on the steps of the TSBDB. However, if MacNeil did not see Oswald at that time, or indeed all day until seeing him on film along with everyone else, then his lack of interest or enthusiasm in having a juicy piece of news is understandable.

(Interesting aside: 8:52am, Dallas time, November 23, 1963: Murphey discusses the assassination with Dr. Malcolm Perry (with blackboard diagrams)!. By turning, Gov. Connally saved his life, for the bullet which otherwise would have penetrated his heart, only struck his chest.")

(Also: Tom Petit interviews Deputy Dallas Police Chief M.W. Stevenson: Stevenson: "An investigation into the assassination is fully underway. Eyewitnesses are being sought. So far no one has been found who actually saw Oswald pull the trigger.")

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(9:54 (CST) Curry, Police Chief, Dallas: "The results of the paraffin test are positive, proving that the suspect, Lee Harvey Oswald, had fired a gun in the last 24 hours. The fingerprints on the rifle were only partial and cannot be identified as Oswald's!")

(10:36am CST: Dallas: On camera: Oswald taken from elevator to Homicide Bureau.

11:41am, Dallas: CST: Ryan: "Lee Oswald, the man accused of murdering the President, was interviewed by the FBI a week ago. According to Police Chief Curry the FBI did not notify the Dallas police of Oswald's presence in Dallas."

Curry: We have no knowledge of Oswald's presence in the city. They--the FBI--didn't warn us of his presence, although they usually do. They usually let us know when any communist sympathizers and subversives are in the city..."

12:07pm CST Dallas: McGee: "Parffin tests on the side of Oswald's face proved that he had indeed fired a rifle."

(Minor items of interest: 6:15 pm Dallas CST: H. Louis Nichols: "I visited with Oswald in his cell. He indicated he wanted a lawyer named Abt of New York...or one who as he put it 'believes in the same things I do.'...I beleive Oswald will get a fair trial in Dallas."

6:24pm New Orleans: The Oswalds' apartment in NO. Jim Kempf interviews the landlady who says that the Oswald couple caused no trouble during their stay.

Landlady: They were quiet and cooperative, and they left promptly after they found themselves unable to pay the rent. (Boy! did she change her tune! S.M.)

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On Sunday, November 24, 1963, 8:02pm (CST) we finally get back to MacNeil who has been chosen by NBC to tell the nation "The Strange Story of Lee Oswald" An NBC News Special Report: MacNeil details what is known at that time of Oswald (showing Mrs. Johnson, landlady on film calling Lee "polite and thoughtful"). MacNeil says Oswald took to work on Nov. 22 a long package "wrapped with string." The following is directly from MacNeil: