

12/23/68

Dear Steve,

Many thanks for taking the time to write me on your card. (For several years, we just have not taken the time for the amenity of cards, much as we want to, as I hope you'll understand).

While I welcome your comments, I do not accept them as completely candid. I do approve and appreciate the spirit I think dictated them. And I take the time to go into it (as I did before without response or appreciation) in the hope it can have some meaning for you.

Unlike Vince, I have no question about your purpose. I do about your judgement and performance. I hope you will stop and think about it as dispassionately as it is given mortal to examine himself.

Regardless of intention, I think you have been a disaster to the investigation, and I will explain it. At the same time, I tell you I think the original fault is not yours. Briefly, you have bled it, led it down wrong paths and been part of may yet and already has come close to ruining it and ~~with~~ it all so many of us have suffered and sacrificed so much for. As the years grow on you, this is one of the things you will have to live with.

It is not only understandable, it is right that young men want to make out, make names and reputations for themselves. I do not criticize you for this, not a bit. How you did some of it is dubious. You may recall that on your request I did defend you, try to ease things for you.

Nor is it culpable to be inexperienced. We all begin that way and none of us ever has enough or ever profits as much as he should (and should want to) from his own mistakes and those of others. "None", please realize, includes me.

I will not go into the entire Rose bit with you. I remind you only that when I had reason to have doubts about him, I asked you to get me a picture and to say nothing about it. You did not get the picture, you never did respond, and you first of all told him about it. Now there was real need for that picture, and there was and is reason to have doubts about him. He has acknowledged to me that there were dubious things about himself that he held out. Once I discovered them, he took the initiative in confessing them, making those to whom he spoke believe it all originated with him. The cost and effect of his work has yet to be determined, but if he came up with a single thing of any value, it is unknown to me. He did come up with any number of things that would have wrecked everything had Jim used them. It is in no way his fault they were not used.

Nor do I know of a single viable thing any of you worked on out there. Fascists? Sure, you've got loads of them, and they are terrible people. But I have yet to hear of a single one in any solid way connected with the assassination or the investigation Jim should have been conducting. As a result, he was kept going in circles and the wrong circles. When he was doing nothing in New Orleans, where he is about to face his moment of truth, he was leeching the money required for it and the time he owed in on nonsense and worse. Other things that went along with this I will spare you. Now he is about to go to court not prepared, not having conducted the investigations he should have, and with a world waiting for the revelations he cannot and will not make because they are irrelevant and false in any event. Nobody can possibly live up to the advance billing. If it does not have a predictable spontaneous effect on the jury, is it asking too much to try and imagine what defense counsel may be able to do with it?

Those very few things I asked of you, you never did. The one important sewer picture, the one I asked of you, you did not make. Instead you made pictures that are utterly immaterial, as the most rudimentary knowledge of the established fact of the assassination would have told you. The result was effective propaganda, only because Jim is luckier than most (but we may yet have to face it in court), the ruin of what could have been an important part of the untold story, and a number of very decent people and stalwart workers on our side quit.

I could go on at some length, but because my purpose is not to berate you but to open your eyes and mind and put you in a position to understand the possible consequences of what you have been part of - and this you will have to live with - I think this is enough. Save for one thing: you must learn that the way to help a man, particularly an egocentric man of some genius, is not to whim and cater to him and his vanity, not to be an apologist and a lickspittle, but to exercise your own independent judgement, not give and tell him what you know he wants to hear. In telling you this, I want you to know that I have read a number of your memos, aside from that awful one on the Zapruder film (where, armed only with the most profound ignorance, you undertook to explain to him what he did not know - and were completely wrong).

You kid yourself if you believe what you say in saying this: "I know I prevented a disaster by making sure to see that film - because by doing that I have prevented the film by being shown in the very dangerous state it was in. I did that and cut off all association with Lemarre as I have promised".

As you know, I have from the first been more than skeptical of that entire operation. We discussed this at some length in Charlie Brown's the end of October. You were still sold on it. I know the book is a phoney. I read part of it last summer. You cannot know anything at all about the subject and trust this book. Could I expect more of the movie? Especially when its failure to appear coincided with other things of which you had no knowledge?

