

9 June 1965

Dear Mr. Stamm,

Thank you very much for your welcome and interesting letter. First, let me try to clear up the questions about the material I sent to you. The newspaper clipping from The Record came to me "as is" through Isabel Davis (our classmate) from a mutual friend who lives in Paramus. She is newly-wed and aware, as through a glass darkly, that I am a Warren Report-buff. She meant well but being remote from anything resembling research apparently attached no importance to the part of the story that is omitted.

The Conlon letter appeared in Analog about a year ago. Analog is a magazine of Science fiction, available at most newsstands. I don't have a copy but my impression is that it is published in New York City. As to the significance of the letter, to me it is the irony of the epithet "humanitarian rifle" and the statement that it never hurt anyone on purpose, posed against the Commission's solemn conclusions about the murder rifle in the face of so many unresolved questions, apart from its lamentable reputation in the mother-country.

By the way, if my recollection is correct, you made some remarks early in the course at New School about the rifle sling, and the quite different sling which can be seen in the notorious photograph of "Oswald" holding the rifle and evil literature. I will be very interested in your impressions of the two slings and how you interpret them in relation to Oswald's alleged ownership of the rifle. Also, do you know what a "thumb safety" is? It is one of the features in the Klein's advertisement offering the Carcano (both the 36" and the 40.2" models). The ads do not offer a sling as part of the purchase, but some other rifles on the same page of ads do specify that a sling is included in the price.

I received Liebeler's paper on Saturday last and it is now reposing with Isabel. It did not infuriate me quite as much as I expected, although it was predictable enough to leave my original opinion of Commission's counsel undisturbed. It does have points of interest, I agree. It is too bad that Liebeler, when he was forced by facts to abandon his "fantasy" theory, did not extend the reexamination still further, to the various areas of preconception and bias with respect to Oswald's character, personality, and history.

Frankly, my first impulse when I read in your letter that you are going to Dallas was to holler, "Wait! I'll go with you!" But I will probably have to settle for a trip to Washington to look at the Zapruder frames, during my vacation (middle July to middle August). The expense is not the problem—it is caring for my cat, and the fact that if I travel at all, conscience will force me to Florida, to visit my father. Now, I would like to give some thought to how you can best approach matters in Dallas, but let me make a few comments off the top of my head, for what they are worth.

First, it would be good if you could take a camera with you and photograph as much as you can of that still-mysterious area, the grassy knoll. We don't know the height or the trajectories of rifle shots from various points. Try to locate the white fence mentioned by S.M. Holland (where he saw footprints), in the vicinity of which he saw also a puff of white smoke. It would be helpful if you would photograph the traffic signs. Originally there were three, between the Depository and the overpass—R.L. Thornton; Stemmons; and Fort Worth, in that order. I am told by a fellow-investigator in California (Mrs. Castellano) that after changing the position of the signs (see Hudson's testimony in 7H), the civic authorities have confused the position still more by removing one sign completely, so that there are only two at present.

Mrs. Castellano is an advocate of the storm-drain-theory (see Michael Paine's testimony in 2H, a few pages before the end) and the source of a reference to that theory which is found in Joesten's pamphlet "Gaps in the Warren Report." She makes some rather forceful arguments but I was not inclined to take this very seriously until I received an excited phonecall from her a few weeks ago. She told me that she had commissioned a Dallasite to photograph the storm drain which can be seen clearly in CE 875 (the SS on-site test photo album), Volume XVII pp 886-887, between the Depository and the white steps which ascend the grassy knoll. Imagine her amazement when he reported back that the storm drain is no longer there—it had been filled in! If you could look into this, and photograph the area which corresponds to the site of the drain in CE 875, it might turn out to be very important.

About getting into the Depository: you will see from Mrs. Reid's testimony (3H 280) that it was not unusual for employees to be visited by friends and family and that the management made no objection to that practice—at least, not before 11/22/63. Perhaps you could strike up acquaintance with one of the witnesses (some no doubt have changed jobs in the intervening time), either by correspondence before you make your trip, or by contacting a likely candidate once you are at Dallas, at home. It seems to me that someone like Victoria Adams, who was dismissed rather peremptorily in the Report and who seems like an intelligent girl from her testimony, might possibly be sympathetic and unintimidated. Another good possibility might be Wesley Frazier. He does not seem particularly intelligent; on the other hand, I got the impression that he liked Oswald, and that he was quite an honest boy, sticking to his story despite what must have been imposing influence to adjust it a little bit. Eddie Piper is another witness whom I liked, but he is a Negro and not in a position to take risks.

If you can get a photograph or even a personal glimpse of Billy Lovelady, you could at least form an opinion of the degree of his resemblance to Oswald. I would have no difficulty in accepting the explanation that it was he in the doorway, not Oswald, in the Altgens photo if only the Commission had provided us with a photograph that corroborated the resemblance, and if I had not heard from various sources that he went to rather extreme lengths to avoid being photographed by "snoopers" after the assassination.

Another interesting exercise would be to use the phone in Dallas to see if any of the witnesses have moved away, especially under unusual circumstances. By the way, if you could have a talk with Jean Lollis Hill she might have a lot more to say now that the case is "closed."

Personally, I am particularly curious about one Honest Joe, who is mentioned in an incidental way in Jean Hill's testimony and in Sorrels'. He is the owner of a pawnshop on Commerce Street and his station wagon was rather conspicuous at Dealey Plaza at about 12.15 pm. He was also outside of the jail when Ruby shot Oswald. Now, in the Hearings you will find an affidavit from David Goldstein, owner of Dave's House of Guns, on the same block of Commerce Street as Honest Joe—whose name is really Ruby or Ruben Goldstein! Both establishments seem to have in common the sale of firearms and a seemingly-remote connection with the case.

I am delighted that you are going to do some on-site tests of your own re taxis and buses. I am not at all convinced that Oswald asked Whaley to let him out at the 700 block of North Beekley instead of the 500 block, as Whaley said originally. Furthermore, while I can understand his unwillingness to take the taxi direct to the boarding house, I am surprised that a person as frugal as Oswald was reputed to be would go beyond the address and walk back, instead of getting out before the address and paying less on the meter. For that reason, I have always wondered what kind of establishments or residences are found at 500 and at 700 North Beekley, and whether in fact Oswald took the taxi for some purpose other than going to his room.

Probably I will think of six far more important possibilities for your research as soon as I seal this letter and send it off. In that case, I will phone or write again. Here is an additional thought already—there was apparently a caterer or vender of food who came regularly to the Depository and supplied sandwiches to those who wanted to buy their lunch. The Commission of course never took any interest in him or in questioning him as to whether or not Oswald purchased lunch from him regularly, occasionally, or on the day of the assassination when, according to his widow, Ruth Paine and Wesley Frazier, he did not take lunch from home. As none of the official agencies seem to have contacted him at any time, he might be less reluctant to talk than some of the witnesses. Maybe you could buy a sandwich from him and one bite will lead to another?

There is a possibility that something may be brewing with respect to my suggestion to Lobenthal the last evening of class that the testimony would make a marvelous subject for dramatic readings. He knew someone who might be interested and I asked him to discuss it, and the person was apparently very taken with the idea. So far as I know, they are studying the legal problems which may be involved, as well as technical and money requirements; and I will be really pleased if something does come of it, as it has been a pet notion ever since I read the first transcripts in November.

Thanks for telling me about "Et Tu, Ruby?" Perhaps I will send for it, despite the vehicle in which it appears. Best regards,

Sincerely,

Sylvia Meagher

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*L.D. re Sethi Kantor's notes re  
photo developing shop Elm St.*