

30 September 1967

Dear Harold,

I am grateful for the copy of the Liebeler memorandum on the palmprint. I have typed an exact copy and enclose a carbon, for easy reference, while the xerox can always be reproduced as evidence. Incidentally, Liebeler's memorandum contains a few errors: he cites "9H" instead of "4H" and then on page 2, paragraph "2" line 2, the pivotal word "not" is omitted! Part for the course, etc.

My book has a chapter "The Palmprint on the Rifle" (rather, it is a section of a larger chapter) in which I raise all the questions in the memo and some additional ones. You will see it before long, I hope. I am told that the official publication date is November 30, but I will have some copies a few weeks earlier.

Also enclosed is a transcript of Garrison's recent interview on the Mike Wallace program. I am weary beyond words of explaining why I regard this man as a menace to legitimate criticism, and as a godsend to the Warren Commission. He has now accused Shaw, Ferris, Oswald, Ruby, and individuals in the Dallas Police, John Birch Society, Minutemen, White Russian community, and oil millionaires. He says "the corroborating evidence is in our files" but I say he is a liar, there is no such "evidence" in his files but only various suggestive materials or allegations (some of which I have seen or heard myself), and the (published) results of the work of the researchers. The net effect of his charges may be to confer immunity on those he accuses—some of whom may in fact be guilty.

When he cites material in the H & E, he is inaccurate and makes misleading statements, or claims there is material there which is not in fact there; even in describing some of the new photographic evidence (which I have seen myself, thanks to Dick Sprague's eagerness to share his materials with those interested) Garrison overstates or distorts what in fact is shown in the photograph, or what has been deduced about its timing or meaning.

You say in your letter of 9/27/67 (paragraph 3) that I am wrong if I think Garrison believes or has said Oswald was a member of a conspiracy to kill Kennedy; Harold, how else can one interpret the Garrison allegations about "P.O. 19106" former with which he links Oswald personally (not a mock-Oswald) to Shaw, whom he has accused? or his more recent charge that there is a phone number in Oswald's notebook, a "Pe" exchange, which is the same number from which Jack Ruby received two phone messages on June 6, 1967? In tying Oswald personally to these people (Shaw, Ruby, and Ferris) Garrison IS accusing Oswald of being part of a conspiracy to assassinate the President. However often he may reiterate that Oswald shot no one on 11/22/63, my impression is that Oswald was NOT party to any such conspiracy, nor even aware that one existed—though if acceptable evidence is ever produced that he was, evidence that meets the strictest standards, I would have to revise my thinking. But the "evidence" Garrison has produced against Oswald seems to me no less contrived and phony than that in the WR—although of course he confuses people and distracts them by his statements that Oswald shot no one or killed no one.

I am also somewhat weary of explaining why I "cooperated with the doctrine of the Epstein book" but I will try once more to state it, as simply as I can: I felt then, and I feel now, that the over-all effect of the Epstein book was so devastating to the WR and to the Commission that it fully warranted all the help that could be given, despite the fact that there were assessments in the book which I reject completely—i.e., that Oswald was one of two or more assassins; and that the "errors" of the Commission were innocent. I absolutely do not apologize for or regret my efforts on behalf of Inquest; nor do I regret those suggestions and additions that I was able to get Epstein to reflect in the text (although he subsequently did regret his failure to accept at least one suggestion that I made). Nor do I apologize for or regret the help I have given more recently to Thompson's book, Six Seconds in

Dallas, which also contains a certain amount of doctrine (re: the wounds) with which I do not agree, and is a bit equivocal about Oswald's involvement. I don't have to agree with every word in a book, and certainly there are honest differences of opinion on points of evidence. I do not accept some of Thompson's judgments (on the stretcher bullet, or the "Mauser," for example) but I think that his book as a whole is a forceful and important work, and a real contribution to legitimate criticism.

I appreciate very much your concern about the rift between Maggie and myself. I am afraid that, for the moment at least, nothing is to be done. I did not call Maggie "unprincipled" although you may consider that implicit in the remarks I did make. I would like to make it clear now that I do not believe for a moment that she ever does anything which she consciously knows to be unprincipled...but I do think that her thinking sometimes is confused, and that her loyalty to people like Lane leads her into inconsistent behavior and to a double standard which leads her to condone or to minimize on Lane's part what she would fiercely denounce on the part of others.

You say that it may turn out that I am wrong about Garrison because there is so much that I do not know; but what about the things that I DO know, as does everyone else, because he has made public pronouncements about these matters? No matter what he may come up with in due course of time, it will not convert a "PPD" into a "PG" nor will it erase from my recollection the fact that Garrison privately admitted in May that his so-called "code" was mistaken but that he would not retract it because it was an innocent mistake; and then, not only did he not retract it, but he had the temerity to reiterate it, in July, to Playboy. Is that an honest man? That code is no less dishonest and contrived than the single-missile hypothesis to which Specter gave birth. Is it okay to use Specter's methods to fight Specter? I would like to think that there is an unreconcilable, irreversible difference between us (the critics) and the authors of a dirty fraud, the WR, and that the difference involves meticulous respect for fact and detail, total integrity (or at least a commitment to strive for it), and contempt for lies and inventions, for WHATEVER purpose they are used. (Don't you suppose that the NC Lawyers managed to persuade themselves that their lies and inventions were in a good cause?)

Since Maggie was not willing even to discuss this with me, I could not see, as I said to her, that we could discuss anything. Much the same is true of Salandria, with whom I am no longer in touch, although we did not have an explicit break in so many words. I cannot accept the servile, unreasoning, adulation of Garrison by those who say they are committed to the truth and nothing but the truth, but excuse his outright lies as mere "errors." (Ray Marcus is different—he at least acknowledges readily that he believes that the ends justify the means.) Above all, I cannot understand how the critics fail to see the extent to which Garrison is jeopardizing everything accomplished so laboriously and painfully, at the expense of health and friends and normal living, by his very acts of grandiose pronouncements and claims, by his actual errors (those he does not intend but which result from carelessness and inadequate study of the records), and by his irresponsible charges. This "cry wolf" exercise may well deprive legitimate criticism of all credibility, even of a hearing. We critics have by and large stated the facts, and stated them meticulously, allowing others to draw the necessary conclusions; Garrison states the conclusions, and when he deigns to offer "facts" they are inaccurate or even invented. Incidentally, I just heard the other day that he served as assistant DA under Leon Hubert, at the end of the 1950's, for a short while. That's interesting! As you know, two States-Item reporters have rushed out a book on Garrison; Joesten is also advertising one; and now you tell me that Turner is doing one for Award Books. He has certainly emerged from obscurity.

All the best, Harold, I am looking forward to your book as soon as it comes out.

As ever,