

3/22/68

Dear Helen,

Your letters of 7,17, both tapes and transcripts arrived in good time. Delay because I was working in NO for a while and an asst DA has been with me here this week, so I'm snowed under a three-week accumulation of mail, etc., and a little more than the usual fatigue. He read your letters here, took the transcript back with him, and I delivered the tape myself. Your efforts are appreciated.

Thornley has not been truthful, whether or not he perjured himself. I, of course, did not read his grand-jury testimony. I am talking about my own investigation only. And, as you realize, there is nothing in what he told Bob that makes my work in any sense inaccurate, including his comment on the classification. Read it carefully. The mention of rumor does not relate to the specific question. So, I am interested in everything I can learn about him, including what may be exculpatory, for I do not want him hurt unnecessarily.

Do you know what, if anything, he does for a living -and otherwise, for he certainly isn't writing.

What happened to freedom of speech? Enough of us aren't fighting for it. I'm afraid all governments have the same characteristics, in this respect, anyway.

Your reference to Stefan's understanding of the return of his unopened letter is a reflection of understanding and generosity on his part-only it never happened. I did not receive any letter from him that I returned unopened. Whatever happened to the freedom of the mails. If he has it, it's like to have it, just as he got it.

Lilla's ankle is outside the cast now, and she can get around, but it is quite uncomfortable.

Thanks for the story on the cancelled banquet. Jim was right in his actions, but his press sense is terrible and he brought this kind of story on himself. I was there and tried to do something about it and couldn't. He locked the doors because they insisted on censoring him, insisted he could not criticize the federal government or the federal courts. It is not because he was refused the opportunity to speak. He was the scheduled main speaker.

Phoned Bob two nights ago. He was going to phone back but hasn't.

How busy are you? Can you transcribe another tape? If you can, what kind of machine do you have. This tape is 1 7/8, reel. It is an interview with a woman who knew Thornley well. It also would have to be in strictest confidence. There are no facilities in New Orleans for it, and my wife cannot now do it. Do not be reluctant to say you cannot. It is about two hours long, perhaps a little less.

Please apologize to Stefan for me, explaining that I did not return his letter. That would have been to insult him, despite his kind interpretation. My thanks to you both.

Sincerely,

Harold Weisberg

4666 - 27th Ave. No.
St. Petersburg, Florida 33713
17 March 1968

Dear Harold:

Enclosed is a copy of my letter to Jim Garrison as the result of an item in this morning's newspaper. I am positive this could not be (what was in the paper) the complete copy from the wire service.

Also enclosed is the particular clipping. I am sure someone will have seen to it that Bob Ruark receives the clipping and he should also have further information for any replies he may make on the air.

The more I read in the 26 volumes, the angrier I become. When an item such as this comes out, I find I still have the capability for more anger. I didn't think it was possible.

I cannot believe that Mr. Garrison would have locked the doors simply because he was refused the opportunity to speak. Furthermore, I cannot accept any report that he said the President should be hanged. He has not acted so irresponsibly in the past and, in the light of his dedication to resolving Kennedy's assassination, that would be the very last remark he would make.

Penn Jones and Roger Craig were the last guests we had on this topic. Most of the listeners to Bob's program are interested and ask intelligent questions but there are two or three who become almost vicious in their attacks on anyone who dares to question the Warren Report. It is nothing more than blind faith in the Administration, whichever one happens to be in office. I think Bob Ruark is trying to present different personalities among the critics in the hope that one can get through to these people.

These are the callers who take up so much of the valuable time with their tirades and thereby prevent others who would ask for information and learn more. Calls are not screened as they are on some of the talk programs so that anyone who is able to get the number is allowed to speak so long as what he says is not in bad taste, profane, etc.

I think Sylvia Meagher is the next one slated for the program but it is possible Bob will contact you now in the light of this clipping and your having worked so closely with Mr. Garrison. I hope so, especially since Mrs. Meagher is not one of Mr. Garrison's admirers.

I hope that by now Lillian is all well and back on the job. My very best wishes to her and to you.

