

Fred 4/9/69

Paster Monday

Dear Sylvia:

I was so pleased to have your letter of last week with all its news, good and not so good.

Harold Weisberg is such a disconcerting, perplexing "phenomenon" (I think that appellation is correct) that while I am often(?) glad to see him, I am usually uncomfortable in his presence after only a few minutes; he is, in short, a self-defeating, destructive person. The fact that he seemed to "have Garrison's number(sic)" rather early on and yet failed to extricate himself from the Orleans Fraeus bespeaks a severe falling of nerve and lack of integrity that he shares with those others who, unlike him, harboured no doubts about Jolly Green's total lack of integrity. Yet even he is, as you relate, saying in effect "just wait 'til the perjury trial brings in a verdict of guilty". What about the manifest perjury of all (or many) of the prosecution witnesses?

My evening at the Fred Newcombs was most interesting. I took him to be a rather laconic individual (this was my first real conversation with him although we met a couple of years ago when I went to pick up Harold there one evening) rather taken with his own work and quite justifiably I felt. His wife is a rather attractive girl, several years his junior and their blonde daughter (I think there are other children though they were not present) is quite attractive, even beautiful. There was something of the Quaker about Fred's wife. Self-possessed to the point of rigidity and markedly reserved, she seemed to exude an almost fanatical control both on her words and feelings. The daughter spoke not a word in the three hours I spent with them. There may be an explanation for all of this. Fred, apparently, has suffered a great deal at the hands of Marcus, Jaffee and Field and it has undoubtedly left a mark especially in view of the fact that much of this "treatment" is so recent. I felt that I was being watched or studied for my reaction to his slides as well as my "position"

on the latest caper of this or that member of the 'civic community'. (It is a sad commentary on that group that the focus of interest today is shifted from the WR or the Assassination of JFK to intramural stances by this or that researcher.)

The most interesting moment of the evening was the presentation of his most recent study entitled "The Last Train From Dealey Plaza". It is a fascinating piece of legerdemain as to how the railroad car(s) on one of two spur tracks behind the concrete pergola have unaccountably disappeared from the various films of the shooting. He attempts to show that they have been air-brushed away by retouching at the hands of an expert and that, indeed, an informed study of various photos show this to be true. I have no way of evaluating the conclusions of his work, although it has seemed to me that photographic evidence lacks that ultimate credibility that final certainty that is often demanded in a court of law. Even in terms of "public acceptance" the famous Oswald photo-study of Fred is in the final analysis undercut by the fact that LIFE magazine equivocated about the photo and (my memory is hazy at this point) the expert photographic witness before the WG averred that he could not rule out a composite. The defenders of the WR are then in opposition to maintain that they 1) never made claims about the authenticity of the photo in question (even though they used it, most effectively, to sell the lone-assassin theory) and 2) it isn't germane to a reconstruction of the actual crime anyway (which might well be disputed). Having said all this, I am nonetheless impressed and hope that Fred's study is made available to other non-journeymen photographers for their critique.

I neglected to thank you for your very fine review in Commonweal which I had missed. Thanks for xeroxing it for me. It was gratifying that a journal of their (sometimes) calibre ~~was~~ fortunate enough to snap you up in this matter.

Glad you enjoyed the tapes. I'm enclosing the Kunkin garbage (pardon me).

