

15 November 1965

Dear Maggie,

It was very sweet of you to telephone Sunday morning. On the whole, the broadcast went well, I think. There was no hair-pulling, shouting, or other indignity. On the contrary, it was for once a calm and objective discussion in which we did manage collectively to include many more facts than are usually heard in this kind of exchange. Of course, there was no opposition--it is axiomatic that those who come to defend the WR do not know the contents. And poor Charles Kramer was utterly unfamiliar with the case, and really came hoping to discuss the Ruby trial, with which he probably is familiar, as he is a good friend of Belli's (and like Belli, specializes in negligence litigation).

The other "defender" was my old friend Curtis Crawford, who was really much more on our side than against us; in fact, he is both well-informed and fair, so that he interceded to support rather than to attack, on several occasions.

We started the discussion with the autopsy findings, thanks to Randi (the moderator), who led off with a question to Fox on that, and spent almost an hour on the contradictory evidence on the location and nature of the wounds; and I think some important points were made. Then we proceeded to the ammunition, and to the statement in the WR (recent and current) which I flatly called an invention--thus paining Kramer again. In insisting throughout that Fox in his book and the rest of us in the discussion had no right to impugn the WC's motives, he unwittingly gave away a great deal--urging that, all right, so there were errors in the WR, so there were omissions, so the investigation was incomplete--but that is no reason to question integrity and motive, etc. (the usual drivel).

When the question came up of the theater patrons, Kramer attempted to defend the WC for hearing only two patrons, saying (in legalisms) that if the facts had been established by interview with all the patrons, it was not necessary for the WC to hear each and every one--And I informed him, to his obvious surprise and embarrassment, that the other patrons had never been interviewed by any authority and that we did not even know their names.

At one point I started an exposition of the Tippit/radio log entries, to explain that the weight of the evidence was that the official version of Tippit's movements ("central Oak Cliff") was completely inconsistent with the record and probably a gross fiction. I had not got past the so-called 12.45 instruction when we were interrupted by a commercial; Kramer took the occasion to send me a note saying, let's leave that, I think we have exhausted it. I fired back a note saying that I had not yet got started. Nevertheless, we did not manage to return to the Tippit business, to my frustration.

Fox did not participate too actively but was very good in his replies when questions were put to him or when he sometimes volunteered remarks. Joe Lobenthal was excellent, although he did overlook one factual matter in discussing the palmprint on the rifle, and Curtis Crawford toyed with him a bit on that, not allowing me to intercede as I wished--but I finally did manage to get it said that the WC accepted the explanation of the barrel markings as a proof of the authenticity of the palmprint without investigating to see if that could have been fraudulent or determining how the traces of powder which Day thought were so unmistakable could have vanished by the time the rifle reached Washington. I also got in quite a bit of material on the Mauser--especially the failure to show the rifle to Weitzman and have him testify whether or not it was the same weapon he had found, the concealment of Boone's testimony, the withholding of Day's so-called written description of the rifle on Friday afternoon and Dhority's written description at 9 pm that same day--which the WC must have realized were crucial documents in establishing the identity of that rifle.

Crawford delivered a too-long exposition of his reasons for believing the magic bullet theory, based on his interpretation of the Zapruder film, but got so bogged down both in the length and technicality of his remarks that I doubt if anyone in the audience who was not an expert on the WR understood what he was talking about. But he was particularly helpful when I brought up the WC's double standard with witnesses (ie rejecting Seth Kantor, accepting Brennan), upholding the view that gross bias was clearly at work, when Kramer tried to minimize the shocking standard of judgment which the WC used.

The five hours (really less than four, if you count the coffee-break the commercials and the inane platitudinous and irrelevant sermons from Randi) went very quickly indeed; it is surprising how little of the case can be covered in that span of time, even in orderly and polite discussion. The tape will probably be replayed in six or eight weeks on a Sunday midnight, when the program is not live.

Meanwhile, Bill Crehan called last night, with many head-swelling and generous comments about the program and about my contribution in particular. He cautioned me that agents would be breaking down my door, because I was to the (radio) manner borne, and similar exaggerations. But (and this is significant) he said also that his wife, who has an LP record business, contacted the station to obtain a tape of the program with a view to issuing an edited version on an LP for commercial sale! If that proves possible and the station does not put obstacles in her path, we may have a very effective new weapon against the WR --not the one tape, of course, but I can envisage a whole series. What do you think?

I should also mention that dear Jones Harris called to say that he had not listened (he was "out") but that his friend whose name utterly escapes me this moment but he is the author of "The Night of the Hunter," called him, knowing of his interest in the case but not knowing that Jones and I knew each other, raving about the program (he stayed the whole way, to 5 am) and about the factual information I had introduced. (I am so blank on names for some reason today that I also forget the name of another friend of Jones Harris, the FBI informer who recanted and admitted that a number of people then in jail had been sent there on his perjured accusations against them. Matusow, that is the name, Harvey Matusow who now calls himself, if I recall what Jones said, Marshall Matusow. This is the kind of thing that makes me regard Harris with some reserve.)

You know already that Lillian Castellano phoned yesterday, after your call, and about her letters from Salandria and the possibility of an article in Liberation. If she decides to go ahead with it, and I hope that she does, I think that you could be of enormous help to her, with your considerable literary talents and judgment. I have the impression that she has not done much writing and will need some advice.

I am very curious to hear more about Dave's new witness re grassy knoll, and other developments--especially if and when you hear from Thomas B. But do please take care of your health, Maggie, and don't overdo. Will write again or phone when there is further news, and will send you the tape of the Randi business as well as the tapes I have from you on loan, and the panoplies, just as soon as I can manage. Much affection and gratitude, as always,