

4 October 1965

Dear Ed,

I am very glad that you were able to be here yesterday, it was a most agreeable surprise to hear that I could expect you after all. We all felt, I think, that you gave us a unique and important insight into matters to which we had had no access; we were all struck also by your dispassionate and clear evaluation of the questions you examined.

Of course I am sorry that you had to leave before our rather heated discussion of the search of the TSBP was resolved, because I do believe and have always believed that this is a matter of cardinal importance. At least four witnesses, possibly five, reported within minutes of the shooting that they had seen a man and/or rifle in a particular window on the fifth or sixth floor—Brennan, Ruins, Edwards, Fischer, and an unidentified man (who may or may not have been Brennan) who reported his observations to Sawyer and provided the basis for Sawyer's transmittal of the 12.45 description of the suspected assassin (see 6H 322). I find it impossible to understand why Sawyer did not send men to that specific location on the basis of the observations reported to him. Even before that report, Sgt Harkness had brought Amos Ruins to Sawyer; instead of sending Harkness up to search the area specified by Ruins, Sawyer sent Harkness to search freight cars in the railroad yards (6H 312). It does not seem to me that chaos nor confusion can be the explanation for this failure of standard police procedure or this violation of plain common sense, for one need not be a trained police officer—much less an Inspector—to respond automatically to a report like Ruins' or the other witnesses' reports by sending officers to the suspected location at once. Harkness had both the authority and the responsibility, and certainly the experience, to have sent a search party urgently.

Yet Mooney, the first police officer to make any deliberate search of the sixth floor, did so without even knowing what floor he was on (3H 284). Boone, when he arrived, went directly to the sixth floor because everyone else was going there—after the three shells were found by Mooney—and after Sawyer told him that the five floors below the sixth floor were in process of being searched or had already been searched (3H 292).

Personally I find it impossible to consider it inconsequential that neither the Warren Report nor any witness relates the search of the sixth floor southeast corner to the eyewitness reports of a man at a window in that location. In a situation of chaos and confusion, it is such reports by eyewitnesses that create order and focus an investigation at a precise site. Here we have a police inspector who, hearing that shots were fired from a window near the top of the Depository, promptly sends the reporting officer to search railroad freight cars. Can that be ascribed to chaos or even to colossal incompetence and stupidity?

Before the Hearings and Exhibits were published, one wondered if the eyewitnesses had not been produced well after the fact to strengthen the case against Oswald—for if they were genuine witnesses, why did the police behave as if there were no such witnesses and no clues to the location of the assassin where evidence was later found seemingly in the course of a floor-by-floor search? Later, on reading the testimony and documents which established contemporaneous records for Duins, Brennan, Fischer, etc., I was all the more perplexed. The witnesses (and I do not even include Arnold Rowland) were real and I saw no grounds for suspecting any longer that their stories were fabrications. How, then, explain the baffling failure of the police (not just ~~Harrison~~ ^{Sawyer} but numerous other officers, Dallas Police or Sheriff's men, who had heard first-hand reports pinpointing the sniper's location but who made a floor-by-floor search instead of converging at that site. I have not even mentioned the three men (Jarman Norman Williams) on the fifth floor, who supposedly reported hearing shells ejected, etc. And still no one goes there?

If the witnesses are not fraudulent, and the Dallas police by the dozen are not stalling to give someone time to escape (which I find implausible), why don't they send men up to the sixth floor? My own very tentative theory, for whatever it is worth, is that they were so fully convinced that the shots had come from another location—grassy knoll or railroad yards—that they simply could not take the other reports (Depository window) seriously. Convinced, not merely by the mass movement of people towards that area but by stronger evidence which is no longer discussed or permitted to be discussed.

But enough of that. Again, I'm glad that you came yesterday and I hope we will stay in touch.

Sincerely,

Sylvia Meagher