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Mrs. Sylvia Meagher
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Dear Sylvia,

Guess who the Girl in the Polka-Dot Dress is. Give up? Okay, check under the table for microphones, watch out for people with briefcases, chamber a round in your .45, move to a secluded spot in a desert away from suspicious-looking rocks and cactus, and swear on a stack of George C. Thomsens that you will be struck with writer's cramp if The Enemy (unspecified) finds out. The Girl in the Polka-Dot Dress is none other than Nancy Ferrin Rich.

There. Doesn't that put everything in perspective? Doesn't that explain a lot? Yes, indeed. It seems that startling intelligence was one of Boxley's major contributions to the New Orleans mess. Garrison swallowed it, and was on the verge of a press conference when the staff forced him to open Boxley's files to them for the first time. Cursory examination by them and ubiquitous Harold Weisberg showed Boxley's airtight connecting of the JFK, RFK and King assassinations to be almost humorous in its nonsense. So they tried to coax Boxley to come into the office and defend his work; he refused for a week. Exit Boxley.

Boxley may not have been a lone psychopath, since he came up with some mutually consistent "witnesses" to actions supporting his allegations. These people looked good enough to Penn Jones that he still accepts the truth of Boxley's assertions.

There are some indications that sleight of hand was pulled on Garrison's investigators and others all over the country, in what looks suspiciously like a fairly well-orchestrated campaign to make sure that nobody would stumble over viable information. If there was such an effort, the wide-eyed eagerness of people to swallow it, and their general inexperience in matters investigative, led to hundreds and hundreds of hours being wasted on palpable irrelevancies and impossibilities.

When New Orleans became interested in Fred Lee Crisman, a petty hoodlum in Tacoma, Washington long known for his connections with the financial end of organized crime, a man claiming to be a freelance writer from the Bay area appeared and told Edd Jeffords he was doing a story on gypsies, a topic Edd was then researching for his newspaper. But all he asked about was Crisman, who was at that time getting cozy with the local gypsies, apparently because there was a sizable OEO pilot project planned for the Tacoma gypsies. After Edd had dinner with this man and dropped him off at his hotel, he was followed home by two men in a car with California plates.

Mrs. Sylvia Meagher, 2

Shortly thereafter a man showed up at Edd's paper and the local Better Business Bureau, claiming to be an ex-CIA private investigator working for an ex-FBI agent, asking questions about Crisman. He said his name was E. Carl McNabb, and asked that any information be sent to a post office box in Goleta, California. I had occasion to visit Los Angeles soon after, and was told by Jaffe that this man was really Jim Rose, former CIA pilot working for Garrison under Turner. When I saw Turner, he said that "Rose" is really E. Carl McNabb, and confirmed his having been a CIA pilot. The only trouble with all this is that some of the less hysterical in Los Angeles were suspicious of the man, and sent Edd a photograph, which he showed to the two people in Tacoma who met McNabb. He got one positive identification and one probable. The photograph was of Justin Steve Wilson, who in 1963 was a member of Patrick's Raiders, a private, tiny, anti-Castro army. The original photograph showed him in camouflage fatigues and carrying a Thompson submachine gun.

Then the plot (excuse the expression) really started thickening. Crisman has been an object of keen interest by local and federal authorities for some time, and there was a fat file on the man in the State Attorney General's office. It disappeared. Crisman turned out to have impeccably suspicious credentials in both Southern California (Raymond Broshears knew him, or claimed to, and there are a few hints here and there that Bradley did, too) and New Orleans (he has long been a close friend of Ferrie's buddy "Bishop" Beckham, and says he used to do writing for McKeithen). When Crisman was subpoenaed, he said that Beckham had brought to this area \$300,000 in "Free Cuba" funds, and that if Garrison found it, he would find his conspiracy.

Then up popped Sprague with the totally wrong allegation that the third tramp in the arrest photos was Crisman! Dick has done such wonderful work finding photos and cataloguing them that I hesitate to be harsh, but he gets wide of the mark sometimes when interpreting them. The man in the photos bears some resemblance to Crisman, but only in the sense that thousands do. The only full-face photo of the tramp is far away enough to be almost devoid of anything but gross points of identification.

