

July 13, 1970

Dear Sylvia,

Received your letters of June 30th and July 1. This reply was drafted at Leo Carillo beach, in the California sunshine on July 4th; but first, the press of work, and then, a complete malfunction on my typewriter, has delayed its being typed until I could get near this selectric, which is only available to me in the wee hours of the morning.

I don't know where I got the impression that you saw the original Z film. Thank for the correction.

Re the whole arrangement (Time Life etc.)---I am not "complacent and self congratulatory". I am always on the lookout for a deception or trap. I do not believe the things you expressed fear of are anything more than hypothetical possibilities. I base my opinion on the nature of the contacts, the people involved and so on. I did not jump carelessly or recklessly to a conclusion that a "this is for sale" game is going on. Of course I "feely admit(ted) " it. This was a reluctant conclusion arrived at in trying to explain all the known facts. I did not mean to sound flippant, though I do think it rather ironic. X

I am pleased to have gathered the data I did; and I feel it is important to examine the original film, as soon as possible, in New York City.

I see no basis whatsoever for your remarks re "cunningly doctored originals".

The relationship with Life is far from over. I intend to be as careful as I can consistent with obtaining the data and information necessary to develop the case that the Z film Life bought is a copy made on an optical printer, if that is indeed the case.

I should add that Haskell Wexler is not only politically motivated to see the truth come out; he does appear, also, to have developed a sincere interest in what type of assassination film could be made if the Z footage could be purchased. The fact that the research cart came before the financial horse in this matter in no way diminishes the extent to which authentic interest is there. Furthermore, it would be silly for any film maker to purchase this footage, at the price range being talked about, without having as one of his major goals, its use (hopefully, "tastefully", from LIFE's point of view) in dealing with an assassination theory, or at least the controversy itself, in some cinematic format. The fact that this film may have an exciting story all its own, makes the whole matter that much more amenable to treatment in screen format. X

To the extent that there is authentic interest, that is a legal protection against charges of fraud; ~~MINIMUM~~ and, as I am sure you realize, no filmmaker could possibly entertain dealing with this matter without people knowledgeable about the assassination and the evidence and the legal record(s) that event left behind. This, in turn, justifies and legally protects my own presence in such a matter,

In view of the fact that you yourself admit that the possibilities you raised are probably not correct, and possibly alarmist, I am puzzled that you would state to me that one ~~motivating~~ you would keep the information I gave

MOTIVATING FACTOR
WHICH INSURED THAT

you confidential was the impression you might give of being naive and gullible, in view of the skepticism and mistrust of walking into a trap.

I would feel much better if I felt that considerations such as these never entered the picture to any extent whatsoever, and that you were keeping something in confidence simply because I asked you to, concomittant to telling that I was excited enough to want to pass on to someone I like and trust.

I am well aware of your distaste for what you call "cops and robbers". To some extent, I share this, especially when and if I feel the type of activity seems designed to sustain or fulfill an immature quest for adventure. When this is not the case, I cease sharing this antipathy completely.

I do not feel that this is the case here. The examination of these film materials was and is necessary to determine just what it was that Life purchased when it bought the Z film. I don't see any other way this could be accomplished, than the way it is being done now.

Re incident in the offices at Time-Life: I reacted on tactical grounds. There are many shades of gray between black and white, and I thought it had been agreed, before entering that room, where certain lines were to be drawn. I regret that such a fine research opportunity a most serious matter contains scenes which sound like they come out of a grade B melodrama starring infants.

Re your third page of your June 30 letter, and the various remarks you made about me and my work.

It is not possible for me to deal with and attempt to answer, in detail, the matters you raise.

I don't believe that the model of my behavior you put forth, and the descriptive wording you are using, applies to me. It would be a very distressing picture if it were true, but it is not ~~XXXX~~ true.

I have not been stalling.

When all is complete, I am sure it will be possible, even then, to discuss the question of hypothetical and alternate time schedules and methodologies.

