

15 February 1966

Mr Harold Weisberg
Hyattstown, Md. 20734

Dear Mr Weisberg,

Thank you for writing to Mr Collier and authorizing me to see the manuscript. I went by yesterday at noon and had a very pleasant conversation with Mr Collier, after which I spent the remainder of the day and part of the night reading your book from cover to cover.

I believe that you have written an outstanding and brilliant attack on the Warren Report, and I marvel that you completed the job as early as you did. The scholarship is extremely careful and in a number of instances you have seen much farther into the evidence than others—myself included—who have analyzed the same aspect of the case. It is appalling that your manuscript has been circulating for so long without the deserved results. Your book should have been published as a major and definitive work. To compare it with Sylvan Fox's book is almost indecent, and that had a remarkable commercial success. Consequently, I am at a loss to understand why no publisher has grabbed the opportunity, if not from a sense of history and obligation, than at least out of intelligent self-interest.

My manuscript coincides with yours to a large extent. As I mentioned on the telephone, parallel "discoveries" and interpretations are inevitable when people of fairly similar perceptiveness attack the same body of information. Certainly I would have no difficulty whatever in accepting your conclusions and your evaluation, speaking very generally. As to the particular, in a number of instances you have made out a stronger case than I have; in other instances, I have made a fuller (though not necessarily stronger) presentation of the same material, having had the advantage of an additional year of time. My manuscript includes some aspects of the case that you have not treated—for example, a long chapter on "Hidell"—but that material supplements the charges against the Warren Report which are amply sustained in your manuscript and are not essential in that they introduce new elements of negligence, deception, etc.

I have no hesitation in saying that in some ways your book is tighter, better written, and more cohesive than mine, and that I would be happy to see yours in print, if it was "either/or". Therefore, I am enclosing a copy of the letter I received from Mr Welsh. I believe that you should write to him, indicating that I have sent you a copy of his letter to me, and offer him your manuscript. Provided, of course, that you are willing to consider piece-meal or serialized publication. If you prefer, I would be glad to write to Mr Welsh and urge him to contact you and request your ms. Let me know.

I am also enclosing (1) a copy of my chapter "The Proof of the Plot" in which you will see that our reasoning was quite similar in evaluating the Odio testimony and its implications; (2) a copy of the "Unanswered Letters" which constitute an appendix to my manuscript.

Now for some specific comments on your manuscript, including some very minor errors.

Page 7 You refer to an officer who saw nothing wrong in leaving his post, Vaughn I presume? If so, I question that he either left his post or was in any way irresponsible or careless. I base that not only on Vaughn's testimony but also on the description given of Tasker (15H 682-83), also the testimonial given by Capt Talbert (15H 189-90).

Page 14 The conversation with Jarman about the motorcade is mentioned in the Warren Report, pp 182-83, but of course deliberately placed there and not where it should have been, which is under the discussion of the prior knowledge of the motorcade route. Not only placed insidiously, but never confronted by the authors as to the significance of the conversation.

Page 21 Your point on the ~~man~~ witness of the tape is extremely acute and very damaging to the Commission. Although I did a very elaborate chapter on the paper bag (including the blanket and the history of Oswald's luggage etc), I completely overlooked that very important point and so far as I know, so did every other researcher.

Page 22 top, regarding the fingerprints on the paper bag--See 7H 143-44. Studebaker found a partial print, he says, and covered it with tape. But when it arrived at the FBI lab, not a whisper of tape or partial print. Very similar to the so-called palmprint on the rifle barrel, the clear traces of which had disappeared so mysteriously between Day's office and the FBI lab.

Page 27 On page 555 of the WR there is an assertion that when the rifle was found it contained a clip, followed by a footnote which refers to a page of Fritz's testimony and a page of Day's. However, there is not one word on the pages cited that authenticates the statement on page 555; nor anywhere else in the 26 volumes, so far as I could determine. Consequently, I am particularly suspicious of that ammunition clip.

Page 29 An index to Fritz's accuracy is his reference to the phone-call from FBI agent Drain, invoking the Warren Commission before it was even established.

Page 29 Only Mrs De Mohrenschildt saw the rifle in the closet, George did not.

Page 29 You say that Oswald did not load the stationwagon. Perhaps you intended to say "unload." You will recall that Ruth Paine testified that he was very industrious about loading the vehicle himself; she unloaded some things when they reached Irving but left the heavier articles for Michael Paine. Neither of them unloaded the blanket-wrapped "rifle" and neither saw it on the garage floor for some time after the return from New Orleans.

Page 32 You refer to Fritz's penchant for being photographed with the rifle. I remember seeing photos of Day with the rifle but not Fritz.

Page 36 Eugene Boone (not Luke)

Page 43 Malcolm Couch (not Virgil)

Page 47 Many of us have worked on the eyewitness testimony, including Zapruder, but to my knowledge you are the only one who recognized the crucial importance of his statement that he saw the President clutch his neck. I congratulate you most sincerely for that brilliant insight, which greatly strengthens the evidence that JFK was shot while obscured by the tree (I had reached that conclusion on a different basis, after viewing the Zapruder color slides at the Archives).

