

July 4th/68

Dear Hal:

Just received your 6/26/68 letter; helluva service.

Let me get to the meat of this letter: First let me preface matters by saying there are obvious missing links to this story, but the main theses seem (to me) plain.

(Since Turner is a key witness/source to much of this, I suggest further confirmation via him.)

Last Monday morning (7/1) George T. Davis called me to ask assistance on a story that (he) broke over the weekend; the tale goes like this:

Last Friday (6/28) Davis received a call from a "private detective-friend-ranch neighbor" near Santa Rosa; it seemed an old friend of Davis and the dick (Hardesty) had fled Los Angeles to seek asylum with him - because he had received threats (death) due to his having been involved with Sirhan just before the assassination; that he had given a statement about this involvement to LA cops at 1PM on June 5; that they had resultantly ignored his further inquiries; that he received the first threatening call the day Kennedy died; that his plea for protection from LA cops was refused; he then fled North.

This man - the Reverend Jerry Owens of East Los Angeles - tells this story: On June 3 he was driving into LA when Sirhan and friend stopped his old pickup at an intersection, asked for a lift downtown (to the Ambassador Hotel), climbed into the back; during the ride the conversation led to horses (Owens had one to sell, Sirhan needed one); they got off at the kitchen entrance, agreed to meet Owens later that night (8PM) to discuss purchasing his horse; (unclear about this meeting) meeting was then set for Tuesday morning at 8AM with Sirhan at Hotel to pay for horse; Owens shows, but only Sirhan's "nattily suited, ~~FRUM~~ with turtleneck shirt and pendant" appears, says "Joe" cannot make it is offered \$100 bill as deposit, will be paid another \$200 by "Joe" if he will arrive with horse in trailer at kitchen entrance at 11PM; Owens refuses \$100 bill, says he has "sermon" commitments that night, cannot appear, but will show up Wednesday morning, gives man his card with his unlisted phone number on it; episode ends here, except for ensuing phone threats and flight to N. California. (Turner interviewed Owens in Davis' office, has same on tape.)

This same story - through Davis - was proliferated in the news over the weekend (by Davis) and is still being promoted (by Davis); right now Davis is being film interviewed by the TODAY SHOW at his ranch in Santa Rosa.

Harold Weisberg

Now, let's probe beneath the heretofore available surface. Here is background on the players:

George T. Davis is a San Francisco lawyer in criminal law; he has achieved a degree of fame in handling the Mooney, Chessman, and Burton Abbott cases hereabouts; until recently, he was one of a battery of lawyers involved in the Thoreson "arms smuggling and illegal possession" case now on trial in Fresno (it has been delayed until Fall); I met him personally through his client, Peter Hitchcock, a friend and business associate of mine; (Hitchcock is most interested in the Garrison case - on a positive plane); Davis generally has a reputation (with his colleagues and the news media) of being a publicity seeker and out-and-out mercenary.

At the outset of our acquaintance, Davis expressed a considerable interest in the Garrison probe; I then cultivated this, introduced him to Turner, who spelled out some more clinical details; shortly thereafter, Davis confides that he has been invited to assist Dymond and Wegmann in the Shaw case as an expert on "hypnosis and the law"; that he has a relative(?) named Dr. Spiegle who has also been asked to participate as an expert witness or advisor; Davis soon volunteered that he would be amenable to going with Wegmann and Dymond - but only to get "inside" information useful to Garrison (he said same to me.); he then proposed that Hitchcock accompany him to New Orleans for such a purpose; (incidentally, Hitchcock has a friend/business associate in New Orleans who is a contributor to the Garrison investigation "fund" he is in the oil drilling equipment business and well-healed, don't remember the name, albeit it sounded peculiar to me) Nothing came of the proposed trip, don't know about further association between Davis and Shaw Counsel, if any.

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When Davis ~~called~~ me Monday PM (7/1) he opened our chat by saying: "Well, I really broke open the Garrison case today (at an interim press conference - called by himself)". That opener boggled my mind, since I could relate only to his earlier references to the Sirhan matter; he went on to say that he used the weekend events to theorize a possible tie-in between the two Kennedy and King murders; he then said he had attacked the Warren Report (and Warren himself) and said he was sold on the Garrison investigation. (If the news media were told this - as he said - then they must have edited it out of his interviews, for nothing relating to Garrison came out.) Enough of this guy for now.....