Sincerely,



Helen G. Hartmann

4666 - 27th Ave. No.
St. Petersburg, Florida 33713
17 March 1968

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Mr. James Garrison, District Attorney
Parish of Orleans
2700 Tulane Ave.
New Orleans, Louisiana 70119

Dear Mr. Garrison:

As one who has observed with interest your attempts to bring to justice those involved in the assassination of President John F. Kennedy, I was disturbed at an item appearing in our newspaper today.

From UPI, the account was two columns wide and half a page in depth and appeared to be composed of statements attributed to but one person, William J. Raggio of Reno, Nevada.

In the past our newspaper has edited wire releases to suit its own point of view and it seems likely this has happened in this instance. From what we were offered today, there was no attempt to report your statements.

Please, if possible, send me copies of both your speech on Wednesday and the one you had planned to make last night in order that we may shed some light locally. The enclosed will, I hope, take care of the cost.

Since I know there will be many questions raised based upon the newspaper item, some answers should be made and I have access to air time if needed. This should be done as soon as possible.

Best wishes for your continued efforts.

Sincerely,

(Mrs.) Helen G. Hartmann

4666 - 27th Ave. No.
St. Petersburg, Florida 33713
7 March 1968

Dear Harold:

Finally! Here is the transcript of the Kerry Thornley program, the original and one copy so you won't have to make a copy. Sorry it took so long.

I have transcribed, from tapes, fully as many words as are contained in your four books during the past six years. You have to admit, that's a lot. But I do believe that Thornley is the most difficult due to his many fits and starts and all that.

Since it has taken so long, the typed copy has not been rechecked against the tape but I am reasonably certain that any discrepancies are not important. There are probably some transpositions of words and a few of Kerry's false starts are bound to have been lost. Otherwise, it should be quite faithful to what was said.

Off and on, there is some kind of difficulty with incoming calls on some of Bob Ruark's programs. This seems to have been the case on this particular program. On the tapes I sent you, I cut out some of this such as, sounds similar to the induction-noises common to our exchanges, static-like interference that hindered exchange of conversation, etc.

Some evenings there are numerous complaints by callers that they were cut off and disconnected after the number had begun to ring. I sometimes have the impression that there is a desire from some quarter to inhibit discussion on various topics. This is especially so when I have tried for several evenings to call the program and have been disconnected following a query by a female-type voice who innocently inquires if the line is busy.

Harold, what ever happened to freedom of speech?

Penn Jones is on tonight with Roger Craig and I am looking forward to it. At the moment there are no other programs scheduled on the subject but some time today I will be trying to prod Bob for some more.

Steffen Sorensen has just completed his second time through the 26 volumes and hopes to rest his eyes and brain for a few days - if I let him. His mind is too keen for him to be allowed to get away from it for long. At one time he became so depressed at the apparent hopelessness of it all and at the magnitude of the deception that, it seemed to me, he struck out at those who had brought the deception to public notice. Almost as if, by discrediting them in his own eyes, he could change it all. I believe he even questioned your own motives and sincerity, did he not? Then he decided that, regardless of the integrity of those who criticized the Report, the facts did not change. At that time he wrote a letter of apology to you, telling me later that it had been returned unopened. I would have been crushed but he said he appreciated what he felt was said by the return. (Thought you would like to know.)

He will be working on the radio logs soon for you.

Got to get this out for the postman. Hope your wife's ankle is all better.

My best to you both.

Helene

4666 - 27th Ave. No.
St. Petersburg, Florida 33713
1 March 1968

Dear Harold:

Thank you for taking time for such a quick reply. My days begin with reading the mail delivered right in time for coffee and I can't think of a nicer way to face the day.

The tapes went off day before yesterday, Wednesday the 28th. I have not had time to begin the transcript but, if I get lucky, I hope it will be in the mail no later than Monday. One thing I should add regarding the tapes, you will hear the point where the question concerned whether or not Donovan was the commanding officer. That was cleared up the following night although it does make all kinds of sense to me that, if a man is the officer in command, he is in some way or another a commanding officer.

