

8/7/67

Dear Shirley,

Your letter postmarked 8/3, written in lined notebook paper, arrived this morning when I read it and I'm now answering it after a day of writing unpleasant replies. I hope I remember it well enough.

I have been ~~xx~~ unable to find the NBC book anywhere near here. The largest bookstore with which I deal didn't know how to get it. If you can get one for me without too much trouble, I'd appreciate it. This does not mean to send me yours, and please do not, for I know you are capable of it. I will want it for a number of reasons but my need is not now urgent. I'll want it before I do the Manchester book and before the trial of the NBC men in N.C. I will not be surprised if I am a witness in that. Of course, I will also want it to have and to read.

Sylvia chides me from time to time because I trust people. When you read about the taped interview Dean Andrews gave a Boston reporter (and a very good reporter and a fine guy, Bob Scott), put that down as one where my trust paid. I spent a long day and half the early morning, all of the night, briefing him and some of his colleagues 89-9. We know enough for the good newsmen is to come through. He phoned Andrews before his guard was up. You'll read the essentials, if not in the papers, in Oswald in New Orleans. Garrison had a copy of the tape before he sought the indictment.

Of course, I agree with your letter. I had noted the Manchester incredibility and NBC's silence. There can be but one answer, yours. NBC never fluffed that one, even with their Fluffy factory. I intend using it in the Manchester book. I wish I had written my way to that, for I tire more daily and now wonder how much more tired and weaker I can get and keep going.

That I need is a good fight. That always turns the surrealism factory on.

Nothing else really now.

Many thanks.

H

BOORUM & PEASE "NEIL"

"He (Oswald) said when he was standing in front of the Textbook Building and about to leave it, a young crew-cut man rushed up to him and said he was from the Secret Service, showed a book of identification ~~xxxx~~, and asked him where the phone was. Oswald said he pointed toward the pay phone in the building and that he saw the man actually go to the phone before he left." WR, p. 629 Inspector Kelley, Secret Service, November 29, 1963.

"Dallas Time: 12:33pm: (Oswald) Leaves Depository by front entrance, pausing to tell NBC's Robert MacNeil he can find a phone inside; thinks MacNeil is a Secret Service man." William Manchester's The Death of A President, p. 279: Interview: 6/15/65

The following excerpts are NBC tape published in There Was A President by The Ridge Press Inc., New York.

12:53 pm (CST) 1:53pm (EST): November 22, 1963: Frank McGee speaks with NBC Newsman Robert MacNeil by telephone from Parkland Hospital, Dallas, where President Kennedy has been taken.

McGee: MacNeil reports that the President is seriously wounded--this from Senator Ralph Yarborough of Texas, who was with the President. The shots were fired while the motorcade was proceeding through downtown Dallas...The assassin is believed to have fired from a building overlooking the parade route. People fanned out and were asked if they saw anyone at a window. MacNeil says he was with the motorcade when the shooting occurred. When the shots rang out, people lay down and screamed...A white man was seen in a window with a rifle.

(Thus, exactly 20 minutes after MacNeil is alleged by Manchester to have talked to Lee, MacNeil is at Parkland Hospital having completed a relatively long telephone communication with McGee. Notice, please, that Oswald described the "crew-cut" man as having gone "to the phone." Therefore, we must assume if this man was MacNeil that he (MacNeil) went inside the book building to the phone, used it or did not use it, exited from the building, and in the melee outside found someone to take him to Parkland--the press bus on which he had ridden having long since motored on to The Trade Mart--gotten out at Parkland, joined the hideous confusion inside the Emergency halls of this building--where, by the way, telephones were at a premium--found a free phone, used it to call McGee, had a relatively long talk with McGee, hung up, making time for McGee to assemble his thoughts sufficiently to go on national television at 12:53pm and make the above announcement. I say the time is too tight.

In addition, I will make the point--sensible to me--that MacNeil did not at that time tell McGee that he had left the ~~xxx~~ press bus and sought a phone in or around the assassination site. This is strange behavior for a newsman. Naturally if it were he who spoke to Oswald, he would have no inclination at that time to mention the fact that he had talked to an employee of the building. ~~since he would have no idea then that the man he spoke to was the alleged assassin~~ However, it is interesting in light of the information on the building as the source of the shots that MacNeil did not mention that he had entered a building near the area where the shots were even then alleged to have come from.)

At 1:36pm (CST) MacNeil reports from Dallas: "...The shots came from a building called The Texas School Depository." Even now MacNeil does not state that he ran into this building! Yet one would imagine that as a newsman he would have found this fact very pertinent.