It turned out that New Orleans discovered Crisman about a year and a half ago when one of Crisman's associates went to New Orleans and fingered him -- to none other than Boxley. My normally unsuspecting self began wondering because this joker is still a close associate of Crisman. He even let Crisman manage his campaign here last year when he ran in the Democratic primary for State legislature. Edd, of course, is known on his newspaper as one of the local critics, so he was assigned to write the stories on Crisman's being subpoenaed (he already knew Crisman from the gypsy business, and distrusted him mightily). The articles were just straight narrative reporting, but Edd kept bumping into Crisman's friend in circumstances indicating other than coin-

Mrs. Sylvia Meagher, 3

cidence: taking his picture, recording his comments, etc.

Then the crowning blow. We heard from Sprague that Turner told him of a man who, from the description had to be another of Crisman's partners in crime, once ran a phony export-import firm in Texas with an unlisted telephone (lights flash, bells go off, minds boggle en masse with but a single thought: CIA, the magic word), using an alias that appears in the volumes.

Impressive, right? All that strange information! All those weird actions! Mere coincidence? Hardly, with corroboration of allegations coming from southern California, Texas, and even our very back yard. Gee, gang, maybe we've really got something this time. I heard that Garrison wanted to arrest the whole crew, but the staff threatened to quit. They finally compromised on Bradley.

While we in Washington were closest to the situation and might have been able to determine if, indeed, there were grounds for suspecting Crisman, we never saw the file, or any part of it. All we ever got was a one-page letter from Burton informing us of the amazing fact that Our Fred seems to have been paymaster for the assassination conspiracy. Poor CIA! The budget has been so bad and the staff is so overworked that it has to enlist a fringe character like Crisman to deliver its cash. I guess that's just about the highest-level conspiracy I ever heard of.

All this is not by way of raising a stab-in-the-back theory, by any means (one already has, involving Bethell, naturally). The Crisman business and allied happenings were palpably irrelevant to the Shaw trial. But having various sources add to and confirm each other, having things mesh so well, and having people act in such suspicious fashions (funny things were even happening to Edd's mail, for God's sake -- no wonder he bought a gun), indicates that the whole razz-matazz may have been staged for the benefit of the Children's Crusade. It may well be that some people were expending some effort to make sure that only the most irrelevant foolishness came to the attention of the credentials-carriers.

In L.A., I heard about another instance wherein Hal Verb, who is too nice a guy to think Evil Thoughts about incredible people, was driving a fellow who claimed to have information on the assassination, information a la New Orleans. The gentleman in question had expressed fears for his life. Lo and behold, a glance in the rear-view mirror shows they are being followed. No doubt about it, they were being followed by someone who did not seek to disguise this. Hal's guest, after a few blocks, drew a gun and said that if the following continued one more block, he was going to shoot. Hal practically had a heart attack on the spot. But by the most amazing coincidence, the follower turned immediately. Surprise!

Mrs. Sylvia Meagher, 4

Anyway, I do think that Big Jim's brigade was the target of false information by some people who injected it with some finesse and thoroughness. Of course, it never could have happened to an investigation that had substantial incriminating information at its disposal, since I am certain that such "hard" evidence would have been more than enough to keep a host of investigators busy, but a little insurance never hurts.

It never could have worked if the dominant characteristic of the field men had been anything other than inexperience, and if their naivete had not been reinforced and encouraged by the people in responsible positions in New Orleans.

I have not communicated my thoughts on this matter to those still sitting at the feet of the Master, because their busy little minds would be sure to see a lot that simply isn't there. Before you could say, "Shaw really did it," there would be a supertheory wherein the dynamic and effective D.A. became a passive victim of superplotters. This would conveniently explain his little lapses. The faithful could even acknowledge that Garrison made mistakes, since this explanation would leave the man in an intellectually understandable position. He would remain a hundred percent good guy.