Page 51 Of course the car was unobstructed as it approached the corner of Houston and Elm and of course that was the logical position for a shot from that window. You will be amused by J Edgar Hoover's "explanation" of why there was not shot (5H 105).

Page 55 You are quite right in saying that the Commission does not indicate the nature of the investigation of the assignment of police cars. However, you will find information in CEs 2045, 2249 (p 50), 2645 and 2781, some of which exhibits contain items of collateral interest.

Page 59 penultimate paragraph - It was not the dispatcher who asked for a check on the laundry tag, it was Sgt Stringer (see CE 1974, page 925 of the volume). I have a long chapter on the jacket. Westbrook did not find it, as the WR repeatedly asserts in the face of his testimony that he did not find it. Moreover, he was not present as he testified when it was found, because he set out to look for the jacket about 12 or 14 minutes after "No 269 (Unknown)" reported finding it. I finally tracked down the identity of No 269, which only made me more suspicious than ever, because he is one of a 12-man squad on which Hutson also works. How could Hutson fail to recognize No 269, then?

Page 61 McDonald wrote a by-line story in the Dallas Morning News (11/24/63 I believe) in which he described the arrest in some detail. In that version, but never mentioned again anywhere, he says that he had drawn his gun and had it in his hand as he approached the suspect(s). Are we supposed to believe that Oswald tried to draw his own revolver (I don't believe he even had it) when the cop coming toward him had his own weapon out already?

Page 74 Of course the Commission ignored Oswald's report that he had directed a Secret Service man to the telephone booth; it would have consumed even more of the precious small time for getting him from the second floor to the bus. I have private information that the man who asked for directions to the telephone was not an SS agent but a newsman named Pierce Allman, who of course was never interviewed by ANYONE, even though he is a known eyewitness because of his BBC broadcast, replayed annually on non-commercial radio.

Page 76 I could not find any place in the WR where the Commission called Mrs Davis "Charlie". Are you sure of that statement?

Page 81 You refer to the search of the Paine residence on 11/23/63 "in the presence of FBI agents." I question that; so far as I could tell, the search party consisted of Stovall, Rose, Moore, and Adamcik of the Dallas Police, and McCabe of the Irving police. I have a long chapter on the Imperial Reflex camera, overlooked in all searches and ostensibly located at Robert Oswald's home, after his testimony, so that the chain-of-possession is unauthenticated by non-police witnesses and unauthenticated by Robert himself. AMAZING what they overlooked--not only the camera, but the famous "undated note," even though on 11/23/63 they were expressly leafing through books!

Page 82 I find your treatment of the photos and negatives of Oswald -with-rifle ambiguous. It is true that the evidence suggests a certain amount of manipulation but did you intend to leave the impression that the photos-and-negatives were actually found on the first search? or that they were fabricated? Do you in fact consider them authentic?

I share your dim view of the police alone in the garage for about 2 hours. If you have read "Invitation to an Inquest" by the Schneirs, you will find quite a parallel in the search of several days in the attic of the Albuquerque Hilton hotel by FBI agents working unobserved, who unquestionably fabricated a piece of documentary evidence which was crucial to the prosecution case against the Rosenbergs.

Page 99 The mystery of Curry's unanswered phone was known to the Commission before he testified in April, to say nothing of his deposition in 12H. But it was only on July 13, 1964 that they got around to asking him about that very sinister circumstance (15H 125)—and then dropped the subject, on the strength of his unsupported word.

Page 99 "With all the experts having identified the 'found' rifle as a Mauser..." I know you meant to say "as a Carcano." "Is there such an affidavit?" Yes, in CS 2003, page 228 of the volume.

Page 109 bottom Even Whaley (not McWatters) who saw two different jackets...etc

Page 130 bottom "five months (not minutes) prior to his application..."

Page 140 regarding the alleged \$1500 and the search of the banks, I did a small section on that, after discovering an exhibit indicating that Oswald had a savings account in an Fort Worth bank opened December 1958 (i.e., only 9 months before setting out for the USSR), in which he had only \$200! (See CE 1150)

Page 142 The Commission was even more unfair to Dial Ryder than you suggest, see CE 2003 pp 252-254, which gives a completely different picture of Greener's foreknowledge of the ticket.

Page 146 DeBrueys is high on my list, together with his cohort Manning Clements; they interviewed Bogard on 11/23/63 i.e. while Oswald was being interrogated but never took Bogard to see the lineup and never even told Fritz that they had turned up evidence of conspiracy — what else could you call a report that "Oswald" had said he expected to receive a substantial sum of money "soon"?

Page 155 It is true that the rifle holds six bullets, if they are loaded into the clip only; if one is placed in the chamber as well, the rifleman can begin with a load of seven.

Page 156 The fourth paragraph from the bottom is not always clear, especially the last sentence and the "only".

Page 183 end of line 6, "...which the Commission said was of exit (not entrance)..."

Again, I can only repeat my congratulations on your achievement, and my genuine admiration of a beautiful job done with unbelievable swiftness. I shall certainly rejoice to see your book published and if I can be of any help I will gladly do so.

I very much appreciate your willingness to let me see the manuscript. Please let me hear from you again, and certainly do let me know if you are coming to New York. I shall return the ms to Mr Collier without delay.

Yours sincerely,

SYLVIA MEAGHER