I think Thornley's trouble, as shown on that program, is much the same as a lot of us have: We understand one thing to have been said but upon reading the very same words we find it was not the same at all. This is the value of transcripts.

Your suggestion about sending material to you for transmittal to Mr. Garrison is a very good one. I have never written to Mr. Garrison, mainly because I have noticed he feels an obligation to reply to those who write him and I do not wish him to take up any of his valuable time just to say thanks for the letter. If I ever should write, it would be with no return address in order to prevent his using time he so sorely needs for things of real importance.

There were many questions that could and should perhaps have been put to Kerry Thornley when I had the chance but, at that time, it seemed best to get him off the defensive before he went to New Orleans.

You wanted more opinion on Ruth Paine. I have it in plentiful supply and it is not one woman's cattiness about another.

If Lee Harvey Oswald put the blanket-wrapped rifle on the floor of the Paine garage, he must have felt confident that Ruth Paine would not mind. The same goes for any knowledge Marina may have had of its presence. According to Ruth Paine, she abhorred the idea of the presence of such a thing on her premises and surely must have voiced her feelings to one or the other or both of them. We have her word that she asked Marina if Lee had a rifle and that Marina said he did and that it was in the garage.

Yet when they all went to the garage, what did Ruth Paine do? She went and stood right on that blanket - out of all the other places she could have stood, it had to be on the blanket.

What was it about Oswald's coming out to the Paine home on the 21st of November that caused Ruth Paine to be on guard when she was being questioned? This made her contradict her own statements on more than one occasion: III 46, 47, 57; XI 392. He either did or he did not go into the house before she did and Jenner appeared to believe this point was important.

She was in even worse condition when it came to the phone call to him at his room. Jenner asked her to sit back and relax. Why was she so tense over this incident? This is III 44. To me, this is significant because of the other inconsistencies surrounding this same phone call.

III 78: When the police arrived on the 22nd, they showed her at least one package or two. What was this all about? She never did say, not did anyone ask her.

From the little we are told about Oswald's reactions in Jail, it is very clear he trusted Ruth Paine. Add that to what Ruth Paine makes clear in her testimony, I am impressed that she must have known even more about him and his plans than his own wife. He wrote a letter to the Russian Embassy about his trip to Mexico and left the rough draft where Ruth would be sure to discover it. This indicates he was not concerned that she would question it.

Frankly, I don't believe he knew the rifle was in the garage - if it really was. Ruth Paine stated that when he phoned her to ask that she contact Abt, he also said to tell Marina he wanted his wife to stay with Ruth Paine. I realize we have only Ruth Paine's word on this, but if it is true, he still felt, even then, that he could trust her.

There has been a lot of speculation about Marina's indoctrination by the FBI and possibly the Secret Service. What about all the hours under Ruth Paine's tender ministry? It may well be that she did not refuse to see Ruth Paine for any of the reasons so far suggested. She may have felt she would not be safe if she went back there.

There are a lot of other unpleasant thoughts I have about this triangle that I don't even want to consider, much less put on paper. But there are some things that cannot be explained otherwise. Perhaps one of these days you will find yourself in our area and we will be able to have a good long talk.

Regard: Ruth Paine is at such pains to display a consideration for the welfare of a poor foreign girl, even friendship if you will although my definition of friendship is somewhat different from what she acted out. This consideration would normally include mental and emotional well-being as well as physical. Yet, (III 130) she would have been happier if Oswald had never come out on the weekends. A friend should have felt just the opposite if such visits added to Marina's happiness.

What is the legal opinion concerning the search of the Oswald's personal effects, forgetting the Paine's? Apparently Ruth Paine gave permission for the search without a search warrant. But, even though the Oswald's things were in her house, could she legally give such permission for their property? Is there any indication that Marina was asked if it was alright with her?

Harold, always remember that at this point I have only got into the middle of Vol. IV of the testimony and have only covered XVI-XXI of the exhibits in any depth. There is a lot (a formidable amount) yet to cover and I have been unable to locate any source for a day-stretcher. Rest assured that if I do find one that works, I will notify you immediately.

