

11/7/68

Dear Miss Brunson,

I'm always impressed when I see poetry, a skill in which I never got beyond the doggerel stage except by accident and then in only an occasional line.

While I am busy-too busy- it is not an intrusion and some of your ideas are quite interesting. I wish I had time to follow some of them with you. I will, however, get for you anything that is available in the National Archives (in a way addressing the end of your letter). Xeroxed copies are 20 cents a sheet. If it is an exhibit, the last thing in Vol 33 gives the document number, and from that I can get it. If it is not an exhibit, a good description may suffice.

To grind the same axe. We must clean this up. It is possible in so doing to achieve other ends.

There is one area in which I've never been able to spend the time I'd have liked. The Commission does not make it easy to trace subjects. I'd like to know what the evidence is on the radical right in Texas - names of members and groups, activities, associations with Cuban refugees (and groups). There are a number of things I've never been able to do what I'd like about, because I've tried to span the field, and that's pretty big. Do you recall any reference by any of the doctors, especially those in Dallas, in either statements or testimony, about surgery of any kind on the President's head. This may mean nothing, but one of the FBI agents at the autopsy reported the signs of it were visible.

I have difficulty believing that Mrs. Paine can figure in this in any kind of a conspiratorial way. But there are strange aspects, aside from those you point out. For example, I believe she was also to pay Marina something, like \$10.00 a week. Rather strange if she took Marina in as a matter of generosity or just to get experience in speaking Russian.

The deeper I get into this the more certain I become that Oswald didn't know the President was going to be assassinated. If anything in the record is credible, he ~~wasn't~~ certainly killed nobody.

My approach is somewhat different. I do not intend to solve the crime; I intend to get it solved, in a way that you and I will be credited. To accomplish this I first destroyed the report, hoping that attention to the evidence in the book would get things going in that direction. After WHITWASH was out for a while I decided I had other responsibilities: first, to go further with what I had, and this I do to quite a degree in the new book; second, to show how the Whitewash was brought about. This I think I do overwhelmingly. It is, I think, an even more shocking story. I hope it will be available before too long. I'm waiting to hear from a publisher. If his decision is negative or his offer is unacceptable, I have another who wants to talk to me and if there is nothing fast and good from him I'll do it alone again.

Much of the new book is from the archive. I've spent every minute I could spare in it, letting the current book go to do it. It has been costly, for we've not broken even yet. While there is too much still and improperly secret (I've just written two long magazine pieces on this) there is a treasure-trove of excellent data that I've tapped hard but have no way of knowing what there is I've no inkling of. The descriptions are a mangle, or deceptive. You've got to work by instinct.

The new announcements are ones of wriggling worms, more deception. Most of the stuff is plain junk. It is a propaganda device, as is the transfer of the Krave and pictures. In such case, the real end is suppression...that Johnson really did was to try and pass the buck to Bobby. He said of himself "I know of no evidence..." not that there is none. He kept the back door open. Sincerely, Harold Weisberg

November 4, 1966

Mr. Harold Weisberg
Hyattstown, Md.

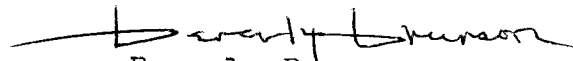
Dear Mr. Weisberg:

Forgive my intrusions; I know how busy you are; and, frankly, I would rather write poetry. I want you to know that I have no axe to grind and no interest in this case beyond that it be solved and the foreign policy of this country changed. I do not expect you to answer me formally - or at all - unless I am of use. In that case, I would be glad to know it, of course.

I have attached certain observations on testimony and material regarding Mrs. Ruth Paine. The last paragraph is, in my opinion, important - provided of course it is not a problem which, outside of my knowledge, has already been solved.

As I have said, I am interested primarily in studying areas that if investigated might turn up something beyond mere theory - some activity or document the investigation of which would not merely cast doubt on the official line, but also serve positively, as a key to unlock or at least reopen the case. Thus, my concentration on the "Walker" letter, since I believe it refers to an activity of Oswald as yet undisclosed; and, in the case of the attached, Mrs. Paine's "copy" of Oswald's Nov. 9th rough draft to the CPA - which I hope is still in existence and available for study.

Sincerely,


Beverly Brunson

I saw you NBC-TV - and was wildly grateful to know that you are working away in the National Archives. I would love to know more about Whitewash II.

What does it mean that the Attorney General has ordered the government to take possession of all the evidence in this case? good or bad?

I heard on the noon news that President Johnson has stated that he is fully satisfied with the Warren Report. He has another think coming - I am even going to look very rigorously into the possibility that he was in on it. How did Moyers get out of Austin & onto his Fox On so fast? - who the hell was Jack ~~Venta~~ Valente to be at the National Security Council meeting that night?

