

30 March 1978

Dear Harold,

Thank you for your latest letter and for returning the pages from Oltman's book together with a set of copies, which I have sent on to Paul Hoch. I was most interested in your comments on the inscribed photo which turned up so mysteriously and so conveniently for purveyors of the lone-assassin myth.

I had not planned to subject myself to the ordeal of reading "Marina and Lee" by Priscilla Johnson McMillan. However, I was so hung up on that inscribed photograph that I ran out this morning and bought a copy of the book to see what, if anything, Marina/Priscilla had to say about it.

Well, they did indeed have something to say, and what they said was so interesting that I copied it out of the book and am enclosing the excerpt with this letter (with copy to Paul). Now we know why no one testified about this inscribed photo to the Warren Commission--it was not "discovered" until "early 1967" and what is more, Marina "today...has no recollection of having written" the inscription! Moreover, according to Priscilla, Marina not only wrote the inscription but under it she made a small sketch of a terrier. But in the copy of the back of the photo which comes from Oltmans' book, there is only the inscription, but no sketch of the terrier.

According to Epsteinker, Marina's handwriting on the back of the photo was authenticated by a handwriting expert; but no one seems to have analyzed the alleged Oswald inscription for handwriting authenticity. Indeed, that inscription includes a curious feature--the manner in which the date was written. Oswald supposedly dated it "5/IV/63" (which I read as 5 April 1963 and not May 4, 1963) but to the best of my recollection, Oswald never wrote dates in that combination of Arabic and Roman numerals. I have not taken the time to search all of his known writings as they appear in the Hearings and Exhibits but a cursory review of his letters to Marguerite and to Robert show that he invariably inscribed the date by writing out the month, followed by Arabic number, followed by the year (e.g., January 14, 1963; May 7, 1962; etc.).

Another curious element: When DeM found the inscribed photo, he took it not to the FBI, not to the Dallas Police, not to any authority or agency, but to George (and Priscilla) McMillan, the well-known professional purveyors of the lone-assassin theory in both the JFK and the MLK cases!

Perhaps it is paranoid, but I do think one has to look very hard at the inscriptions to determine whether or not they are authentic (and what happened to the sketch of the terrier???) and one has to look equally hard at the strange and fortuitous discovery of the inscribed photo by DeM among his possessions. Is it beyond all possibility that the package and the inscribed photo were planted? Could Marina have written that inscription and then lost all recollection of it?

I will close with excerpts from some rough notes of an interview of Epsteinker which I have just received from David Williams of AIB: "I asked him about the photo to, allegedly signed by Marina and Oswald that had been given to DeM. He said the handwriting analysis had been performed ('in Nov. or Dec.') by Jay McManus, ex-FBI analyst. Confirmed it was Marina's handwriting. What about Oswald? He mumbled 'yes', but I question whether this was actually confirmed because later in the discussion he said, 'Maybe people doubt it was LHO's writing on the photo.' Certainly not the words of someone confident that it was LHO."

All the best,



Excerpts from MARINA AND LEE by Priscilla Johnson McMillan

That evening was the last time Lee Oswald ever saw George de Mohrenschildt. On April 19 the De Mohrenschildts left Dallas...The De Mohrenschildts did not return to Dallas for more than three years. They came back in 1966, and when they got around to retrieving their possessions from storage in early 1967, they had an enormous surprise. There, among all the boxes and bundles, they found one which they could not recall having received at all. It was wrapped in brown paper and contained a stack of records that they had loaned to Marina in an effort to help her learn English. They were unable subsequently to remember whether the bundle bore a postmark or not.

But the greatest surprise was still to come. It was not the bundle of records itself, but something that had been laid neatly and purposefully on top--a photograph of Lee with his gun⁹ and dressed in black, one of the two Marina had taken. The back of the photograph bore two inscriptions. Across the top, in Russian, were the words: "Hunter for the Fascists--ha-ha-ha!!!" Under the inscription, which was bold and clear, was a small sketch of a terrier, of the kind the De Mohrenschildts owned. Marina today, fourteen years later, has no recollection of having written it. But the writing and the sketch both appear to be hers. And in the lower left-hand corner, catty-corner and in English, was another message in handwriting that appears to be Lee's. It read: "For my friend George from Lee Oswald." Beneath the inscription was the date written, as Lee might have done it, in a combination of Latin and Arabic script: "5/IV/63." The date was probably supposed to be May 4, 1963, and Lee had, as nearly as can be guessed, mailed the records--and the photograph--from New Orleans.

