

Mr. Wayne Chastain  
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2/28/77

Dear Wayne,

Glad to hear from you! Your letter of the 25th is informative and helpful to me in its explanations of the questions you ask,

We do not disagree on fact, or I do not question you when you tell me something is a fact. We do disagree on interpretations. I guess this comes from our different experiences and from each has in his head that the other does not. In fact you have been very helpful to me when you have not understood what information I was seeking from you.

Not just your papers, no papers did a good job of reporting the Shasteen report. The reason the Times did not cover it more extensively is probably because if there had been greater length a bit more of the whitewash would have shown.

The Mannel story was garbled. The threat he reported was of a lieutenant and not in Memphis but in Knoxville. The claim there merely was confusion. At first I considered it possible but level-headed Mes Payne ridiculed me out of that belief. He was right to use ridicule. I'm beginning to lean over too much in an effort to be fair to those terrible people who did such incredible things. I do not know Manuel. I have heard the name before. His committee is not renowned for its responsibility, integrity or dispassion.

I don't know why Additt was removed. I have beliefs. It would take a long time to present them to you. But I am certain that the lie told him, that it was all Secret Service, was of Memphis origin. Thus I also disagree with your belief that "someone in Washington was calling security signals."

I have no question about your account of the surveillance on King on the 3rd. If you have any more details I would welcome them, no matter how minor they may seem to be to you. If it would be easier to just talk about it into a tape recorder I would take the time to listen on the chance there might be a small thing in your recall that could be of value to me, even if only triggering what I have forgotten is in my mind. You are absolutely right that those types were invisible on the fourth. But then King's schedule was different on the 4th. Did he not spend most of it at the Lorraine? So let me ask a question instead of giving you as fact what I cannot represent as fact, not knowing: how many people did the various police require to watch one motel room door for all the police to have all the benefit any and all surveillance could yield with King at the motel? One team was ample, wasn't it? And where were they going to keep all those trucks with all the gear they carried? In the motel parking lot? In the bushes behind the flophouse? It just was not feasible there. However, you omit something: how about where that night's meeting was to have been held? Wasn't Kay assigned to cover that? Why not ask her (and give her my warmest when you do) if she was not in fact at that place and if in fact she did not see FBI agents there. I think you'd find if there were any way of checking that the trucks were where they could be used, not where they could not be used. That simple. By the way, if Kay or any other recall seeing these vehicles elsewhere, at the meeting place or anywhere else on the 4th, I'd like to know.

Yes, we agree on the riot. It was not spontaneous. But I do not recall your saying it "had a paramilitary precision about it." On this I would welcome as much detail as you can provide because it would help my understanding and when I get to it my writing. I have no trouble agreeing with your observation, which is why I'd appreciate anything you can add by way of explanation. What did not observe that suggesting this kind of precision that, obviously, the young people had not had occasion to learn? You say this could not come from the MPD because it did not have enough money. But suppose it came instead from a couple of the Invaders who had received training? How many who could influence the others do you think it would have required? And have you considered the possibility of the FBI helping your local police? Probable to me. I'm suggesting that

it need not be as complicated as you make it. You are saying Washington did it. I do not believe it. I do believe that if Washington had wanted to do it there would have been a straightforward offing, like a sophisticated and powerful bomb.

When you finish checking it out I'd be interested in knowing how you decide on military intelligence having Ray under surveillance after King was killed. I'm inclined to believe that if anyone had spotted him he'd have been arrested.

I also do not believe that Ray went to LSA after the King killing and I'm certain that if he did he did not go to the St. Francis again. If you get anything on this I'd be interested in it as a disinformation operation, not as fact. It is not reasonable. Besides, he has been placed elsewhere with some certainty during that period of time. You say Frankie Darre is the source and this was three weeks after the shooting. Well, 13 days after the shooting a conspiracy charge was filed against Galt in Birmingham. Do you really believe that anyone would use that name a week after that where he had been known before? I don't. This is part of what I mean by keeping it simple. In much less than three weeks the FBI was all over the St. Francis.

I don't recall the 1/76 Village Voice stories you mention about Youngblood. I do not believe that Russell and Freed were in on some kind of deal with him. It may have helped Youngblood but not anyone else and would not be factual. That it is not factual will make it hot stuff for Freed. If Lomax was checking that out he deserved what happened. I doubt he was.

I did not know Lomax. I did his show once.

I'm sorry you had no stories with your letter. There must have been some local ones in Memphis. And sorry that you had no report on what Lane had been up to there. He is a walking encyclopaedia of misinformation, the phrase not mine. He has been on this subject and it has not helped the House committee a bit. I know he was there with Abby Mann.

Have you heard any more about the bugging of Dusty the breadman? Any other local reports or rumors? Do you remember a white man from Carolina the union sent in before the killing? K'm interested in him and would like to know his name. I saw Conny Sabella, who was not helpful on this.

These complicated scenarios are found from Grabe B- movie but not for reality. Try to keep your thinking as simple as possible and you'll find it productive. Thanks for the helpful information. Wish I thought I'd be able to get down there.

Hope things have picked up for you. Or have Memphians stopped getting drunk and being charged with DWI?

Best wishes,

WAYNE CHASTAIN

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February 25, 1977

Dear Harold,

I thought about you when the Justice Department report was released last week. The Friday and Saturday issues of the New York Times and Washington Post do not get to Memphis until Tuesday or Wednesday. I ~~have~~ had time to read and digest most of the material now. The local papers do such a poor job of winnowing and publishing facts concerning ~~these~~ stories as big as the King murder. Selective repression I call it.