1.

In regard to Ruth Paine (and possibly Michael Paine though I haven't enough information about him to say much), and the role played by her in events, I would like to offer the following remarks for your record.

Oswald's association with the Paines, after his return from Mexico, has been minimized. He "only went to Irving on weekends". Actually, from October 4 to November 22, 1963, Oswald spent part of at least 22 of the 49 days with the Paines - most of them full days and nights, almost all of his free time in fact, except for workday nights and the one weekend before the assassination. If there was a conspiracy and if Lee Oswald was aware of it, Oswald, after October 14, 1963, ~~could~~ could have spent only about 20 weekday nights and the two full days of the last weekend in the company of the conspirators - provided the Paines were not involved. Yet his landlady testified that he spent nights in his room and seldom went out and never had visitors. We know that he probably did go out to make phone calls. But, in the Report, at least, there is no hard evidence that he spent any of his free time with anyone other than the Paines. No one else can be identified as having been in his company. The rest of the time he was either working or spending time at the Paine home, riding around with one of them, going to an ACLU meeting with one of them. One would expect, that if Oswald was part of an assassination plot, that he would have spent more of his time with the "conspirators". Instead he spent it with the Paines.

We know also that Oswald engaged in some of his suspicious activities while in the presence of the Paines - though, not necessarily with their knowledge, of course. He attended an ACLU meeting with Michael Paine on October 25th where he presented himself as a Marxist and made remarks against General Walker and in general made his visit conspicuous and memorable. Later on he used his attendance at this meeting in an attempt to contaminate the ACLU. There is no reason to suspect that Michael Paine was aware that Oswald was not on the level at this meeting, of course.

We know also that Oswald wrote his Nov. 9th letter to the CPA on Mrs. Paine's typewriter at her house in Irving. But her story of how events transpired regarding it does not hang together. She states that he must have written the letter "early in the morning" of Saturday, November 9th. According to her, when she came too near, he made an effort to conceal his papers. That made her suspicious. But then she says he left a rough draft of the letter - with a lie exposed - on the top of her secretary desk in the living room - left it there, according to her story, until Sunday night when she swept it into her desk drawer surreptitiously. Oswald spent a good deal of his time in that living room according to other of her testimony, watching TV and so on. It's strange he did not notice an incriminating letter which earlier he had taken pains to conceal. In fact, according to her, he forgot the draft ever existed and went off with it. In the meantime, she had made a "copy" of this letter because its 'lies' offended her. What is not brought out in her testimony is that Monday, November 11th was a holiday and Oswald also spent that day in Irving. (The final draft of the letter was postmarked November 12th.) So for three days Oswald did not remember questionable material that he had taken pains to conceal on Saturday morning. - It is interesting that in addition to this

story, Mrs. Paine also said that Oswald "worked on the letter all that weekend." Commission Counsel made no effort to clarify. - There is also the Nov. 1st letter to the CPA. Was that written on Mrs. Paine's typewriter?

I will return to the matter of the Nov. 9th letter in my last paragraph.

There is also the fact that in her testimony before the Commission Ruth Paine - not necessarily intentionally, of course - made a gratuitous and misleading statement regarding the letter Marina wrote to a boyfriend in Russia which was returned to her for insufficient postage. Mrs. Paine is vague about both when Marina told her of the incident and when the incident actually occurred. By implication she makes it seem later than it actually was. If I am right (see the "Walker" letter) the letter to the Russian boyfriend was written about January 1963. Mrs. Paine sets the time she first heard about it as May or even October 1963. More important, Mrs. Paine misrepresents the circumstances of the letter's return. She stated to Commission that the letter was sent back for insufficient postage and left "at the Oswald's door", where Lee found it. Now Mrs. Paine volunteered this story: she was not specifically asked about it. She found a place and intruded it into her testimony. And in this connection it is interesting that it was also Mrs. Paine who (unwittingly according to her) turned over the "Walker" letter to the authorities. She was at any rate well aware of the importance of dating the "Walker" letter as she had been intensively grilled about it after its "accidental" discovery in a cookbook she turned over. Now Mrs. Paine should have grasped immediately the implication in the difference between ~~this~~ letter being returned to the post office box (to which it actually was returned by explicit testimony of Marina) and its being left at the door of the Oswald's apartment. If the letter was left at the door it would indicate that Marina was not using the postoffice box at the time postal rates went up in January 1963. If it was returned to the post office box (which it was) it would indicate a time when Marina was using the box and most likely had a key. (Marina, reasonably, must have expected to be able to retrieve herself any letter that the boyfriend might send in reply and would not have expected Oswald to deliver it and place it in her hands.) But the "Walker" letter obviously refers to the time Oswald first gave Marina a key to the box since it tells her how to find the post office. ~~At the time Marina~~ This incident of the returned letter is very important in dating the "Walker" letter; Mrs. Paine's gratuitous statement is then highly misleading and hard to understand.

