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Harry Merritt  
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Dear Harry:

May is almost here and I would like to set up a meeting with you, at your convenience. I am going to be busy much of May, so why don't you give me three or four dates and I'll see when we can meet.

They say you should always decide what you are trying to accomplish in a meeting, so here it is! I would like to spend most of the day with you, and here is what I am looking for.

I would like to see everything you have found relating to Sen. Cooper and the Warren Commission. Specifically, I am looking for opinions, about Oswald and especially the single bullet theory, which he did not agree with.

Also, any opinions he had on any other issues or members of the Commission.

I am also interested in any information or opinions he gave on the Vietnam War. For example, in his oral history with Bill Cooper, he stated he did not think Kennedy would have gone into Vietnam as far as LBJ.

I realize that some of this may be confidential work product, which I would honor.

What can I do for you? I have sent you most of the Cooper info I have, plus the documentaries I think are most useful. I think you should prepare a list of questions about the Warren Report and Cooper, and I'll try to answer them. Feel free to send them to me before we meet, so I can research any answers.

I am going to try to prepare a list of Xeroxes showing the direct contradictions between the Warren Report and the Commission Exhibits. For example, the foreman of the Texas School Depository Bldg. stated that he saw Lee Harvey Oswald enter the building empty handed. He was the only witness to Oswald actually entering the building on Nov. 22, 1963. So naturally the Report stated that Oswald entered the building with a long package that morning. This is an absolute and provable lie.

Oswald rode to work that day with a coworker. He said Oswald had a package about two feet long, that he said contained curtain rods. But he never entered the building with them. Where did they go? Weisberg tells me that there was a small building outside the TSBD the workers used as a locker room. Oswald may have left them there. No organized search and description of this small building was ever made, as far as we know.

Why would Oswald carry curtain rods to work? He apparently got them from the woman Marina was living with, Ruth Payne. The couple was living apart, Oswald in a rooming house that may have needed curtains. When reporters got to Oswald's rooming house, his landlady was putting up curtain rods in Oswald's room to make it look better to reporters! The FBI did find some curtain rods, old used ones, at the Payne household.

The members of the Commission have been criticized for the poor job of the Warren Report. A surface reading of the 888 page report seems convincing. But when you look at the interviews and facts behind the Report, they are often contradictory. And not just a little bit. There is no doubt the staff was only interested in finding things to make Oswald look guilty. When they failed they just made up stuff, as above.

So I am interested in anything Sen. Cooper had to say about the staff. I'll try to show you some stuff where Cooper had a showdown with Gerald Ford, about firing Norman Redlich, a staffer. Redlich made the sin of being a member of the New York Civil Liberties Union, and was criticized by some right wing columnists for being a Red. So the gutless and right wing Ford wanted to fire him, and Cooper and others stood up for Redlich. He stayed. The transcript of this meeting was withheld for many years, Weisberg got it just a couple of years ago. In thinking about it, I bet you have never heard this story, and it is a very good one. Shows Cooper's sense of fairness.

In my research, I have formed strong opinions about only three members. Sen. Cooper- Growing up in Corbin, Cooper was my hero, and my idea of a good Republican. That a hillbilly just like me could go on to be such a world leader was an inspiration to me. I dreaded getting into the Warren Commission, because I was afraid I would find my hero with feet of clay. Much to my surprise, Sen. Cooper did his work on the Report diligently and worked very hard. Although I disagree with his conclusions, he was not involved in any coverup, but was lied to by the staff and the FBI. Also the CIA. Truly a man of honor, and the President's only good friend on the Commission. Weisberg and other researchers have much respect for Cooper.

Sen. Richard Russell I thought Russell was a backward, typical redneck Southern senator. My research shows I was very wrong. Russell wanted to file a dissent with the Report, but Earl Warren would not permit it. Russell later gave his opinion that he thought JFK was killed as a result of a conspiracy. Harold Weisberg and Russell later became friends. Russell tried to get at the truth, but again the staff hid it from him. My former low opinion of Russell stems from his fight against the Civil Rights bill, which goes to show you can't judge a man on just one issue.

Russell and Cooper always had problems with Marina Oswald's testimony. In my opinion, the Feds made it clear to Marina that she should "cooperate", and given the fact she spoke only halting English, and was scared to death, not to mention the fact that her husband was killed while in police custody, led her to tell the FBI whatever she thought they wanted to hear. But she could not keep her stories straight! Cooper and Russell probably suspected something like this.

Rep. Ford I had a lot of sympathy for Gerald Ford, I thought he did a decent job in a bad situation after Nixon's resignation. However, I know him now as the right wing, narrow minded Newt Gingrich type, who was one of the first authors to write a bullshit book to profit from the assassination. That is a story in itself, but I don't believe the other members were very impressed by his book, either the fact he wrote it or its content. I believe they had agreed not to try to profit from the assassination. Ford was only interested in one thing his whole life- money. I would be interested if Cooper made any comment on this.

Harry, this is how I approach the subject. I am available on weekends, some week days, and evenings. I will be glad to come to Lexington, as I recall you live near UK.

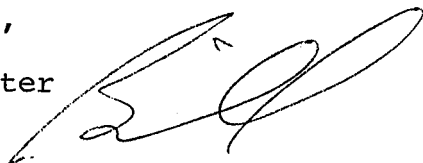
I have come to see Sen. Cooper as the hero in a sad Greek tragedy. He was close friends with President Kennedy, and gave him advice in one of our most dangerous times in history. Members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff were actually giving him advice like we should carry out a nuclear first strike on the Soviet Union, or put a quick end to the Vietnam war by nuclear bombing. That is insane. Then Sen. Cooper tried to get at the truth of the assassination, but was prevented by the lies of the staff. Finally, the Vietnam tragedy, which Cooper was instrumental in ending with the Cooper-Church Amendment. In my opinion, JFK's death led directly to the Vietnam war and the death of millions.

Sen. Cooper was called a communist, a traitor, and worse for his role in ending our Vietnam involvement. I hope you look at some of the cartoon that people drew and sent him. I recall one with Stalin, Lenin and Cooper

Hope to hear from you soon. Feel free to call me here at the office.

Sincerely,

Bill Neichter



PS I include an article from the Wall Street Journal by Edward Epstein. He is one of the original Big Three of the assassination researchers, Harold Weisberg and Mark Lane being the other two.

Epstein once met Sen. Cooper. I do not know Epstein. He wrote Inquest, which became one of the first books critical of the Warren Commission, one of the Book Club selections.

Epstein seems to think that Oswald was somehow involved. I disagree. But Epstein is a pretty sharp guy, and he does know quite a bit about the abuses of the CIA. I am not aware of any active research he does no anymore on the JFK assassination.