Tony Mauro

Dear Tony Mauro, 7/23/79

Jim Lesar told me that he'd suggested to you that you call me. Perhaps he did not tell you why - or that it never is of personal benefit to me when reporters do.

On the King case his subject expertise is limited to the applicable law and the legal proceedings. He handled the habeas corpus largely alone and carried the real load at the Ray evidentiary hearing of 1974. He did all the work of the appeals. This covered a large area, all related to the allegations relating to Ray. In those areas his knowledge and recollections are better than mine. If he thought he had been able to inform you as fully as possible he'd not have suggested calling me. He also knows I don't have time to do what he wants me to do.

All the investigating I did. Fact was my area of case preparation. The time pressures applied by the judge at the evidentiary hearing were such that Jim was questioning witnesses he'd never spoken to based on questions I typed up for him the early mornings before their testimony.

We both learned something about Webster in early 1972, when I was investigating for the habeas corpus petition. That is when I first met John Ray and his sister and spoke to people at Leavenworth, fellow prisoners, case workers and even the warden. John Ray's case was so unusual I called it to Jim's attention. There was virtually no case against him and what there was also was dubious. There had been an illegal FBI siezure of all his records, none of which were every returned to him. He wound up getting 18 years for allegedly driving a switch car for a man acquitted of robbing a bank. Webster was the judge whomsentenced him and admitted as evidence against John money John was not even alleged to have seen, money ruled inadmissable against the alleged robber. As a result of all those successful bank robberies attributed to him by the assassins committee, which was Cointelproed into that belief by the FBI, John was so broke he could not pay a lawyer. And the one who was to have filedhis petition cert to the Supreme Court managed not to mail a copy to it although he did send one to the Solicitor General.

Beginning with the appeals work on the second of my many FOIA cases for JFK info Jim has been the lawyer. Where information is included in the records in those case, and the records are vast, Jim's recollection may be better than mine. But on fact I am the subject expert and what he'll recall originated with me.

My files now run to about 60 cabinets. I keep all the records exactly as I get them. I make copies for subject filing where the material is of sufficient interest. Most of the stuff is crap and I hate to think of the thousands of pages of it I've had to waste time on. This is true in both cases, JFK and King. However, there are not many stories on which I don't have something relevant. For example, when George Lardner phoned me Friday about the Marcello-Trafficante twist of the mafia canard I read him over the phone the FBI report the committee omitted, his lead. (He will also tell you that I did this despite disagreement with his beliefs. If you ask him.)

Your own papers Les Payne will tell you that when he followed leads I gave him, including the names of people to interview, he wound up with two significant stories, both on Newsday's wire and both picked up by the wire services. He will tell you if you ask that I gave him copies of significant records when I received them, mailed others to him and made others for him in anticipation of his following up. Just last night my wife asked me what I'm going to do with a box of them that has been in her way for close to a year. He has been busy on other stories, I guess. There was no quid pro quo and as Mo Waldron from the Times will tell you there never is.

While I can't find time for the work I want to do and my health now requires that I spend what time I can daily in physical activity I have been forced into a public role in these matters and I do serve it as well and as honestly as I can. I recall no complaints. I do it to this extent: when I got the FBI's Oliver Patterson files I gave them to the Post-Dispatch before even looking at them. It got four page-one stories before returning them to me. And I paid them for the xeroxes they made for Patterson so he could help them. ...Calling me is no favor to me but I give what help I can. Best wishes,

7627 Old Receiver Road
Frederick, MD 21701

July 23, 1979

Mr. George Herman
CBS News
2020 M Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20037

Dear George:

The questioning of FBI Director Webster was, I believe, the best and best-informed I recall of anyone on any such show. I'd appreciate a transcript if there is an extra.

The extent of untruthful responses - which does not mean I'm calling Webster a liar - is astounding. That he could give these responses intending to be honest is a slight indication of the magnitude of the perpetual FBI/CIA problem that what is called reform has not ended.

Webster is part of a campaign against FOIA. The whole informer part of the campaign against it has no basis in the Act or any decisions of which I am aware. That kind of information is and always was immune.

On the other hand, the FBI has disclosed the names of about a dozen informers to me in recent years. I mean actual symbolled informers, not sources. I did not ask it. I let them know so they could correct reading-room copies. I do not believe this was accidental and do believe it was part of the campaign against the Act.

It disclosed a number to the HSCA. In a case of which Tony knows, Oliver Patterson, this was over his written objections. Patterson is not the only one of these who wound up with Mark Lane. (Another of whom I know rebelled in a different manner, privately.)

It simply is not true that all information is at FBIHQ. I have and can give you copies of pre-Webster FBI testimony to the contrary. The FBI's primary file source on every major case is the Office of Origin. I'm getting a single record of 40 linear feet from one field office, a record that was not at FBIHQ. I've gotten another from the same field office, not FBIHQ, that was of two and a half linear feet.

It likewise is not true that summaries sent to FBIHQ include all. They eliminate what does not suit the FBI's special interest or often what is embarrassing to it. What is adequate for FBI purposes is not what is adequate for scholars, private citizens or history.

Its internal self-investigations are rigged and nobody ever sees the FBI's records unless it desires this. It prepares the records it is going to let get to others. The case of the FBI's destruction of the allegedly threatening note Oswald left at the Dallas Field Office is a case in point. I've made a set of separate copies of those records if you hear of any responsible reporters who have an interest.

Fred's question about perjury was a particularly good one, but the FBI arranged it, in the cases of which I know, for there to be no possibility of establishing which is the truthful version.

Moreover, FBI false swearing in FOIA cases is so common I think the agents know they will get brownie points for it.

Webster's response to the question about the assassins committee was very careful, in some respects I believe properly so. He limited what they will study to what the committee publishes. Except for the acoustics, this does not have enough substance to use even for compost. You will find, if you inquire, that the committee refuses to let anyone have anything else - and most of its so-called investigation was star chamber. (David Belin's recent complaint about this is contrary to his own record. The Warren and Rockefeller Commissions worked entirely in secret.)

With regard to the committee's acoustical report, which had been intended as the ultimate in put-downs, I agree with Webster's position, that it should not be done by the FBI. He provided the wide variation in possible costs because the committee began with unjustified self-limitations.

The FBI may have told Webster it ought not investigate itself by doing this study, but I'm telling you it also is a means of withholding evidence the FBI has and is still withholding. I've been after it in court for years and how have proof of the existence of some of it.

Best wishes,

Harold Weisberg

cc: Tony Marro