For in spite of Marina's unkind remark, Mrs. Paine is anything but stupid. It was Mrs. Paine, in fact (see Dec. 1963 article in NY Times) who first analyzed and gave out to the press an almost complete explanation of how Oswald and Oswald alone could have financed his trip to Mexico - which explanation was later accepted in full by the commission and put out as its own.

There is more.

There is, for instance, the two identical phone calls which Oswald made to Ruth Paine about 4:30 P.M. on Saturday Nov. 23. Mrs. Paine

tried to minimize this highly charged and suspect sequence - though she did admit that Oswald probably lied to the police about whom he was calling on one of the dialings. She skims deftly on and says she really regarded the two calls as one - which is preposterous. Obviously, even if Mrs. Paine did not know why Oswald made a call to her under the pretense of calling someone else, Oswald knew it and knew why he did it - and knew in fact that he was putting through a secret call to Ruth Paine. One cannot help thinking of the possibility of a code message. At the very least Oswald must have wanted to tell Ruth Paine something he did not want police to know he was telling her. What did he say? What was the message? Mrs. Paine is innocently unaware of any.

There is also the fact that Mrs. Paine did not tell the FBI Oswald's phone number in Dallas which would in effect have given his address. She says it didn't occur to her - which is compatible with the open, honest, intelligent-but-human picture she consistently presents of herself.

There ~~is~~ also the question - never settled in the report - of whether or not Ruth Paine knew exactly which building Oswald worked in. This vagueness has been interpreted to mean that Marina may have lied when she said that Mrs. Paine cried that the President had been shot from the building Lee worked in: if Mrs. Paine did not cry out that statement, then what made Marina go out to the garage and look for Oswald's rifle? Mrs. Paine is also vague on whether Marina did actually go to the garage. But this vagueness also accrues to the benefit of Mrs. Paine: if she did not actually know the building in which Oswald worked she could not have anything to do with events there. However, the fact is that Mrs. Paine did know exactly which building Oswald worked in for she ~~looked~~ looked it up in the telephone directory for the FBI early in November, and gave them the Elm street address. This she admits, but claims she "forgot" about it; and, I suppose, went vaguely back to thinking that maybe he really worked on Industrial Blvd. She is mistress of the art of honest-seeming vaguities.

There is also the fact that she steered Oswald into the job.

There are other things: her goodness to Lee and Marina, going so far as to make two trips to New Orleans; her statement that Oswald didn't drink and would have no reason to go to nightclubs though she testifies that he tried to make up a batch of blackberry wine. But vagueness and inconsistency are not evidence of guilty knowledge. Most of us, I'm sure, want to believe in Ruth Paine. We want to believe that there are people simple, intelligent and good as she seems to be. She is one of several almost fabulous characters in this story, but she is the only one who seems wholly good. (Unless of course she was in love with Marina which ~~her~~ her letters might suggest to some people). So strong is this impression of her goodness that one hates to snip away at it, ~~in~~ ^{for} fear of turning up, behind the image, a clever fiction.

✓ This is a dark horse suggestion and information not available to me might have already invalidated it - but I think there may be one way to establish conclusively the innocence of Mrs. Paine's character. If her copy of Oswald's rough draft of the Nov. 9th letter to the CPA, along with the rough draft itself, can be compared

rigorously and minutely by someone who understands the nature of composition, it ought to become evident whether the copy in her handwriting is actually a copy and not a draft of the letter itself. Any sensitively literate person ought to be able to determine this. I can think of no reason why she should copy the letter if she were not honestly what she presents herself to be and if circumstances were not actually as she says they were, that she was merely troubled and confused. But if the copy in her handwriting should turn out not to be a "copy" and if it could be established that it was a draft of the letter itself, this alone might be enough to reopen the case.

I would like very much to make this comparison myself but can't; I don't have a copy of her "copy" nor a full copy of Oswald's rough draft. Do you? Can you?

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✓ Keeper of the Graveyard

his place is in a patch
of scrubgrass at the end of a long road
in a deserted city where scratch
brazen beetle and horned toad

where lie the hills and ridges
of earth, level across the eye
to the outermost reaches of birth
and the stone sings all day

"genius loci" under a tree:
his is to look and listen
admiring the several sounds, to see
though the seed be stricken

it carried off on the wind's horn
and returned in the same motion:
this climate is bad for the corn
but good for devotion

here all day he can roam
in and out out and in
among fallen stars and at night come
home with a fetching grin

BRIEF ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

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