There is, perhaps, a basic disagreement as to the credibility threshold one must cross to communicate effectively to the people at large, concerning a matter of this type.

I am referring to the level of proof required to substantiate allegations, to what extent proof is required, to what extent circumstantial evidence is OK, and to what extent unanswered questions (literally: obvious questions which are left unanswered) can cause a decrease in credibility and make the difference between a book which would be persuasive and significant, and a flawed book---an incompletely researched job which has hand-waving speculation and conjecture, where allegation supported by researched fact ought to be.

My goal is not to come out with a work which aims some more torpedoes at the Warren Commission Report, and optimistically hope that the institutions of our society allegedly concerned with truth and justice will take the matter from there, and carry the ball the rest of the way.

Such literature already exists.

It did not cause a new investigation, nor the apprehension of any guilty parties. I believe one reason for this has to do with that threshold I spoke of earlier, as well as the entire method of approach of that literature.

It the citizenry of this country were composed of philosophers and logicians, that literature alone would have caused a political outcry for a new investigation.

On the other hand, no writer can expect his investigation to completely solve a complex crime ~~XXXXXX~~ of this sort, or have his manuscript function as a substitute for some ideal courtroom criminal prosecution of the guilty.

Somewhere in between however, is a territory I do hope to occupy, where one can bring into sharp and clear focus, for all who can read english to see, the operation and functioning of a specific conspiracy consisting of real and specific people, that is responsible for the assassination of JFK.

Since such a thesis is----a priori---non-credible, it is all the more important that key holes not be left unpatched, or such a work will be completely ineffective as an instrument to cause a new investigation, and will be of primary interest to a small band of assassination buffs as merely "the latest theory"; ~~XXXXXX~~ It would be laughed at or ignored by the major media and the people at large, and it is a substantial cross section of plain folk that ~~must~~ be reached ~~and~~ (not only communicated to, but also outraged, I might add) if there is to be fundamental ~~political~~ political pressure for anything to be done.

These are all matters of judgement; I have learned, over the years, that there are some matters ~~which~~ can only be decided, in the last analysis, by oneself. ~~that~~

In answer to your July 1 letter.

I did receive a copy of the Texas Observer from you. Thanks much.

There are no restrictions whatsoever on the outlines of the Dallas tapes, or the ABNP (except, as you have indicated, the paraffin tests).

I have not given the radio outlines the careful scan they deserve, other than to note the existence of numerous items I'd certainly want to check out if I was at the archives. I am intrigued by the fact that several of the items (I have made no list yet) ~~XXXX~~ could be the Parkland press conference. I would like to see someone who can take shorthand check out the most promising ones at the archives, and create a brief transcript if that were the case. It is apparent that this is the way to fly, rather than attempting to order audio tape, which involved getting permission and so on. Then, if something turns up that is really good, energies can be concentrated on getting permission to get the actual tape duped. Needless to say, I am ~~not~~ devoting hardly any time to this, although I intend to peruse outlines as time permits in the future, and hopefully have a list of the ten or so most promising things on them to listen to when I do eventually get to the archives. I should add that I have lots of NBC tape, so I already have many of the entries in my own audio collection.

Its interesting to read your account of Flammonde and Wecht on the Long John Show. I am puzzled (and somewhat disturbed) that a man of Wecht's ~~XXXX~~ stature and accomplishment should have the slightest hesitation to give you credit, where credit is due, in supplying any documents or info. If you care to elaborate on why this is the case, and if it could possibly be relevant to any future relationship I might have with him, I would certainly appreciate

the info or insights or whatever.

Re your comments on p.3 and 4. Yes, it is indeed exciting that one way this case could be reopened is if a film exists that was missed by the conspiracy. I agree, and hope that such footage does exist. With few exceptions, almost every film we know about is through the archives FBI reports, so that means the Dallas field office of SS or FBI knew first.

I would expect that--indeed---one way for Sorrels to be fingered as a conspirator would be for such a film to turn up, contradicting one he had sole, or principal, possession of.