(Pages 290-291. Further passages follow the above, dealing with possible motivations for the inscription of the photograph by Marina, on one hand, and by Oswald, on the other.)

Footnote 9 (page 489)

A description of the bundle, the way the photograph was placed in it, and the inscription was given to the author by Pat S. Russell, Jr., De Mohrenschildt's attorney, in a telephone conversation on April 21, 1977, after De Mohrenschildt's death, and a copy of the photograph, with inscriptions, was subsequently sent to the author by Mr. Russell. Some persons have questioned the authenticity of De Mohrenschildt's "find", suggesting that he placed the inscriptions there himself. There appears to be no truth to this. De Mohrenschildt immediately told friends about his discovery. In a letter of April 17, 1967, George de Mohrenschildt wrote to George McMillan, husband of the author, that he had come into possession of some "very interesting information" about Oswald since his return to the United States; and on June 22, 1968, he invited George McMillan and the author to visit him in Dallas to discuss "some interesting material on Oswald plus a message (De Mohrenschildt's italics) from him we discovered in our luggage."

Legend

4/4/78

Dear Sylvia (HR, PH and JL, too)

Please excuse the haste and the probably worse typing. My regular machine is in the shop and I'm using a duplicate of the Agee one I've had for more than 40 years!

I've not yet read the rest of today's mail because Jim is pressing me to rush along with much FOIA work. But I want to go farther with your helpful 3/30/78.

By now you, Paul and Jim have copies of a memo from Howard on the date on the picture, with copies of the Epsteinker and McM treatments.

I want to go back farther, with an initial stop at 4/19/63. The FBI records I have confirm the DeM departure date of 4/19. However, Friscilla claims that deM claims he found this stuff in their "luggage" when they returned. This explains her contrivance of a May date for what is clearly April and was for the Oswalds impossible in May. Like the Epsteinker she fakes her case. (Assuming the accuracy of what he quotes in the note there is no reason to believe as she suggests that the language relates to the inscription, which is hardly a "message.")

Now I would like to take you back to Whitewash The First. In it I reported that the cops did indeed get two negatives and listed them, with the Commission and the FBI pretending otherwise. I think we had later correspondence about this. It interested me much. For a while I was able to carry this farther, in the Archives and in Dallas.

The reports I have from the Archives may well have been added to by now and I do not recall how I have them filed. So I believe someone who can find the time might consider asking the Archives for all available records relating to these pictures.

They were spread around widely by the cops, by giving them out and by leaving many copies unattended. I know at least one reporter who found a big bunch of prints drying in I think he told me Lt. Day's office.

He could have lifted some. I don't recall if he did but he could have without admitting it because he found nobody there and the place wide open.

I don't recall if Howard made the point but if he did I agree that so close to the Walker shooting neither Lee nor Marina would have made cracks about it, especially not if Marina believed Lee was involved.

But is Friscilla's account credible for 4/19 - that after getting the picture the deMs were silent about it? Another reason for her May contrivance.

On the other hand, there is no reason to believe that in May the Oswalds had an address for the deMs, in Haiti.

These and other considerations get back to the suspicion of a plant of the picture. Anyone with access to what the deMs left behind and a copy of the picture could have done it. Officials certainly could have. With motive in the early Garrison days. That there was a plant is easier to believe than any of these other accounts.

Then there is the different descriptions of the same inscription. It is not only the presence/absence of the terrier sketch. Different direct quotes. From one copy? I find it not easy to believe that some may were so silent over all of or any of this for so long.

My greatest present interest in this is Epsteinker and the CIA. This also means anything you may hear about Epsteinker's access to CIA records, Nosenko, etc. There is now the relevance I projected some time ago. I do not know the exact details but our presentation of "new evidence" at the appeals level and the government almost hysterical opposition to it in the executive session transcripts case is going to be resolved, possibly by trial. We can depose CIA people in another case. If the

district judge takes the very strong hint from the appeals court we'll have a trial or be able to take depositions. He is to do whatever he does in time for oral arguments before the appeals court in its June sitting. At issue is what the CIA made available to Epsteinker and denied to me, particularly about the 8/23 session. (On this note that E. gives a wrong date, to make it appear as a result of what Helms told Warren rather than following whatever the Commission decided the day before.) So we can use any info that can be used as a basis for asking questions as well as for establishing fact. Thus anything Ep. says can be useful. Hastily,