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August 27, 1989

Jerry Rose  
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The Third Decade  
State University College at Fredonia  
Fredonia, NY 14063

(COURTESY COPY)

Dear Jerry,

I have written you under separate cover about my authorship of "Annex A", The 25 Questions concerning Dr. Burkley, which was included in Sylvia Meagher's submission to the HSCA which you published in the May 1989 issue of The Third Decade that I just received, but I wish to add the following note of caution and concern:

Sylvia was very concerned about the integrity of her work on the case. It is regrettable that she could not be with us to review her memorandum before deciding whether she wished to see it published. I myself regret that she did not have that opportunity, because it certainly would have involved some discussion between us concerning the Burkley questionnaire.

My point is that, although Mr. Harris owns a physical piece of correspondence, the contents of that memo are Sylvia's (and to a smaller extent my own) literary property, and to that extent are now controlled by her estate representatives.

I cannot claim to know whether Sylvia would have approved of this publication, but I find it significant that she never took steps to have it published in one form or another during her lifetime. One cannot ascertain what revisions she may have made after further reflection, or in light of the final results of the HSCA investigation. I doubt that those critics still living who also submitted suggestions to the HSCA in 1977 would be content to see them published without first having the opportunity to review them and, perhaps, reconsider them in light of subsequent learning.

Concrete evidence, moreover, casts very serious doubt that Sylvia ever intended this correspondence to be printed. My personal recollection of the haste with which it was prepared is corroborated by my personal file copy of Sylvia's covering letter to Mr. Blakey dated September 12, 1977. It reads in full:

Dear Mr. Blakey,

In your letter of 8 September 1977 you suggested

that I should submit as early as possible a list identifying principal areas for investigation and of unanswered questions in each area.

Your request confronts me with some difficulty. In general terms, I believe that my book Accessories After the Fact in itself consists precisely of a review of the principal areas of investigation and of the unanswered questions, not in the JFK assassination alone but also in the murders of Tippit and of Oswald himself. At the same time, it is true that important new information has emerged since Accessories was published in 1967.

Since it is not realistic in the time available to prepare a comprehensive outline of the principal areas and the unanswered questions, I have attempted to prepare in highly condensed form a list of a few of the principal areas and have included some of the new evidence which has come to light in recent years. This list, which I enclose herewith, is highly condensed and merely illustrative and by no means comprehensive.

Yours sincerely,

Sylvia Meagher

While it is true that authors' works are sometimes published posthumously, it is usually with appropriate caveats and qualifications, and only after careful investigation to verify the author's intentions.

Let me add that Sylvia did write some pieces which she did not consider of publishable quality. I am aware of instances in which she ordered some of her papers destroyed or withheld from her formal collection upon her death. She had very firm and carefully thought-out ideas as to the legacy she wished to leave to the critics and posterity. Although it now appears that Mr. Harris (and perhaps some other critics) received a copy of this memo in what surely must have been the strictest confidence, I did not find it among her papers when I made a cursory inspection of them shortly after her death, and I must presume that she intended for this memo to be read by those who will one day have access to the entirety of the HSCA's record when it is released.

While I assume that any of Meagher's previously unknown or private writings are of interest to those who know her published work, and that a certain wistful longing attaches to one who did not publish any new material after 1971 (other than the HSCA index) until her death in January, nevertheless a decent respect for her editorial judgment and personal rights as an author would seem to me to dictate that the revelation of unpublished writings by Sylvia Meagher be dealt with in consultation with her estate and with due

consideration being given to their posthumous nature.

I would be surprised to learn that Mr. Harris was authorized to offer you the memo for publication. I regret that my own intellectual work product (which was intended for the HSCA's use only) was included when due inquiry would have identified it as such. I believe now that Mr. Harris was given a copy of this memo only because of his co-participation with Sylvia and others in a round-table of critics held by the HSCA staff which was highly confidential in nature (as witness the secrecy oath participants were asked to take), not with a view toward its publication. I know that Sylvia would have reviewed it very carefully, and would have made any necessary revisions, additions or clarifications before allowing it to go the print under her -- our -- byline, if at all. Consider in this regard the passage of twelve years.

Jerry, I respect the work that you are doing with your fine publication, but I must express my disappointment at this unfortunate editorial lapse, especially as it concerns one for whom we both shared high admiration and appreciation.

Very truly yours,

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