

1313 Dauphine Street
New Orleans, Louisiana
July 8, 1968

Mrs. Sylvia Meagher
302 West 12th Street
New York, New York 10014

Dear Mrs. Meagher:

Thank you very much for your recent letter, and the kind remarks therein anent Jim Garrison and myself.

As for the Warren Report, I see no reason why I should not introduce it as evidence, since it contradicts in important particulars, the theories and fantasies which Garrison will undoubtedly produce in court. It is, after all, an official government document, and a jury should be allowed to decide whether it or Garrison's case is factual and true. There is a federal law saying that all reports of government departments, commissions, bureaus, agencies, etc., are admissible as evidence in any state court. All I am asking is that Division C of the Criminal District Court for the Parish of Orleans be required to obey the law, which seems to me completely reasonable. Moreover, you will have noted from my amended pleadings that I have asked the Federal Court to force the Attorney General to defend the Warren Report in open court. This would, in effect, amount to an evidentiary hearing on the Report; and, since this is what the critics have been demanding these several years past, I should think the prospect would be cheering to you and the other critics of the Report. In any event, neither my lawyers nor myself see any need to amend our pleadings in this respect. I should make it clear that I am not cynically using in my defense a document which I distrust. I am convinced that the central conclusions of the Report are absolutely correct and valid. You will appreciate that during the past sixteen months, I have become, necessarily, something of a student of the Report and of its critics. In this connection, I have read with particular interest your book Accessories After The Fact, and I must congratulate you on the clarity and lucidity of your writing, and on the conviction and dedication which underlie it. When I have said this, however, I must add that it seems to me that you have gotten somewhat bogged down in minutiae. There is a very real danger that if one examines the trees with such extreme care--bark, root structure, leaf pattern, etc.--that one does lose sight of the forest. No sensible person would contend that there are not inconsistencies, incongruities and loose ends in the details of

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the Report. I should hardly expect it to be otherwise in such a gigantic and sprawling investigation. Indeed, I should be most suspicious of the Report if it were neat and tidy, with all loose ends tied up, as a first-rate work of fiction should be. The Report is based on some ten million words of testimony, much of it eye-witness and contradictory, and I am sure that if we had such a body of evidence on any other crime in history, the same criticisms which have beset the Warren Report would have arisen. If, for example, such a body of evidence existed on the murder of the Romanov Family at Ekaterinburg, I am confident that by a process of what I can only call unnatural selection, I could prove that: (a) Anastasia was murdered with the rest of the family; or (b) that Anastasia escaped and is now a little old lady in Paris, going from attorney to attorney, her brief case bulging with documents proving that she is the last of the Romanovs. There are certainly peripheral loose ends in the Report. But microscopic examination of them by the critics convinces me, not that the Report is fraudulent; but only that it was produced, not by supermen, but by human beings with the occasional blind spots, prejudices, and sins of omission and commission to which all flesh is, in varying degree, heir.

Viewed ~~macro~~ microscopically, the problem is even more difficult. We are asked by the critics to believe that the nine distinguished Americans who comprised the Commission are either fools or knaves. There really is no middle ground. Personally, I find it impossible to believe that nine such distinguished and practical men could have been deluded, gulled and conned into signing a false report in a matter of such great national and international importance. And, if this were the case, who did the deluding, gulling and conning? President Johnson? Attorney General Kennedy? J. Edgar Hoover? The CIA? The Secret Service? Who, exactly, put the rings in their noses and led them up the garden path; and, most important, pro cui bono?

If the Report is fraudulent, and the members of the Commission are not fools, it follows they must be knaves. If so, why? Bribery? I very much doubt it. How do you bribe a Chief Justice, who has one of the great positions in the land, life tenure, and a salary of \$40,000 a year as long as he lives? It has been suggested that, though the members knew the Report to be fraudulent, they were persuaded to sign it on the basis that it was "the best thing for the country." I don't believe that for a moment. The Republican members of the Commission, who are leaders in their party, were undoubtedly convinced, then as now, that the "best thing for the country" would be a Republican in the White House.

