

9/27/67

Dear Sylvia,

Glad you are getting better. I have slowed down to the point that I sleep sometimes as much as 5½ hours. There is too much to do and I feel it should all have been done before this.

My Lane information is from Dal Verb, who saw him end August. I look supposedly on press and this subject. An honest job on that could be important. I've been asked to do it but cannot. ...Lane is looking for publicity. On this aspect, where his public position is otherwise, he can get it only from the glow....Your comments on the N.G. are really understatement. The only reason I got any mention there at all is because they had to listen to Balfrege then. His daughter sent him a copy of my book. The N.G. did not answer a letter I wrote them, as Armoni and other, before printing. You could add to your comment on Lane how ostentaciously he omits that particular footnote. I wonder if this incident is not typical of the man, whose other character defects we all have to live with? Maggie's comment reminds me of what I have long felt: with Epstein not part of our "group", aside from Lane, who is there who causes "schisms"? Are all of us to accept his various abuses in silence to avoid "schisms"? I rather think the rest of us cooperate rather well. Perhaps you explain her silence, which I had attributed to her preoccupation with her book. I plan a wrap out there for, among other things, a real effort to beard Liebelor and Bill, for whom I'm loaded. She has been silent. I asked for the name of her book so I could include a reference to it in the one I've just finished drafting and she hasn't responded. Nor has Steve Burton. I also wonder if they are put out at my attitude toward the CBS thing. I sent them copies of the long commentary I prepared as a first step to doing something, asking her and their comment prior to doing anything with it and the reply has been silent from them and Bill. I have consulted counsel and my position appears to be different because there seems to be a prima facie case of actual plagiarism and a viable question of what the lawyers call "contract" in that I had proposed to them what they did (save for doctrine) and they said they wouldn't do it. Therefore, I made what I did personal. I believe I didn't send you a copy because you were so busy and it is 75 pages long without introduction or conclusion. This attitude toward him can be most hurtful to those who hold it. I had to decline a Playboy offer to clobber him for what he did to me in their interview when they learned it and phoned me, for "us", not for him. There will be no end to these things and I regard as the most serious extent threat what he said in New Orleans. I was with Richard Townley when Lane told us the LA bar group he addressed that day had enjoined him in writing from comment on the N.O. case--and he a lawyer! I think perhaps you know a little of my feeling when there is total silence about the things he did to me when, as with the Playboy piece and the Zapruder film, there was such silence from all.

I do not believe, as you imply, that Garrison believes or has said that Oswald was a member of a conspiracy to kill Kennedy. I think he believes otherwise, although I also think he believes all the Oswalds who have appeared may be the real one. Or did before I went down. I wish you could see all of my stuff on this, independent of Garrison's as it is. I heard from the Times of London, which read the ms, just yesterday. They found it "very persuasive". My great fear is that the case will be thrown out of court or that parts of it will be because of what has happened.

I did not respond to the Playboy letter for different reasons. We have been in touch since before they did the Lane interview. I think it will do no good to tell them I do not reuse the condoms of others, and what else can I say?

Your own strong feelings are very clear. However, I really do not think it is right to call Maggie unprincipled, and I do not think she is. Aside from Lane, where there is an old personal relationship and perhaps the justified feeling that he alone raised his voice at the beginning, regardless of motive and whether or not he was responsible -and for that I believe he deserves credit and I always seek to give it to him- what is between you and her and you and others is really your attitude toward Garrison. As I tried to tell you, I believe you should let history not passion write the answer. None of us knows what he really has or doesn't have. I know what I have and I have tried to assure you that I sincerely believe it is enough to establish in the minds of reasonable men the fact that he is on the right track. Suppose it turns out that you have been wrong because there is so much of it that you do not know. I encourage you not to break a long friendship that had to have a strong basis to exist.

This sort of thing can be very hurtful to all of us. I am perhaps more acutely aware of it because of the financial crises with which it helps confront me daily. Right now I wonder if printing ROSE MORTEN, which I regard as very important, is something I can afford to do. I am going ahead with it, but I have seen no support at all for its predecessor, ~~which~~ I have also been told is important, though I recall no west-coast comment and I got no response when I asked if the bookstores out there could be checked.

But remember that you could, without hurt to your conscience, cooperate with the doctrine of the Epstein book. Aside from the personal feeling, can you not as easily have a similar attitude toward Maggie?

