

25 May 1968

Dear Shirley,

I was not sure to which address to send this, but it will no doubt reach you. You had the old Owasso address on your undated letter, sent after your return from NYC. I am very sorry to learn that you found Teresa so ill and I do hope that she is better.

Having finally met you personally, I can understand why so many of our mutual acquaintances have described you as beautiful. You are certainly a lovely and very feminine woman, with a quality of great delicacy and even frailty--though I know that you are not frail but have great strength and endurance. The last thing I want to do is to cause you unhappiness; yet, your letter raises issues on which I can only respond honestly and frankly, and my reply is likely to disappoint you--if so, I am truly sorry.

You say in your letter that you want dear friends, not causes. How do we become friends with other people? We select from those individuals whom we meet some with whom we make friends, for a variety of reasons--temperament, shared interests, pleasure in talking and being together, ability to communicate and sympathize, and--above all--the implicit or explicit understanding that there is a common commitment to certain moral and ethical standards, which guarantee fairness and honesty in the friendship and which provide a basis for mutual respect. When this much is there, the differences which often alienate people, even such serious differences as political views, cease to matter. Thus, I have been able to become good friends with Sauvage, for example, whose political position is very different from my own, but whose integrity as a human being is absolute and whom I trust and respect wholly. Mark Lane's political stand is rather similar to my own; but as a human being, he is unethical, untrustworthy, untruthful, and despicable. I cannot be his friend, and I can only grieve that he is on the ~~MMMMMMMMMM~~ "same side" as I am, in the public eye, instead of on the side of the Warren Commission where he belongs, since he has as little regard for truth as they had. This is evident from his partnership with Garrison in a sinister and lunatic game which includes harrassment, entrapment of innocent bystanders, and other sordid practices. The fact that "he was so kind and compassionate" at a time when you were cast into a terrible human tragedy is irrelevant--in fact, only a monster could have failed to suffer with you, and I am sure that Lane has human qualities and feelings. That is not to say that he has the moral and ethical qualities essential for respect and friendship. Indeed, I feel sure that Earl Warren himself would have felt great sympathy, true compassion, had he known the circumstances--and I am not about to become Warren's admirer.

Now, I am sorry to learn that Mike was "not too happy" with me when we met here two Fridays ago. If he considered that I was wrong--about Lane, or about Garrison, or any other subject of our conversation--why didn't he say so, and why didn't he argue for what he believed? He did do so, to an extent, on the issue of why he had joined Lane's "team" in the first instance. As I recall his reasoning, he felt that Lane was going to talk to the public with or without Mike's help, so he might as well try to keep him as accurate and honest as possible. By that kind of rationalization, one becomes a collaborator of that amount of dishonesty which one does not succeed in preventing. But why is Lane's abuse of facts or ethics to be loyally hidden, or condoned, while the dishonesty of the Warren Commission is to be denounced? If one is opposed to false evidence, to false accusation, to falseness itself, there can be no amnesty and no escape hatches for privileged individuals who are relieved of obligations and demand of others. We critics who have been demanding truth and justice about the Kennedy assassination for almost five years cannot, in plain decency, accept less from each other.

I cannot love people on request, even on request from those whom I may indeed love, and I cannot love out of sentimentality but only from respect and confidence. If I have an opportunity to know and understand Mike much better, it may be that I will have great rapport and admiration for him; on the basis of the one evening

we spent together, I have no strong feelings one way or the other. He seemed a well-intending, pleasant, person but perhaps vague in projecting his convictions and guarded. Honestly, Shirley, I just didn't have enough sense of contact to be able to react, and I am certainly not hostile to Mike or anything like that. He said nothing that offended me; but he said little or nothing when I made statements that perhaps offended him, which I regret, because it left him ambiguous and remote. If he feels there is a case to be made in defense of Lane, Garrison, or what-have-you, good! let me hear, let us communicate, I am willing to listen, I am even capable of changing my mind. You see, I knew you so very well from our long correspondence that meeting you was a mere extension, a corroboration. But I never knew Mike Lester and I still feel that I do not know him, but have only met him. So when you say, "Please love Mike," you place me in an impossible dilemma. How can I love someone I don't know?

Another point, not in your letter but in our snatched conversation as we were walking to the restaurant, is the prospect you saw of my reconciliation with those critics from whom I am alienated. I was shocked by the suggestion, because it made me realize that I have never really made you understand how I feel and why I am alienated from them. I have lost the respect and the trust which is indispensable for friendship and for partnership. How can I possibly resume friendships when there is no respect and no confidence? The loss of those relationships was a terrible loss, I don't pretend that I am not often lonely, that I don't feel isolated. But this way, I can at least live with myself. If I permit myself to become indiscriminate and promiscuous in my "friendships" with those who, knowingly or unknowingly, are helping or condoning or fronting for that master of fantasy and unscrupulousness in New Orleans, I could not survive one night in company with my conscience. It would be the same as making friends with Specter or Jenner. What is the difference, really, between two sets of people who are willing to abuse truth and condone injustice, each for their own stated cause? To me, there is no comparability possible with either set, including the set willing to engage in such tactics in furtherance of a position of opposition to the Warren Report, which is my own position.

Well, Shirley, for the warmth of your letter, I have returned only the cold water of a purist and inflexible abstractions. I have been called intolerant for taking such a position--by one of the lawyers for the Warren Commission, no less. And I am intolerant--of quacks, liars, fabricators, and perpetrators of injustice, and I only hope that I will never deviate from such intolerance.