At 2pm MacNeil is still commenting over his eye-witness view of the assassination scene: "Men and women were lying on the ground to escape the bullets...The assassin fired the ~~x~~ shots from a fourth floor window...I was in the reporter's car, three cars behind the President...There were very few people on the street at that particular point in the motorcade. The Texas School Book Depository is about eight floors high..."

MacNeil still does not mention that he jumped out of the press car and raced into the building in question!

BOORUM & PEASE "NEIL"

(Small aside here: MacNeil attended Dr. Perry's press conference and reported on it at 2:32pm, CST: "Dr. Malcolm Perry reported...Dr. William Kemp Clark...said...The President died at 1:00pm Dallas time...He was wounded in the back of the head and on the right side of the head. A bullet struck him in front as he faced the assassin.")

At 3:23pm (CST) NBC announced that Oswald had been arrested as the suspect in the Tippit killing and that he (Oswald) was also a "stockman" at the TSBDB. Films are shown of the TSBDB. No announcement from MacNeil, however, that this was the building he had run into to find a phone or that he may have spoken to ~~the~~ an employee of the building. Such announcement would be normal for a newsman.

At ~~6:36~~ (CST) pictures are shown of Oswald. No comment from MacNeil that he has seen this

4:36

man or spoken to him during the day.

At 11:54pm MacNeil is on again talking about the cooks on LBJ's ranch. As he concludes this vital bit of information, he says: "Oswald has been formally charged with the murder of President Kennedy. A film clip then shows Oswald protesting his innocence. MacNeil still does not say: "I talked to this man only 3 minutes after he murdered the President of the United States!" Harold, this behavior is not typical of a newsman if MacNeil did indeed stop Oswald at 12:33pm on the steps of the TSBDB. However, if MacNeil did not see Oswald at that time, or indeed all day until seeing him on film along with everyone else, then his lack of interest or enthusiasm in having a juicy piece of news is understandable.

(Interesting aside: 8:52am, Dallas time, November 23, 1963: Murphey discusses the assassination with Dr. Malcolm Perry (with blackboard diagrams)!..By turning, Gov. Connally saved his life, for the bullet which otherwise would have penetrated his heart, only struck his chest.")

(Also: Tom Petit interviews Deputy Dallas Police Chief M.W. Stevenson: Stevenson: "An investigation into the assassination is fully underway. Eyewitnesses are being sought. So far no one has been found who actually saw Oswald pull the trigger.")

am
(9:54 (CST) Curry, Police Chief, Dallas: "The results of the paraffin test are positive, proving that the suspect, Lee Harvey Oswald, had fired a gun in the last 24 hours. The fingerprints on the rifle were only partial and cannot be identified as Oswald's!")

(10:36am CST: Dallas: On camera: Oswald taken from elevator to Homicide Bureau.

11:41am, Dallas: CST: Ryan: "Lee Oswald, the man accused of murdering the President, was interviewed by the FBI a week ago. According to Police Chief Curry the FBI did not notify the Dallas police of Oswald's presence in Dallas."

Curry: We have no knowledge of Oswald's presence in the city. They--the FBI--didn't warn us of his presence, although they usually do. They usually let us know when any communist sympathizers and subversives are in the city..."

12:07pm CST Dallas: McGee: "Parffin tests on the side of Oswald's face proved that he had indeed fired a rifle."

(Minor items of interest: 6:15 pm Dallas ^{President of the Dallas Bar Ass.} CST: H. Louis Nichols: "I visited with Oswald in his cell. He indicated he wanted a lawyer named Abt of New York...or one who as he put it 'believes in the same things I do.'...I believe Oswald will get a fair trial in Dallas."

6:24pm New Orleans: The Oswalds' apartment in NO. Jim Kempt interviews the landlady who says that the Oswald couple caused no trouble during their stay.

Landlady: They were quiet and cooperative, and they left promptly after they found themselves unable to pay the rent. (Boy! did she change her tune! S.M.)

~~XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX~~

On Sunday, November 24, 1963, 8:02pm (CST) we finally get back to MacNeil who has been chosen by NBC to tell the nation "The Strange Story of Lee Oswald" An NBC News Special Report: MacNeil details what is known at that time of Oswald (showing Mrs. Johnson, landlady on film calling Lee "polite and thoughtful"). MacNeil says Oswald took to work on Nov. 22 a long package "wrapped with string." The following is directly from MacNeil:

MacNeil: "Oswald leaves the building (shot of TSBDB) and gets on a bus."
Yet MacNeil still does not say: "By a strange coincidence I was one of the first men to talk to Lee Oswald after he had brutally slain the President of the United States."
WHY doesn't MacNeil say this if he talked to Oswald on the steps of the TSBDB at 12:33pm as Manchester says he (MacNeil) did?