Once paranoid reasoning gets you, extricating oneself is damned hard. I had thought that some of my associates in other parts of the country might be interested in my comments on trial tactics, since I have legal training and they don't. So I praised Dymond and flayed Garrison, from a purely technical standpoint unrelated to the substantiality of the evidence. The reaction was, from a couple of people, about as defensive as I have ever seen.

Thank you so much for your review of Flammonde's book. I read the "Evergreen" excerpts and decided not to buy the thing, unless I suddenly found myself with a lot of money I wanted to get rid of in a hurry. I think the last time that happened was about ten years ago.

I think the only matter of substance to come from the Shaw trial is that the possibility of Oswald's having met Ferrie and/or Shaw would bear some scrutiny by an objective reinvestigation. Needless to say, this no more makes Shaw guilty of conspiracy than a recipe for pizza makes toothpaste. There are a host of non-conspiratorial reasons why, if Shaw met Oswald, he might not have a consuming desire to admit it, no matter what the circumstances were.

I always have considered 544 Camp Street to be a good lead, so I was disappointed, but not surprised, to hear nary a peep about it during the trial. I don't suppose I had a right to expect anything else.

I join you in hoping that Jackson can suspend his superhawk

Mrs. Sylvia Meagher, 5

proclivities long enough to listen about the assassination. I had hoped to see him during Easter recess, but great affairs of state, like cavorting before television cameras at the local baseball stadium, precluded it. Ah, the responsibilities of power!

I long ago decided that if even Martin Bormann was known to disagree with the Warren Commission, I would trek through South American jungles and sneak past ex-SS guards to get a written statement out of him that could be used to coax money out of the local Nazis. So I have no particular qualms about approaching Jackson, or about leaving my old McCarthy button at home if and when we meet. My only real problem is how to scare the Hell out of the man by showing how vital a new investigation is, without going into the policy changes that occurred after John Kennedy was murdered.

Anyway, I intend to have a set of the Report and 26 volumes at hand when I talk to Jackson, so there will be no possibility of misunderstanding the quality of the evidence.

Remember my questions about the statement in the Epstein article regarding Oswald's attending the Powers trial? The mystery has, I think, been cleared up by our local scholar, Larry Haapanen. One of Oswald's letters to Robert mentions in passing that he saw Powers in Moscow. Larry has obtained photographs of the audience at the trial, but has been unable to find anyone who might be Oswald.

Speaking of Epstein, how did your challenge to him turn out? In Dave Lifton's Garrison packet was your letter to Epstein asking some pointed questions about his handling of the Commission in his "New Yorker" article, and I would be quite interested to know the upshot of the controversy.

For a short break from putting together the Jackson presentation, I wrote a gag obituary of Penn Jones for "Probe," involving his being found in 350 copies of the "Midlothian Mirror," mysterious companions calling themselves Mark, Harold and Jim who are really tramps arrested in Dealey Plaza, a man who failed to pay his property taxes in Langley, Virginia, and a power blackout in Asia during which someone stole Japan and left toothmarks all over the Himalayas. But I am having second thoughts about it: few would understand the rather esoteric references, and it would just make Penn angry.

Did I mention that Fensterwald was out here? He is a nice guy, and seems to have done a good job trying to get the autopsy material, but he is more prosecutive than the D.A., as it were. He still thinks Boxley and Nagell are legitimate. I think he is also too ready to jump to conclusions about connections between the three assassinations.

Mrs. Sylvia Meagher, 6

Two last items: in Marina's testimony, when asked about how a puny little thing like her could physically restrain big old Lee, as she sometimes said she did over the Nixon incident, she confided to the Commission that when she got angry, she got strong, but when he got angry, he got weak. "Parity," she called it.

Finally, about your Subject Index: I asked you some time ago if there were available copies, and you said you knew of none. My interest in obtaining one still stands, so if you ever run into one that is not outrageously overpriced, I want it.

Thanks for your letter, and keep at it.

And good night, Clay Bertrand, whatever you are.

Best wishes,



George E. Rennar