Conspiracies do make mistakes. Or putting it differently, if they don't, if they implement the perfect crime, then, by definition, there will be no evidence and no solution possible.

Re your questions on Kellerman and Greer. At this time, I can only say this. The Z film I saw (and especially the 35mm film strip of the Z film, which I carefully inspected on the 35mm microfilm reader) does appear to show someone standing in the "Kellerman" seat, as the car goes into the overpass. In particular, frame X 466 shows this quite dramatically, in my opinion. Also, I have a 3/65 tape of Holland, interviewed in his home by a very beautiful and knowledgeable girl from Berkeley, who at that time was working for Lane, in which he tells how he was asked by Dallas SS office not to mention the fact that he thought this man was shot when he stood up with the gun---not to mention it, that is, to the Warren Commission, when he was going to testify!

That's about all I can say on the subject, for now.

You ask: Does your Z film / Z plot hypothesis include your ~~XXX~~ earlier theory about papier-mache trees, hollowed out knoll etc.....

The answer is no. (Also, I fail to see what the two have to do with each other).

.....or have you discarded that line of reasoning?

So that there will be no misunderstanding, and for the record. I still suspect that camouflage was employed, to some extent, on the plaza, to conceal shooters. None of this will appear in my work. It is unproveable. I feel it is more important to stick to what can be proved, and let what one suspects play the role of directing ones investigation, as time permits.

Also for the ~~XXX~~ record, please note: I once said that I thought there was structure or trellacing in the tree line ~~XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX~~ ~~sXXXX~~ and also went so far as to say the tree structure, itself, could be false. (I no longer subscribe to, or even suspect, the latter). But I was not the one to invent the paper mache tree bit. That was Harold Weisberg's word creation, apparently employed to deride my camouflage hypothesis. (It was, in fact, first published in a London newspaper by a Washington reporter who Harold had spoken to, from what I can determine).

I would also like to point out something else; my earlier theory re "men in trees" was created at a time when I was unaware of key information in two areas of this case. 1) I had no idea that knoll photos were altered to the extent that they were.

2) I had no decent information regarding the activity of trains in the Railroad yard. Perceiving elevated images sans obvious means of support, I proceeded to infer concealed support in the foliage itself.

I now realize that what I used to call "trellacing" and structure IN the treeline may very well be structure or outlines associated with a string of RR cars, on the track(s) nearest the fence, as seen through the foliage---- complicated by the fact that some of these photos are all the more confusing because of what appears to be extensive and elaborate and deliberate doctoring and art work. I have reference to Bond slides of the knoll, Willis slides of the knoll, and whole scenes from the Bell film.

W I will be very suprised if---when the whole truth in this case is finally out---it turns out that no camouflage whatsoever was used, and that all my percieved images and the whole hypothesis is false. ON the other hand, I am well aware of the public relations blunder it would be to voice any suspicions in the absense of definitive proof, in a manuscript.

Its a luxury I can*t afford. However, I do give out small bits in this area of the case.....

Re SS, ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ I never meant to imply that I thought all SS agents were involved in a plot, or that the SS, as an organization, was the source of the plot.

You write:"I continue to believe that the SS had neither the brains to engineer this whole affair nor any ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ inclination to liquidate JFK!"

I Since you frequently ~~have~~ made remarks, in the spirit of constructive criticism, critical of many hypothesis I have put forward, and ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ have frequently appeared to object to the manner in which my own hypothesis seem to violate your view of the application of Occam's razor to this whole situation, I would like to know, so that I could understand better how you view this whole thing, your answers, or hypotheses,

Who do you think engineered the whole affair, and had the inclination to do so, etc.??

With assurances that I am working as hard as possible.....

Best wishes,

David



P.S. Re snickers, snickerers, and snickering.....

It is the constitutionalright of anyone to snicker. Even Spiro Agnew hasn't eradicated that, yet. In fact, just last night, I ran into someone who had been snickering at me.

I'm having the insurance company handle the repairs on my car....