

Barnabei (carbons Hoch, Schoener, as reminders) 10/27/69

While awaiting a caller, I am consolidating files. I've just found my 7/12/69 memo of my interview with Frank Valdez, manager of La Casa, one of the very toughest of the tough Quarter joints/bars. Enclosed in the pertinent section. Here is the story behind it.

You will recall in DCUF I mention a man illegally confined in an insane asylum because of the interest of the Secret Service. I include their confirmation of interest to me, in writing. You must never mention his name or last of any of his relatives, for he is legitimately a sick man who, I believe, does not require such confinement (they wouldn't let me take him out into the sun, would not provide a guard for escort to overcome their fears--and he told me 7/4/68 he is never allowed outside for any sun or exercise. He then seemed quite rational and was lucid, with certain total blanks in his recall.) Well, I had access to all his papers his mother could find. He was very good with his short poetry, excellent in sketches, frightening in paints. Among these I found a small fragment of a novel, telling the story of the Cuba "freedom fighters" gathered at their favorite place, La Casa, awaiting the arrival of the gun-runner, etc.

I have no way of knowing whether or not this is true, although I suspect from other things it may well be. I also would not expect Valdez to tell me if he knew. I give you this because of your interest in the Fla arrest pictures, which I have asked "My Man in Miami" to get for you, as the enclosed carbon of the letter to him shows.

I showed Valdez well over 100 pictures. I believe in all cases his answers were honest, to the best of human recollection. I call your attention to his seeming familiarity with a man in the pictures I got from Larry Howard and one man in the picture you seek, of which I had a copy. If it is true that he recognized these men, there may be more significance in the picture you want. Valdez is one of the more rational, seemingly solid Cubans I interviewed. Most were immediately emotional or irrational. Everyone was surprised that he even spoke to me (and even Matt was afraid when I went there, especially at night, for that part of Decatur St is the roughest part of N.O.).

I never did learn why the ID pictures in Garrison's office included that of Lavender. His father was once head of a state mental hospital. I also have a letter from Godfrey's (lesbian) wife to his mother, from Hollywood, promising she would save him from the Lavender boys. I know they were in some ways close (Godfrey was wired both ways, as is his wife--Shaw's closest friend; gave them their wedding parties--she had been woman's editor of one of the N.O. papers--old family gone to seed).

I do not ask you to take this implicitly. I do suggest you keep all this in mind, for a fantastic amount of that part of my N.O. investigations, seemingly incredible, has checked out solidly. Godfrey's mother, on whose front door is the sign "Register Communists, not Guns", is a little flakey. But she insists Godfrey came home at night talking about the training camps and caked with mud. By the way, Ed Butler and Godfrey were friends. HW