Recall that I offered to chauffeur you and Lemarre around. Remember I was a bit late? Remember I made bad turns? From this you will certainly recall that I got you to the office much too late to show it and catch your plane. You would not have shown it in any event, for once I knew they have the Zapruder film in it (and I do not for one minute believe the story of how they got it), had I gotten you there on time the office would have prevented its showing. Without Jim there, I doubt any member of the staff would have permitted it. Are you now aware of the possibilities of just this: the stolen Zapruder film, of which Jim has the only known unofficial copy, is in it? How could they have gotten it? From LIFE? FBI? Secret Service? CIA? Do you think that when LIFE had a year ago paid Zapruder a half million dollars for the right not to show it anyone in any responsible position was going to give it away if he had a copy?

The reality is that you did not prevent a disaster by making sure to see the film. It has yet to be learned whether your association with it will yet be a disaster. More, there is nothing that can be done to that film to make it anything but dangerous. I am willing to assume, from what you say, that you are responsible for certain changes in it. That cannot possibly be enough. I have to be persuaded it is less than an enormous trap for us.

In the course of all of this, how much office money did you spend? What is there to show for it that Jim can take to court, now that he will be there, at long last? Not a single thing. Now ask yourself what could have been done with just the money alone that you so happily pissed away. Suppose some of that could have been spent in New Orleans (as 100% of it should have been)? Can you begin to imagine what the results would be? Have you the remotest concept of the work yet

to be done there, with there will not be time for before the trial? What if you had the money to buy the good life in Europe, as the supposed case of Mrs. [unclear] who

could not possibly bear fruit, I was going deeper in debt to try and do some of this work, abandoning my own work in order to be able to, and even paying my own expenses. While you were living it up I spent two weeks in New Orleans, with so little money that in this period I had but four meals, each as a guest. I began the day with a glass of powdered skim milk, had a 19¢ hamburger for the evening meal, and rarely had more. There was a bonus. I lost 15 pounds I had to. But this is only a sample of what you have cost. That money spent in New Orleans could have yielded much of the still-missing information. The leads are viable, many, if not most, already developed and authenticated, and no one to do it and no money to pay for it? And did you get good movie footage you can use for your own purposes? You brought nothing back but a potential disaster.

Here again I do not exhaust the possibilities. For example, I could go into how you spent your time in Dallas, and what it cost, and what could have been done there. However, my purpose is not to abuse you, so I do not.

This cannot be pleasant for you. It is not for me. I could let it go, I could send you a polite thanks for the card. And I have other things to do with the time, so many things I do not have time for, aside from a few moments for a personal life. Why, then, do I take the time for what cannot be pleasant for both of us? Simply because you are not, in my belief, what Vince accused you of. You know and understand considerably less than you think, but I do not consider you this or a crook. I think you are a nice guy who is simply over his depth. However, you are not a complete fool, I am satisfied you also want the truth, and you are going to have this history to live with and survive. Therefore, I write you so you can begin to be honest with yourself, not half-honest, as you were in this card. You must begin by facing the reality of this awful period and your part in it. If what can eventuate does, you will be better able to face it and live with yourself. Even if it does not, as you grow older, unless you are corrupt (and I neither think this nor imply it) you will have the greatest difficulty rationalizing this record. Face it now; try and understand it, and do what you still can to undo what may be undone. The Warren Commission had no monopoly on error. I am not and have not been immune. However, I had certain advantages you did not: more years from which to profit and a background from which to benefit. Nonetheless, I also have erred, as who cannot and has not?

"But you should know the whole story before you judge", you conclude.

If there is anything I should know and do not, I encourage you to put it all on paper, and immediately. Forget about self-justification. That is meaningless and self-pitying. It sometimes comforts, but the comfort is induced and unreal. Give me what fact you can. About Lamarre and his associates, get it all down, in the most elaborate detail possible. Who. Where. Assume nothing to be innocent, and let the checking out determine. Please leave nothing out. Give what descriptions where possible, and do not load it. Do not say how extremely important things are, just say what the things are....I think you owe this. I think we need it immediately to prepare for anything that might require preparation. I also think you very much owe it to yourself.

Steve, I have not cushioned this as much as perhaps you'd like, but if I did I'd not be honest and I'd not be acting in your interest as I see it. I really do think you have to face those many things that should not have been (here I remind you of Broshers) and what may flow from them. Imagine what can be done in court with some of these things and you carrying Garrison's credentials. Please do it, immediately, thoroughly, and accurately, without the sales stuff you gave Jim. Let me remind you, if it has not dawned on you, that in thinking and writing this way you also condition yourself and your own thinking...As an older man who has too-often evaded, I tell you there is but one proper way of addressing