During the course of Turner's interview with Owens, it was discovered (via Turner's inquiry) that the Good Reverend Owens has a most diversified religious background affiliation-wise; one of his past churches had been the Twentieth Century Reformation Church --- and yes he does in fact know both MacIntyre and Bradley. No more comment necessary.

Owens' two private detectives (partners) are somewhat unusual too;

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they both have been in police service in the boondocks of N. Calif.; (the Sonoma-Napa Counties are somewhat known for having their police agencies manned with Bircher-Minutemen types, of which these two are seeming replicas;) in an impromptu chat with them in Davis' office on Tuesday afternoon, I thought it weird that they should not only know so many of the seemingly clinical details behind Owens' plight, but that they should also be so ready, will^{ing}, able, and anxious to push across the pat storyline; maybe just my imagination.

From my own standpoint: I find it weird that Owens should find it necessary to have to come to N. California to seek aid and cover and publicity, when the Sirhan Story is the hottest story in S. Calif. in a decade, especially with the alleged shooting incident with the older brother today; perhaps Owens' background and associations were (or would be) too readily accessably to mediamen down there, wherein time and money considerations would inhibit (limit) pursuit by news-men up here;

Now, let me tell you what my "immaculate perception" dictates to my intuition: If Owens (and friends) were afraid witnesses might be able to place him in Sirhan's company beforehand, they would have to come up with an explanation, i.e. the innocent horse transaction; what better time to protect oneself than the day of the assassination, as Owens voluntarily did at 1PM on June 5th; with the lid clamped down tight by the LA cops - and no followthrough inquiry on their parts - Owens (and friends) might have gotten itchy and sought to dramatize (and hopefully institutionalize) an alibi.

Naturally, I must place a disclaimer on all this - that I am becoming such a "buff" that my normal powers of reason have left me, that I (like that chicken farmer from Maryland) have reduced myself to blithering paranoia. However, let me calmly tell you that whatever else may be involved... I like it - I LIKE IT! jelled

On Unruh: Frankly, I don't know what to do there; had his invitation/to join in as advisory (hopefully as I proposed nee liaison with the critics) there might be a different political direction in this country (I doubt it, though);

Harv Morgan just dropped by - and Turner just called.

Morgan is equally puzzled by Davis' irratic behavior; he hasn't decided on which way to handle matters.

Turner has now decided the Preacher and his story are legit; he was with Davis and Owens for 3 hours last night, just after the LA Special Squad came up and gave Owens a polygraph test at SFPD, without his counsel being present; there is, in Turner's opinion, an overt reluctance on the LA cops' part to accept Owens' statements as other than mistaken identity, albeit they purportedly have told him not to make public statements. Undoubtedly Turner is better qualified in terms of background and proximity to evaluate this matter - but this doesn't change one iota of the aforementioned so-called coincidences; whatever is the truth, it is not going to exert itself spontaneously,

Harold Weisberg

If Owens' tale is true, then every effort should be made to corroborate same; if not, then the same obligation exists.

If the LA cops are seeking to bury their bungling of the matter, then the facts should be made public.

Right now, not enough is known to prove or disprove anything concretely; it is a repeat of Dallas and Memphis, with the news media seemingly running off in well-plotted directions.

I have suggested to Turner that there might well be three forces at work in this situation; as stated, Owens (and friends) might be anticipating future probing and the LA cops trying to suppress questions (and/or evidence) of "conspiracy"; that third aspect could well be the elusive "truth", which might not survive the other two.

I have broached an "undercover" investigation by a very large S. Calif. medium; this would entail an evaluation of Owens' activities and associations over the past decade, as well as recent bits; might call on you to join in, fees/expenses available.

You might tell Garrison to unleash the buffs in LA to match their data on Bradley with possible links to Owens; but do not dispatch them into the meadows until I know from whence I stand with the aforementioned newsfolk.

I am laying(?) on Ann Alanson to go ahead with the McCarthy thing for you; you will probably be sent to see Finney first; if Clark Clifford doesn't mind.....

Spann has told me he has plans to put you on from New Orleans, with Garrison if possible; the interest level hereabouts seems as high as ever.

Good luck.

Best Personal Regards,

John



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