

2/26/69

Dear Steve,

Some of the rhetorical questions in your letter of 2/22 I can, perhaps, answer. Today I duplicated the third of three limited private publications of books end, as always at such an interval, I am too tired to go forward immediately with other production. I use these intervals of fatigue for catching up on correspondence and filing, etc.

At this juncture, I will have to decide what to do next. I have already completed some of the backing against the disaster but will be without means of exploiting. I have it ready, no more. It is possible I may feel I must do some writing I never expected or planned. We all have a survival problem and we have among us too many lemmings. Probably within a few days I'll know enough for a basis for decision and then can hope only that it is the correct one.

With your introduction, about disgust and what is good and bad in the Dealey Plaza presentation, I disagree only with your estimate that it was, by and large, good. It was anything but that, inadequate at best, dishonest by intent, incomplete and amateurish through a combination of ignorance and ego, and all of this need not have been. This is not to say a thing against Oser or Alford, both of whom are fine, competent men. When I let them persuade me to go, after I had called my plans and reservation but two days earlier, after the first fiasco in Judge Halleck's court, both met me at the airport. Alford told me he had not read a single

book on the case and had had no connection with it until two ~~anywhere~~ weeks earlier. Oser had had a little contact, but that was far in the past. It is criminal that no single lawyer was prepared after two years of time. None of them can be held at fault. They ~~all~~ all were kept busy on other office work. This was on Sunday morning, 1/20. By that night I had more new misgivings than I needed. There is now no point in going into this. Four of the lawyers got on the phone 1/19 and each asked me to go down. I had done nothing but help prepare them from 12/4 on, and unlike them, I put in long, hard days. I spent what for me is much money that they asked me to. They had promised not only to repay my expenses but to raise some money some way to compensate me for the time. I'm still waiting for the expenses authorized.

There came a time, roughly coinciding with Jim's return to town, when these lawyers had little interest in me, so I decided to leave. I stayed long than I would have only because I was asked to. In the presentation thus far, not having to do with N.O., I know of nothing new and solid that has any other origin, and there is but little of that. The stuff on and from Finck comes from POST MORTEM and POST MORTEM III: SECRETS OF THE KENNEDY AUTOPSY. I had not completed the latter but gave them the contents verbally and I Xeroxed the former for them. Among the witnesses I line up were the Willises. At some point they just started wrecking what their inhibited preparations permitted. Not putting Wecht on, for example, is criminal. They may get Finck for perjury, but had they subpoenaed Hughes, as I'd asked, there is no question. And these things would have meaning if and when they lose. They would also have meaning for the rest of us, the only ones who will pay for all of this. But they do not care for any of us, not really, or for what we have tried so hard to do. Theirs is a strange, illogical, self-denying selfishness. There is no point in going along this line. They did miserably, and I am not judging by the press but from well-informed friends on the spot. The only reason I am not there is because I just didn't have the funds, for even that subminimum of my New Orleans existence. Before I left, not really wanting to stay there, I let Maggie and Vince know only because I did not want later charges against me for copping out. I am without complaint that neither Maggie nor Vince felt they ought to do anything. I merely wanted them to know. I would have stayed and tried, knowing no effort could succeed. You have never understood Jim or the rest of them. In the long run, assured as I feel they would have heeded no one, I believe I did more good at home. You have no idea how much I heard by phone from others than the office, including their friends, that I was needed and should be there.

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My response was that I had but two preconditions: it had to be made possible and I wanted assurance not that what I suggested would be done but that I would be listened to. I have heard nothing from the office, directly, since I left. I do not think you will ever begin to fully realize the lost opportunities, including N.O. and Dallas. You do not know what witnesses were available, what they would have said, including the other side. Or the preparations ignored for the witnesses of the other side. There is and was a New Orleans case. It was not put on. I cannot tell you why. This includes denning material on Shaw, directly, and much potentially of enormous importance never pursued. Some day I'll do that book. I hope I do not feel impelled to do it soon.

The bit about Oswald and the rifle was for other purposes. I tried to discourage it without success. It was to prove his guilt! They did and said what they knew to be wrong because this is the charge of the indictment, but they would not use the "and others unknown" part for a "False Oswald", an indispensable of any viable case there, as should by now be clear to the ignorant and then should have been to the partly-informed. I took this up all the way to and including Jim.

"Anyhow, I went to bug out of everything for a while to find out what happened", you say. Do not be a summer soldier. It will cause you too much trouble in the days and years ahead. We all make mistakes. Do not compound yours. Now is the time to be prepared for whatever must be done that can be tried, not for quitting because things are about to get rougher. Only, drop all the nonsense and stick to realities. You should be getting an understanding that all the stuff you were working on was nothing and kept you away from what might have yielded something.

"Is my judgement poor?" In this case it was, but not without major responsibility not being primarily yours. You are still of but so much real experience in life and with people and you accepted the word and judgement of others you had reason to trust. You also were on warning and did not do your own, independent thinking. But, if it is any solace, others with more experience and more knowledge had and used worse judgement. For your years, I think serious complaint cannot be made against your judgement. There was too much stardust in your eyes, anyway. But do you now understand what a year ago I discourage you from leaving school and going there, why I tried to persuade you not to go there to work for the summer? May I, as a measure of his integrity as a human, point out that when I discussed this with Louis, he made the same recommendation to you?

"Is it the opposition?" No, they are out best help. They have nothing but power, which is a tremendous asset, but they have used it poorly. We are and have been our own worst enemies. The real responsibility on our side is shared, and it is shared by those with no morality, those with bad morality, and those unconcerned by any concept of morality. You have associated with too many of all varieties, no fault of yours. We have too many would-be bigshots who do not and do not like to work but do love to talk -and do - too much. Some they have yet to learn to apply intellectual judo to the opposition. Too rewarding being important and seen and heard - and in some cases, paid.