Is this another of Manchester's half-assed mistakes?

Why wasn't MacNeil called before the Warren Commission, since if the story Manchester tells is true, MacNeil would have been one of the Commission's most convincing witnesses in regard to the time of the departure of Oswald from Dealey Plaza. How is it possible that MacNeil, a newsman, "sat" on this story for nearly two years until Manchester interviewed him (MacNeil) in '65? How can MacNeil possibly consider himself a newsman and keep this story quiet for so long? How can MacNeil possibly consider himself a patriotic American citizen and keep this story from the Commission? It is all too much for me. Did Manchester make the story up? Then it should be challenged because it not only puts MacNeil in a poor light, but it also makes the Warren Commission (and the FBI) look even stupider than it looks already.

On the other hand, Kelley had the story from Oswald. Therefore either Kelley or Oswald made up out of whole cloth that the "crew-cut" man was a Secret Service agent. This is hard to believe as it was the information from Kelley that he (Kelley) was a Secret Service man that sparked the memory pattern of Oswald in regard to the crewcut man who was also a Secret Service man. Lee Oswald had been in trouble with one agency after another for many years, both in this country and abroad. One doubts very much that he would foolishly mistake MacNeil's introduction: "I am with NBC" for "I am with the United States Secret Service."

These are my questions then on the Manchester garbage.

Harold, the remark by Allen Tippit in regard to his father is as follows:
8:54pm, Dallas, CST, Sunday, November 24, 1963: Allen Tippit: (the oldest son) My father always said --correction here: I read it wrong the first time. Forget it. Allen is saying that his father wanted HIM to be something besides a policeman. I read it too quickly and thought the boy was saying his father wanted to be something besides a policeman himself. Nevertheless, it is very mildly interesting from a psychological point of view that Tippit did not want his son to be a policeman.

9:05pm CST Nov. 24, 1963: Vanocur: The Justice Department says that the Oswald case is not closed, and they will not allow the Dallas police department to close it...It was bad practice in any case to permit anyone entrance to the basement of the city jail without a pass.

9:38pm CST McGee: The Dallas police force has ~~xxxxxx~~ declared the Oswald case closed. The Justice Department, however, refuses to accept this. (Tape of Wade: Wade: "Oswald's fingerprints were found on the rifle." Contrast this with Curry's earlier remark. Wade: "Our office had not closed the investigation, as there is no concrete evidence.":")

But the most conclusive evidence against MacNeil-Manchester seems to be the following:
2:32pm, Dallas time, November 22, 1963: ~~xxxxxx~~

Ryan: "Robert MacNeil, who was three cars behind the President, reports that newsmen didn't even know about the shooting." Then why did MacNeil jump out and look for a phone? I have long maintained that whoever the Lovelady-Oswald figure is in the doorway of the TSBDB, a man standing in this alcove (I have stood there) cannot necessarily see plainly down Elm to where the limousine was when the shots were fired. If this had been Oswald in the alcove, he could easily have returned to the building without being thoroughly aware of what was going on. Apparently the newsmen three cars behind the President (corner of Houston and Elm and behind) had the same failure of recognition. Yet their view was uncluttered. Whoever the man was in the alcove, he could not see as clearly as one imagines.

Finally, as a touch of hope and irony, I must include the following:

MacNeil: This is not a simple story: Oswald was not a simple man. Though charged with the assassination of President Kennedy, he died--technically--an innocent man. But unless something extraordinary happens--again--history will hold him guilty. (Accent mine.)

Someone should write a book and call it: Something Extraordinary Has Happened!

Harold, thank you for the letter. I will tell Sylvia you are going to see her. Your tape is on top of the icebox waiting for me to get to the Post Office. I should have taped a copy but did not have a chance to get another machine. Very few of my friends have tape recorders here in Tulsa! Will dig through "files" for newspaper item on Honest Joe as executor of Ruby estate in three-way deal with two other Dallas men. However, this is sound enough if you want to use somewhere as it was printed in paper. I realize you need date. Will see if I have NEWSWEEK still with O'Donnell's fink letter. I may have thrown it out. I don't object to O'Donnell keeping quiet; God knows! I don't expect him to attack Texas, Dallas and Texans of the LBJ-brand. On the other hand, after the indignities he and Mrs. Kennedy suffered at the hands of that rightwing, Kennedy-hating son-of-a-bitch Rose, how in the hell can it deliberately write to a magazine and offer a glorious defense for Texas, Texans, Dallasites, etc.? Why not keep quiet? My God, it made me angrier than anything in a long time.

Must close. I am exhausted with this damn machine(~~considering~~ I use only two fingers for all typing!) Much love to all, S.