The New York Times normally carries a pretty comprehensive news story along with the actual document itself. The Times, however, did not print one important fact which I gleaned from The Washington Post: namely, the name of the source which tipped Memphis police about a murder contract on Redditt's life.

Do you know a Senate Government Operations Committee investigator named Phillip R. Manuel? How did he get wind of a murder plot against an obscure black detective in Memphis?

I know you dismissed as significant the fact Redditt was removed, but I still believe that may be the only tangible clue that someone in Washington was calling the security signals for King's surveillance on April 4. Remember, I was there. On April 3, King was surrounded by a phalanx of FBI agents, and probably Army CIC agents as he spoke to a crowd in the courtyard of the Centenary Methodist Church on McLemore in the afternoon. A panel truck was parked ~~at the intersection~~ about a block down the street, ~~at the intersection~~ but at an angle where King could be viewed standing on the courtyard's steps which were to the side of the building. ~~Remember~~ The Army CIC (they certainly were not Memphis detectives or FBI agents) were parked almost in front of the church on the other side of the street. They were more ~~obvious~~ obvious and they used zoom lens cameras, photographing everyone in the crowd. The next day, these people just were not around. The fire station was the only logical vantage point to conduct surveillance on King, ~~and the only logical vantage point~~ other than the rooming house, and of course, we know the FBI did not use the rooming house. At the fire station, there is no evidence to this point that there were any FBI agents assigned to the local police to assist the surveillance from the fire station. No, a seven year old campaign of intensive surveillance ended one day before King was assassinated. You tell me that this is not significant.

I do believe I told you my suspicions ~~concerning~~ concerning the March 28 riot during one of ~~our~~ our beer drinking sessions. Again, I was there: a half block from South Main Street on Beale and a half block from the front wave of the massive sea of protest marchers when the riot erupted. At Beale and Main, there were battalions of riot control police ~~poised~~ poised to wade in. It is significant that the riot started one block from South Main Street where most of the large white department stores were located back in 1968. (Today, most of them have moved out East although one major department store, Goldsmith's, keeps its downtown store, less than two blocks from Beale & Main.

Now if this riot was planned and organized by genuine black militants, who wanted to "shit on Whitey" (that was what one of the signs said), why didn't the rioters wait until the massive sea of marchers reached South Main Street, and until after the tail end of the march had turned on South Main Street, and when the march was heading north on South Main Street. The rioters could have smashed the windows of Goldsmith's (the largest downtown store), as well as a multitude of men's stores, women's dress shops, etc, almost exclusively patronized by whites back in those days.

Instead the riot erupted at Beale and Second, which gave police battalions ample opportunity to move in and contain the march in the black ghetto.

No, I believe the ~~evidence~~ evidence suggests that the March 28 riot had been planned and precipitated by the white power structure. It had almost a paramilitary precision about it. Now, who or what agency has this type of capability? Not the Memphis Police Department, because it had limited funds, limited manpower and limited intelligence: I mean the latter in both the military and actual sense.

There has ~~been~~ been something else to occur in the past 10 days, but I can't say anything about it until I check it out. I know how skeptical you are, and I certainly wouldn't waste your time filling your head with what may turn out to be sheer fantasy. But in essence, if my information check out, military intelligence had James Earl Ray, or someone they thought was James Earl Ray, under surveillance after Dr. King was killed.

was movie  
Also, there ~~was~~ an aging (he may be dead now) ~~star~~ star of the 30s and 40s, Frankie Darro, who told several persons in Los Angeles that he saw James Earl Ray in Los Angeles at the St. Francis hotel after ~~Dr. King was killed.~~ Dr. King was killed. This was approximately three weeks after Dr. King was killed and after Eric Starvo Galt had been identified to the public as the number one suspect in Dr. King's murder. Ray, Darro said, was using the Galt alias, and was in the presence of a girl name Maria (Marie Martin???) and a large negro man weighing about 300 pounds and ~~standing~~ standing at least six feet six tall. Los Angeles police swept down on the hotel after someone tipped them that a Galt was staying at the hotel, but the trio had checked out--leaving personal belongings in the hotel. The raid was published in the Los Angeles Examiner but not the Times, so I have been told. I have written the morgues of both papers offering to pay for any zerox clippings about the raid. The story was that police came in with guns drawn. The movie star, Darro, was the man whom I have been informed actually tipped the police.

A similar story appeared in the January 1976 Village Voice, the article which carried a front page ~~picture~~ picture on Jack Youngblood, and an inside story about Youngblood's exploits. Donald Freed was the source on that story and Freed is quoted as saying he gathered several affidavits from people in the hotel--he does not mention Frankie Darro--which said Youngblood was there with a large black man and a man who could have been a double for James Earl ~~Ray~~ Ray. Freed never mentions a dark-haired girl named Maria. My source relegates Youngblood as just a man who was registered in the hotel and who was seen talking to Maria but never seen talking directly with the man who appeared to be Ray. My source said Ray, Maria and the black man left the hotel in a hurry, jumping into a large black limousine and driving away with the big black man at the wheel. I have been told that Louis Lomax was checking this story out when he was killed. Lomax was on his way to Sante Fe, New Mexico, to check out a lead on the identity of the large black man when his car supposed turned over on the highway and killed him. I have been informed that Lomax was working on leads and tips furnished him by someone who leaked information to him from military intelligence.

Did you know Lomax? Did you know or did you ever hear about the so-called Los Angeles incident?

~~Write~~ Write and give me your impressions of recent developments. I am especially interested in whether you know Philip B. Manuel and whether you knew about the alleged Los Angeles incident.

Your friend,

Wayne