What a pity I did not begin to study this subject until last October or November. There is so much to be absorbed even without the 26 volumes. Please be patient if I bring up points that are no longer considered of consequence.

I will ask Steffen Sorensen to work on the radio logs. I know he intends to do so and he can start sooner. . . At present he is transcribing all his notes and sending them to me for checking along with his comments. Among these is a question as to just how tall Lee Harvey Oswald really was. His height seems to have varied with some kind of regularity from 5' 8" to 5' 11" on forms he filled out himself. At any rate, when he applied for his passport in 1959 he said he was 5' 11" tall. An application for employment 5-9-63 states he was 5' 9". Same man? Someplace else he said he was 5' 1" tall - yes; that is one inch.

A question about bullets, about which I know as near nothing as you could guess. There was more than one mention of the smell of gun-powder in Kennedy's car on the way to the hospital. Strange in view of the distances to any of the points

from which the firing may have been done. Steffen brought up this point, so I will pose his questions. Even I know about dum-dums. But Steffen asked if there is any kind of bullet that carried its own charge that would cause it to explode with even more fragmentation upon impact or penetration. This was an open car moving moderately fast and had the odor of gunpowder come from the gun itself, the odor should have dissipated quite rapidly. For it to linger as it apparently must have done, there almost had to be gunpowder in the car and this could have been deposited there by such a bullet as he describes.

Sonics are also out of my ken but I have another question. The witnesses in the eastern part of the plaza described the shots as bang, bang-bang. Mrs. Connally said she heard bang-bang, bang. It seems to me this would show that the second one was much closer to her location than the first and further from the witnesses to the east than the first. I am willing, however, to leave this whole portion of the subject to those who are qualified to analyze sonics and ballistics.

Several years ago one of the previous moderators of the WLCY program replied to some caller with the information that the FBI is interested in the program and monitors it constantly, occasionally making requests for portions here and there. Particularly during the Cuban crisis I remember it was well to be discreet in any remarks over the air if one did not adhere strictly to official policy. Many of the comments on the subject of Cuba have been interesting and I have noted from time to time that some of the callers would voice criticism and make statements about their own political philosophies and have never been heard from since. It has always been the policy of that station that callers must not be allowed to identify themselves unless they are already in the public eye. Therefore, I do not believe identification of callers could be made without some agency's monitoring and tracing calls.

When an individual phones the program there is a wait of anywhere from a couple of minutes to three-quarters of an hour, ample time for tracing. I am sure all the regular callers to that program are identified on someone's list. I am among the very few who are allowed to give their names, addresses, etc., over the air. This has only been true for the last three years.

During the 1964 presidential campaign you will recall things got very messy and often there were accusations, concerning the murdered J. F. Kennedy, made by the callers to the program. When I had the true facts, I occasionally called in to make a short statement of fact and that was the extent of it. Suddenly I found I was on the receiving end of telephoned threats from the very obviously extreme right. At that time, there was no way my telephone number could have been learned if the calls I made were not traced. I recognized the voices of the callers as those heard regularly on the program, spewing the fascist line. When I stated on the air that the voices were recognized and that action would be taken if the calls to me continued they stopped and I have not been bothered again.

It is just barely possible that Bob Ruark mailed you the tape and that it was then removed from the mail since it would have been important to you and Mr. Garrison at that time. My outgoing mail is never put in the same receptacle twice and definitely not in my own mailbox for collection. Too bad we can't afford our own couriers like J. Edgar. No wonder he doesn't trust the U. S. Mail.

Penn Jones will be on again the 7th of this month. I like him, too. He will have Roger Craig with him.

I hope your wife is mending rapidly. My husband, Bob, can sympathize to some degree. He twisted his back to the extent that he had to fall on the floor to get out of bed. He is a musician, playing organ and piano and twisting to play the piano did it. He is now playing only organ to avoid that in the future.

Wishing both of you the very best - and, please, don't feel you have to answer this.

Sincerely,