Those of us who take a serious attitude toward this should not irrationally ourselves. Fortunately, Lane is the only where (I do not say "among us"). There must be differences of opinion between independent people who have their own attitudes and beliefs. I think in your distress you may have escalated this, and I encourage you to consider, dispassionately, whether it is possible.

There are those about whom I think I have reason for question. About them I remain silent. Therefore, I have asked you and Maggie to make no mention of what I have sent you two alone. This is not the same, however, as fighting -or hating.

The situation is not good. There are too many people from whom I have not heard in too long a time, even after I have written. From this I take it last they disapprove of things I have done or said or have picques of which I am not conscious. I must leave it that way, knowing I have intended nothing that could justify this. I hope it can be kept to a minimum and to the degree compatible with good conscience, sublimated. However, I am troubled by it. Before I plan for the west-coast trip, I'll write Bill again. I have no knowledge of the pub date of Oswald in New Orleans. It will be about two weeks after that.

Yesterday I finally heard from Penn. They have troubles, too. I had referred a magazine to him, feeling a story in the "mysterious deaths" should be his. He has signed a contract with Award, and Award has Turner doing a book on Garrison... Just got a call from the painter who is to do some touching up at our new home and I must get there to let him in... We'll soon move our bodies then drag the rest. I'll let you know when. We'll have private space for visitors then. I put it this way because it will be some time before we can afford to furnish it decently. Chin up!

Best regards,

23 September 1967

Dear Harold,

Your letters of the 9th and 22nd both arrived today to find me convalescing from a siege of acute bronchial asthma, for which I had to have nurses around the clock earlier this week. I am much better now, but of course have little energy as yet and a mood of gloom and irritation. I won't make this a very long letter but I did want to thank you for writing. Your own fatigue is evident and I would like to urge you very seriously not to push yourself into illness, with all the attendant problems and loss of time. You must force yourself to slow down.

I am not clear on your references to Lane and his book. What is the subject of his book—the New Orleans affair? or (as I had heard earlier) the detention camps on the West Coast? Did Lane actually write a book by himself? And has CBS purchased Holt Rinehart and Winston? That I did not know. Frankly, I cannot understand why Lane is willing to be Garrison's resident-critic. It is not like him to wish to share headlines or glory with a man who is no less a publicity-hunter than he himself; and it is inconceivable to me that Lane should be willing to risk his own reputation in a cause that seems to be in ever greater trouble. His view of Garrison these days seems to be far less confident than when he made his 3/29/67 pronouncement to the world about how he had been allowed to see all and how Garrison would turn the country on its ear. I hear from a reliable source that before leaving California, Lane said that Heaven should help Jim if all he has is Russo, and that Russo is all he has, so far as he (Lane) knows. To reconcile this with his earlier proclamation is beyond my feeble powers; nor can my imagination cope with the possibilities inherent in a situation where two men with as little concern for accuracy, consistency, or ethics as these two, Garrison and Lane, decide to travel in tandem.

I had a very serious run-in with Lane. I did not have enough copies to be able to send you an exchange of letters with him. He had long ago volunteered a jacket quote for my book but of course he did not send it in time (in my opinion, he did not mail it at all but pretended it went lost, ultimately sending me the original on which he had written "copy"). Ockene had to get it at the 11th hour by phone. And it was a very generous comment, for which I was genuinely grateful. But when I finally received the "copy" of the "lost" letter, it contained not only the jacket quote but a very nasty and wholly unjustified attack on me, for not having mentioned in my book (in an appendix on the news media and the WR) the National Guardian. Lane very sarcastically accused me of deliberately making no reference to the NG because of political cowardice or disaffection. He had no basis whatever for assuming that the omission was either deliberate (in fact it was a mere oversight, largely because the NG did little or nothing after the WR came out, and it was that period with which my appendix dealt) or for the nasty reasons he implied. This would have been enough to outrage and disgust me, in itself—but, what is far worse, Lane himself, in his own book, had carefully systematically and deliberately avoided all mention of the NG, on the jacket, in the acknowledgements, in the text and in the footnotes!

