

Received 2/6/93

Harry,

Here is the report of my interview with Mary Ferrell. My reports on Gary Shaw and Gary Mack will be completed shortly. Please do not use my name in your new book, You can call me a researcher. We might need to reinterview Mary Ferrell in the future. If you use my name, she would never speak with me again.

Mary Ferrell stipulated the time and place of our meeting. She said her husband was at home after a long hospital stay and was not expected to live more than a few weeks. We met at a dumpy hamburger joint a few miles from her home. She was driving a late model luxury car and was dressed in expensive clothing that seemed mildly inappropriate considering the surroundings. She had the appearance of a part-time real estate saleswoman who had just come from showing a house to a wealthy couple and was relieved to get back to her neighborhood. Our waitress greeted Mary by name. We sat in a booth in the rear of the restaurant and talked for more than an hour. We talked first about her reasons for devoting the last 25 years of her life to an investigation of John Kennedy's assassination. She was relaxed and friendly...she said she welcomed the opportunity to forget her husband's impending death for a few minutes.

The following is a summary of our conversation:

My approach to the interview was the following: I told Mary that I was a northern liberal who was in the process of rethinking my long-held views about integration and about John Kennedy's hard push for civil rights legislation in the early 1960s. I said I had come to realize that change, particularly in the South, cannot be forced.

I said that I had idolized John Kennedy in my youth, but that I was becoming more conservative in middle age. The discovery of Kennedy's philandering, I said, had disturbed me greatly. I explained that I had been researching the assassination for years. I complained that all the major researchers were men who seemed far more concerned with selling books and protecting their own turf and ego than with getting to the bottom of the Crime of the Century. I said that I would like a woman's perspective on all this.

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I had hoped this approach would loosen Mary's tongue. I knew, of course, about her racial views and her involvement with right-wing causes. She keeps a lid on her contempt for blacks, but it creeps out at when she talks about Kennedy and integration. This strategy, to some degree, was successful.

I began the interview by asking for her opinion of John Kennedy. She said she had disliked Kennedy, did not vote for him, and would not vote for him if he were alive today. In the early 1960s, she explained, she had belonged to a right wing group that was violently opposed to Kennedy's integration policies and to the Kennedy family in general. The group thought Kennedy was soft on Communism. She would not say which group this was, but she did not offer a denial when I mentioned The White Citizen's Council.

When pressed for specifics about her dislike for Kennedy, all Mary would say is that she had heard a tape recording of Kennedy making love to Pamela Turnure, Jacqueline Kennedy's secretary. She explained that Turnure's landlady had placed a microphone under Turnure's bed and had made a recording of her affair with Kennedy available to various right wing groups in Dallas. This tape was played often in Dallas, fueling a hatred for Kennedy. Mary said all the Kennedys were arrogant and that they wanted to establish a dynasty in American politics.

Mary's explanation of why she has spent so much time and money researching the death of a man she despised was evasive. She offered a view of her childhood, in which she painted herself as a poor southern girl who was often abused by her first husband, an alcoholic and a thoroughly miserable sort. She had escaped a life of "being barefoot and pregnant" and had gone on to accomplish things she never dreamed possible. She mentioned traveling widely, meeting important people, and holding an important job as some of her accomplishments. "I love this country...that's why I work on the assassination," she said. "I do it because he was a President of the United States."

I told Mary that some researchers believe that a right wing group in Dallas engineered the assassination. They have even suggested that Ferrell herself had a role in the shooting, and that her work today involves screening the various researchers and throwing them off the trail when necessary.

Mary's face reddened as I spoke. She showed a brief but intense flash of anger toward me. She reprimanded me for even asking such a question. When she regained her composure, she started to laugh-off the suggestion of her involvement in the assassination. "I had John Kennedy killed, now that's a good one," she said. "How in the world could I have managed that." We went on to talk about the researchers. She had some harsh comments about some of them, particularly David Lifton and Harry Livingstone. "Poor Harry has a lot of emotional problems," she said. "But he's a nice man underneath it all, and I would work with him if he were not so rude and abusive. I treat people the way they treat me. If he is civil to me, I will be civil to him." She went on to give her version of the events of the now infamous assassination conference in Dallas.

She praised the work of Gary Mack and Gary Shaw, naturally. She went on to say that researchers should pay close attention to the information contained in the book "The Man Who Knew Too Much." She pushed hard for a theory of communist involvement in the assassination. She also defended the accuracy of the audio tapes that she allegedly uncovered and transcribed.

Mary also denied the allegation that she had traveled to Viet Nam with the head of Locke, Pernell. While she had been "Locke's personal secretary," she said she "had never been to Viet Nam." She is very proud of her close association with Locke and her high position at his law firm. "It has allowed little old me to travel all over the world and meet with fascinating people," she explained.

She refused to discuss the possibility that Locke, Pernell, the military, defense contractors or organized crime played a part in the assassination.

She did admit that she had met Carlos Marcello. She said she met him once in a New Orleans restaurant and found him to be "A charming gentleman. I enjoyed his company," she said.

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Mary said that her husband, along with a man named Gordon McLendon (not sure of spelling) had founded Downtown Lincoln Mercury in Dallas. The company had agreed to supply cars for the Presidential motorcade on Nov. 22, 1963. "They quickly ran out of cars," Mary said, "so my husband called me and asked to use my car. That's how my car came to be photographed in pictures of the assassination."

I asked Mary why her husband, who also disliked Kennedy intensely, would have cooperated with a request to provide cars for the motorcade. She avoided the question. It was on this note that she ended the interview.

CONCLUSIONS

I uncovered no absolute proof that Mary Ferrell had anything at all to do with the assassination. But it is indeed odd that she has become the grand old lady of the assassination research effort. She truly disliked President Kennedy. She says her involvement stems from patriotic feelings and her love of our democratic system. I find this weak and thin. Her concept of Democracy is diametrically opposed to everything that John Kennedy stood for. She openly admits to connections with groups and people who hated Kennedy, yet she has involved herself year after year with an effort to find his killers. She counts herself among the right wing Dallasites who listened to a tape of Kennedy making love and scorned his immorality, yet when he came to town she provided a car for his motorcade. She is a tough, pragmatic woman who does not openly display the concern for Democracy she claims to feel.

Perhaps there are good reasons for her behavior. But for now her involvement with the research community raises more questions than it answers.