

2 June 1968

Mr. Kerry Thornley
726 South 51st Street
Tampa 33619

Dear Mr. Thornley,

Your letter of 29 May 1968 was most interesting. I have already tended to the matter mentioned in your postscript, and would now like to establish an understanding with you, as a matter of principle, about the confidentiality of anything you have written or may write to me. I take it for granted, and I hope that you will confirm this explicitly, that you do not object to the use of the information by me or by others for the specific purpose of enlisting support, making the facts known, and preventing a miscarriage of justice in your case or that of anyone else who, like you yourself, has been victimized and suffered false accusation. At the same time, when you designate particular information as confidential and not to be disclosed to anyone else, I will of course fully respect your stipulation. I hope that this is agreeable and will look forward to your response.

I am not sure that I share your views about retribution, although I do detest the penal system with all its sadism and savagery. Certainly, in the context of the Warren Report, I feel intensely that it is a right and a duty to expose publicly the conscious falsehood and fraudulence of this document and to hold its authors to account for their deception, their violence to history, and their stigmatization of an innocent man as a "lone assassin" and a murderer. Whether or not the real assassins are ever identified or brought to justice, this to me is secondary to clearing the name of Lee Harvey Oswald if he is, as I believe, entirely innocent, and to correcting the historical record, as well as exposing the dishonor in which the Warren Commission and its lawyers have steeped themselves, and the even more disgusting shenanigans of a district attorney who is attempting to capitalize on the shameful deeds of the Commission by even more ugly and cynical railroading of the innocent.

As you yourself concede, to remain aloof may serve to facilitate the violation by others of the rights of an individual. You have therefore attempted to prevent the railroading of Heindel. If you did have information which implicated a particular individual, I would have to question your remaining silent (although I would certainly not expect you or anyone else to co-operate with Garrison under any circumstances, since his dishonesty is so abundantly clear)—especially if breaking silence might help Clay Shaw or some other victim to clear himself. But I think that we are basically in agreement on this.

If I may say so, I think that you lean over backwards—and to your ultimate disadvantage—when you leave open the possibility that you did encounter Oswald and spent time with him, witnessed by Barbara Reid, with Oswald "unrecognized by me." I regard it as absolutely impossible that you and Oswald could have met again, any number of years after your association while in the Marine Corps, without recognizing each other. My mother had an experience some years before her death which greatly impressed me: when she was in her sixties, she went abroad to visit her niece and nephew in Israel, and to see that new country. During her stay, she encountered a woman, also in her sixties, who seemed poignantly familiar to her (as she seemed to the woman, too), although they agreed that their paths could never have crossed for at least 50 years. In the end, they finally came to remember that they had known each other as little girls of four or five, never to meet again for more than 55 years but still each with a fragmentary and haunting memory of the other.

That you and Oswald could have met and conversed after only some five years and that each of you failed to recognize the other, seems to me to be out of the question and just not to be believed. It seems to me that your position would be stronger and more credible if you categorically denied that you were in Oswald's company during the incident in question, and that you have no reason not to deny this absolutely on the basis of the account given in your 29 May letter to me.

I cannot throw any real light on Harold Weisberg's role vis-a-vis Barbara Reid or yourself. I had a somewhat troubled but basically friendly association with Harold between early 1965 and late 1967. He is a forceful, egocentric, and often difficult person, who did a basically sound and often brilliant critique of the Warren Report which was not really well-written, unfortunately, and then proceeded to alienate prospective publishers in a variety of tactless and ill-considered ways. I continue to think that his first book, Whitewash, was an important contribution. After that, it seemed to me that his work and his judgment deteriorated, and that he took on a burden of resentment and envy (of the comparative ease with which other critics had their work published by good houses, got reviews and recognition which he felt he deserved far more) which distorted his sense of balance still further. My sympathy with Harold sustained me through some difficult and exasperating situations but a real breach developed on the issue of Garrison (which ultimately alienated me from those critics who had been my most valued and trusted friends and colleagues —Salandria, Penn Jones, Ray Marcus, Majorie Field, Lillian Castellano, Bill Turner and others, but mainly Salandria, Marcus and Field, for whom I had enormous affection).

I terminated all contact with Harold Weisberg when I read his last book, Oswald in New Orleans. Although for months he had been urging me to hold in abeyance any assessment of Garrison's "case," he himself without awaiting the trial for which he insisted I must wait now wrote, in this book, that (in effect) Clay Shaw was Clay Bertrand, as if it was an established and unchallenged fact. I was shocked and appalled, and wrote to Harold protesting this prejudicial and wholly unwarranted assertion. And that was it.

But, from what I do know of Harold from the two years or so of our cooperation and friendliness, I cannot believe that his pursuit of Barbara Reid or his effort to convince others of your implication signifies any conscious or deliberate malice or cynicism. I am afraid that Harold really believes that you are implicated, with the same fanaticism that he believes much of the irrelevant nonsense in his latest book (O in N O) and in Garrison's "case" as a whole—which he claims he himself established and "gave" to Garrison in the first place, so of course he believes it with every last iota of his enormous self-esteem. But this in no way mitigates the damage he has done you. I am not quite so charitable as you toward such as Barbara Reid or Harold, even conceding that he does not intend to harm the innocent but is convinced he is pursuing the guilty. There are degrees of stupidity and self-deception to which no one is entitled and for which they cannot escape the consequences; and this is especially so in the case of critics of the Warren Report, who did a magnificent job, by and large, of uncovering its defects and falsehoods by using the objectivity, intelligence, and scepticism with which they are endowed but which they have relegated to mothballs in their gullible and inexcusable infatuation with the New Orleans D.A. I cannot imagine ever reconciling with them, even if and when they see the light, for I have lost all respect for and confidence in them, and regard them as only Jenners and Specters under the skin. Long ago I talked to one of the Warren Commission lawyers about a piece of "evidence" cited in the Report which was wholly false, only to be told that I was "intolerant." I hope that I am intolerant of cant, hypocrisy, lies, and injustice, and I hope to remain so, for to indulge in sentimentality, to condone in any degree, the abandonment of integrity by one's "friends" is to encourage, in the name of a false friendship, corruption and the victimization of others.

It happens that I am more to the Left, politically, than to the Middle or the Right--but as an individual, and with considerable contempt for The official Left, which stands in default of any pretense of morality on the issue of the assassination as well as on other major contemporary issues. But I don't require anyone to agree with me, and I am quite prepared to make all possible efforts on behalf of anyone being railroaded, however much I may differ with him on politics and even if he belongs to the John Birch Society or other organized madmen. No one may be railroaded, not even the CIA, and not even by a pompous blow-hard (excellent epithet!) who pretends to be on the side of the critics of the WR but who is really sabotaging their work and discrediting their position in a manner which must make the Commission--ers rejoice beyond their wildest hopes.

I was pleased to read in a clipping from a Miami paper that you recently expressed considerable scepticism about the Warren Report and about Oswald's guilt. This did not affect me, in terms of willingness to support your fight against Garrison, but it certainly did not displease me! Have you read my book, Accessories After The Fact? I would be glad to send you a copy on loan, if there is none available in your local library and if you feel able to spare the time and attention (it requires a rather painful degree of concentration by the reader).

Please let me know of any new developments. Meanwhile, all my good wishes,

Sincerely yours,

302 West 12 Street
New York, N.Y. 10014