"Is Garrison's judgement poor?" As poor as you will ever see. Also, he is an incongruous mixture of close-to-genius and incredible stupidity and self-deception. He can be absolutely brilliant but is usually inept, incompetent, self-defeating and, until now above all, blessed with luck like no man ever had. No one else could possibly have gotten away with what he has. And with all of this, no critics more competent than the Epsteins? Who ever had that kind of additional good luck. He is also sick. He has survived to this point only by good fortune and the thankless efforts of others, over his active opposition.

"The junk in December was the capper". There was so much junk in December you lose me. I will not again, knowingly, go through what I then did for him. I have yet to be thanked or get my expenses back - as promised.

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I have taken this time because I think you are worth it. I give you my opinions in confidence, for you alone. You have made other people's mistakes. If you make any ~~xxx~~ more, let them be your own, and then, if you do, face them like a man.

On the shipment of WWII in question. I gave an insurance receipt to the PC, for we could have collected. Their response is that you received the books. There are these possibilities: The receipt is for the wrong shipment; you did get the books; they are wrong. But I need something to go on. You did not even tell me if they spoke to you. Did they? How do they know you got them?

Insure whatever you return. However, remember when I was out there, the time I stayed with the wonderful Grossmans, I carried 100 books with me and, when I got to LA, I gave you about all I had left, perhaps as many as 20-25, as my contribution to your committee. If these are the books, do you want credit for them? Remember, we were in your room where you have your locker, and I believe you put them in your locker. There were some you were all out of but my supply was not uniform. Please insure whatever you return. And, how about leaning on that sentimental fink Kunkin to get him to pay for the books he then ordered, said he would promote, and have neither paid for nor once mentioned in his rag. Our bills, as is customary, include the cost of postage. He need not return what he has not sold if he has any intentions of offering them for sale. But he should pay. He can get credit at any time; for returned saleable books. Heck is so highly principled he does not respond to letters.

Thanks for telling me the rifle went to N.C. Neither you nor they told me in time for me to give them the identical sight, brand new, to have that for use in court. They, of course, are the only important and busy people in the world, so they have no time for phoning or writing those things normal people working together find necessary. Did you also send the clips and ammo? I think, but I am not certain, that some of the ammo had been disarmed.

No, the little radio is not okay and was not when it arrived. It was then inoperative. Louis has it. By remarkable bad coincidence, when you did not let me know about it, and I didn't know until I got there that you had sent it, I arranged to get another. That, also, was inoperative. There I was with two, neither working! And did I need it! I really blew a mind, when it was most important and when I could not tape. I had a witness, Bud, but that is not quite the same as a record. With Pan's latest hip-shooting, it would have been helpful. For my vanity and for an historic record, I would have like very much to have a precise account of what we missed. You told me it had come insured but he had destroyed the receipt. He was going to try and have it fixed. I asked, if that could not be done, you have it returned to you with the statement that it had been received in damaged condition so you could collect on the insurance from your end. I've heard nothing since. I have neither. Both are in NO.

It is about time for you to get other than a Frank Merriwell understanding of the word loyalty. You consistently misuse it and you assign wrong priorities. A man's primary loyalty is to principles. If your own intelligence doesn't tell you that a dog licking shoes is other than "loyal", does not the decision of Nuremberg tell you anything about responsibilities. You can be disloyal, the way you use the word, and consider it loyalty. How does it "disrupt loyalty" to "say, I think the integrity of American justice is best served by an acquittal..?" Anything else would be the highest disloyalty. I have long been saying there could be no sustained conviction simply because "our side" had by then denied the defendant his rights. To say that the other side was the cause is to say insufficient and to evade what some of us have done. But, they also have not put on the case they could which worries and troubles me, for those reasons I can assign to this do not satisfy me. To answer you another way, to me, as a writer, investigator, a man of reasonable intelligence, there is no doubt on the facts. However, on what has been presented in court, there is no case against Shaw at all....What could they have had when they charged him, Russo by then not having crawled into the light? Sorry, I have to inflict the yoke on you. Chins up. Life is this way, and so are people. Learn when it hurts less. Best,

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4829 Morella Ave.  
No. Hollywood, Calif.  
22 February 1969

Dear Harold,

I am disgusted with what is happening in New Orleans, as I'm sure others are. The case is structurally weak simply because it relies ultimately upon Russo -- who is uncorroborated and neutralized even if he is telling the truth. I think the presentation of Dealey Plaza facts was good -- but it could have been more meticulous and complete as I'm sure you agree. The junk about Oswald bringing a rifle into the TSBD is a ploy (Louie said no comment when asked) to force Shaw either to admit an overt act or to admit conspiracy in Dealey Plaza/


Anyhow, I want to bug out of everything for awhile to find out what happened. Is my judgment so poor? Is it the opposition? Is Garrison of poor judgment? What happened? For many months I've felt something like this was going to happen -- in fact since your last visit. The junk in December was the capper. Until I have a better handle on the situation, I had better do nothing.

As far as our finances are concerned: the shipment of WWII in question did not arrive as far as my memory and records show. Would I have signed something if they did? Would the P.O. have it on record? I'll be returning 10 books, mostly Photo WW for credit. All in A-1 condition.

The rifle went to New Orleans pronto as requested. Did it get to whoever it was supposed to? Is the little radio o.k.?

I guess that's all. As much as it disrupts loyalties to say so, I think the integrity of American justice is best served by an acquittal unless, somehow, more comes out. There is a reasonable doubt, I think.

Best,

  
Steven J. Burton