My reply was, as you can imagine, a real blast, in which I reminded him, inter alia, that I was not obliged to be holier than the Pope and cited chapter and verse from his book showing how meticulously he had avoided identifying the NG as the only publication willing to print his brief for LHO and as the sponsor of his public lectures. I emphasized that I expected him to reconsider what he had written me and to retract it. No one who saw or heard about this exchange could find one atom of excuse for Lane's stupidity, hypocrisy, or unfairness in attacking me on an issue totally unrelated to me or my book but on which he himself is vulnerable, not to say contemptible (I happen to know that the then-editor of the NG is bitter at Lane's studious disassociation from the publication the moment he no longer needed its help). "No one" is not quite accurate, though—I am sorry to say that Maggie, whose immediate and full support I must admit I expected and even took for granted, was quite sympathetic to Lane (who was then her house-guest) and when I asked her her reaction to my exchange of letters with him, she merely made some

icious sounds of distress about how awful it was that so many schisms were developing in our small group. (I have never considered myself part of a group that included Lane, except in the broadest sense--I have never worked with him, entertained him, confided in him, consulted him, or sent him copies of my correspondence.) When I pressed her, she did acknowledge, as laconically as possible, that I was "right" in that Lane himself had not mentioned the NG (if she could have found some excuse for him, I suspect she would have), but again she tended to equate his position and mine, or to consider the merits irrelevant, out of concern for the so-called schisms.

Frankly, I was very disappointed to know that she not taken a strong position with Lane, and offended by her double standard in re: "schisms." Some months ago she involved several of us in a "schism" she was having with Lifton. I am never unwilling to take a position where the merits are crystal-clear and I did feel that Lifton was dead wrong. I vetoed her suggestion of a letter to Lifton to be signed by all the critics, excommunicating him (so to speak), on the grounds that it would wind up in the press and overjoy the Liebel/Schiller/Specter axis--and she agreed at once that her idea should be dropped. However, I did stick my neck out by writing to one of our colleagues to warn him against Lifton, purely on the basis of what Maggie had related of his activities at that time, on the understanding that Maggie would also write personally to the same colleague. Well, she failed to do that so in the end an exhortation not to be a "cannibalistic paranoid" was addressed, by our colleague in question, to me--for something in which I was not even involved except in my support of Maggie! Well, Lane's attack on me was if anything even worse than the earlier Lifton incident; but instead of getting support from Maggie, I got a kind of disapproving or distressed neutrality, and Lane got wined and dined together with his cheap sidekick Mort Sahl--apparently their names are so dazzling in Beverly Hills as to cover a multitude of their sins against lesser friends.

I don't think that this in itself would have caused any fatal rupture between Maggie and me, although it would have cast a very serious shadow over our relationship. But there has been a fatal rupture, the other day, on the issue of Garrison. This is not personal, in the sense that the Lane incident was personal as between Maggie and me, but it is far more important. She was and perhaps still is in New York and when she called me the other day we had words about Garrison, brief but bitter words, which have left me without willingness to continue my relationship with Maggie. As I understand her position, something that is a dishonest and rotten fraud when Specter does it is only a "mistake" when Garrison does it (or when Lane does); and when I asked, not unnaturally, why Specter too cannot be indulged his "mistakes" her answer was that they (the WC gang) made so many more "mistakes" than Garrison and that she did not wish to discuss it. I said that if we could not discuss that, then there was nothing for us to discuss at all; and she agreed, and that was that. What I did not have the courage to tell her until after this painful and traumatic conversation, when I did say it in a letter, is that I have been very shocked and very resentful for some months about the way in which Maggie smoothly and complacently changed from being the most ferocious of the advocates (among the critics) of Oswald's complete innocence to resignation to his guilt as a member of the conspiracy to assassinate JFK--purely on the story of that rather sordid Russo, unsupported even by the kind of facade of circumstantial and physical evidence that the WR indicted Oswald with. When I recall Maggie's vehement feelings against certain critics, because they thought Oswald was implicated, or even because it took them too long to come to the realization that he might have been nothing more than a fall-guy and wholly innocent, when I remember her scorn and intolerance toward someone who has done very sound work and made a real contribution, merely because he was late in understanding that Oswald was the victim of a monstrous injustice, and compare her subsequent easy faith in Russo's confabulations and her instant conversion to the thesis of Oswald's guilt (in the planning, at least, of the murder), I have to say that I am angered beyond words and disgusted and ashamed. I think our whole "friendship" was a horrible mistake and a monument to my own stupidity.

I have no friendship with ANYONE nor will I ever have a friendship sufficient to reconcile me to the lies and fabrications against Oswald, whether by the WC or by the DA, or sufficient to persuade me to keep silent when my conscience and my convictions tell me to speak out loud and clear. But now I must really stop, time for my next pills, etc. All the best,

P.S. I will try to keep a copy of my letter to Lifton on the junior instrument, which I thought a disgrace.

John