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Setting aside all questions of probity, integrity and honesty, I cannot believe these men would not have seized such a golden opportunity. They could have behaved quite morally in exposing the fraudulent nature of the Report, and at the same time have achieved the aim to which their whole political lives have been dedicated--the capture of the Presidency for their party. If there had been provable fraud in the Report, there would have been a stinging minority dissent, the Report would have become the campaign issue in 1964, and, if fraud could have been proved, there would be a Republican in the White House today. Furthermore, the conspiracy theory bears within itself certain problems which seem to me insurmountable. Garrison has proclaimed, at various times, that the conspirators include, the Dallas police force, the Secret Service, the FBI, the CIA, the doctors at Parkland, the doctors at Bethesda, certain anti-Castro Cuban adventurers, psychotic oil-rich Dallas millionaires, members of the American Nazi Party, the Minutemen, and the then Vice President of the United States. One wonders why he has overlooked the Boy Scouts and the Future Farmers of America. If all this is taken seriously, it would mean that the cast of conspirators would literally run into the thousands--two or three thousand, at least. However, discounting all this by 90% (a necessary procedure, I have found, in dealing with most of Garrison's statements), we are still left with some two or three hundred people active in the plot. Is it conceivable that anyone could wield together some several hundred people, ranging from the newest rookie on the Dallas police force up to the Vice President of the United States, into a smooth-working assassination plot? I find this much harder to believe than the Warren Report. But, assuming that someone with a James Bond type of brain, raised to the nth power, had managed it, what of the aftermath? Can it be believed that there are several hundred people who know the truth about one of history's greatest crimes and that, in the five years since the assassination, there has been no leak whatever? What about deathbed confessions? Surely, few would care to meet their Maker, with such a crime upon their souls, unshriven. Penn Jones' grisly (though actuarially inaccurate) mortality tables indicate there has been ample opportunity for deathbed confessions in the case, yet, there have been none. It is a pleasurable pastime, and relatively easy for an agile mind to conjure up conspiracies, perceive plots and fabricate fantasies, and then weave together various bits and pieces of the sprawling Warren Report to support their ideas. But the simple, stark, monolithic and inescapable fact remains: in the five years since the assassination, not one hard, proven, evidentiary fact has appeared to support the conspiracy theory.

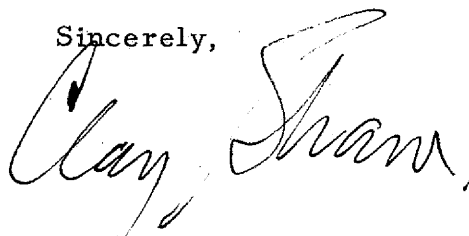
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Finally, the psychological portrait of Oswald which emerges from the biographical data available, convinces me that the actions attributed to him are quite reasonable and consonant with his personality; and that he is far more likely to have acted alone than in concert with anyone. I suppose the really troubling thing is the incongruity of what happened in Dealey Plaza. Whether we know it or not, most of us do expect life to follow art. We feel that great events should have the logic and consistency we demand of our better novelists and playwrights. And when death comes for a great statesman, we expect him to come in full panoply, with nodding black plumes, not in the form of a poor, psychotic, little loser, crouched behind his cardboard box barricade, with a cheap mail-order rifle clutched in his sweating hands. And yet, to criticize what has happened on the grounds that it shouldn't have happened, is to echo the childish complaint that life isn't as it should be. Events are, for better or worse, what they are. And, if what actually happened fails to coincide with our preconceived notions of what should have happened, well, then, so much the worse for our preconceived notions.

I trust you will pardon the length of this letter. Since you were kind enough to write, I felt I should explain my position to you in some detail.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Clay Shaw". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned to the right of the word "Sincerely,".