

Dear Phil,

2/4/85

You conclude your 1/31 by thanking me for my "brutal candor." I did intend the candor but I certainly did not intend to be brutal. I hope you use a figure of speech! Without candor I do not serve your interest, but I ought be able to be direct and unequivocal without brutality. If you meant other than a figure of speech, please believe me that was not my intent.

Probably I sent the letter unread and uncorrected. This is because I lead a strange kind of life. Before these illnesses I was into too much. Now I have too little time and for the first time in years am taking some time for fun. Orioles and Redskins games, Doug Flutie's long before his Hail Mary fame, and the superb nature programming on PBS and infrequent drama. So I still have little time. It was 2:15 when I sat down at the typewriter and I've been out of bed since 5:30. Blood test, walking therapy, taking wife shopping with forecast of being iced in tomorrow, and to the bank, then getting firewood in and for the first time in weeks splitting a little for the upper-body exercise. The days go and I rush. As I believe I told you, the three parts of the an bacn petition are all rough drafts. The first was rushed because I feared complications of the bronchial infect, based on the past. Etc. I did want to be pointed and to get your attention but the last thing in my mind, not there at all, was hurt. If I did, I'm sorry.

Now that I'm into this and now that you have an FOIA request, may I suggest that as you rethink your Zapruder peice you rethink more deeply and see if wider application, more in your thinking than in your writing, is appropriate?

Begin with three basic assumptions: the crime itself was never really investigated officially and we thus are limited to a) disclosed official records and b) what we pick up on our own. Then, as you evaluate information, whatever its source, ask yourself is this reasonable, is the world this way, is this the way people are, is it how they act? There will be great variable, especially with people, but each is susceptible of individual evaluation. As you found out with mine of Jimmy and will of Olver Patterson.

Going back to the Z film, for years there have been stories of pirated copies, before Garrison provided copies of the specially prepared one Life gave him. From my knowledge of it I warned him that identification was built in, obvious from altered exposures and colors. I think it more likely that CIA got one of these than that Lamarre got his fine print from the family. (That is what he told me.)

I do not see how CIA could have had the original for doctoring and I do not see how, before autopsy, it could have known what alterations it might want to make. I therefore assume that with CIA involvement, of which we have no proof, it would have done nothing at all. That is the way it and other such agencies work. While I've not studied it for years, my original belief is unchanged, the only alterations officialdom would have wanted is the elimination of frames. Not doctoring, which was much too risky at any point.

I also believe that if the CIA had any involvement, it would not have been official, on the McCone level and as I recall clearly having said on a Chicago talk show in the late 60s, probably late 1967, if part had the job done, say the VN gang, they'd have made it look like someone else did it and if within the agency, other part with motive, like the Cuban gang.

I don't know if this is at all helpful, but what is solid is that the CIA deliberately withheld, what it withheld questioned the possibility of the official solution, and it was dishonest in other ways - in such a crime. And I think you should check what I have in PhotoWW on the film and camera, from the time it left Dallas.

You ask about Ferris-LHO relevance and I can respond only by theorizing, which I generally do not want to do outside my own head. And I include an approach that when I was young and investigative reporting I found helpful, probably earlier but have no specific recollection. If it is a tough nut seek the most probable certainty and bulldoze the hell out of it. And without Occam ever out of mind! Avoid the Byzantine, the oriental, etc. Simplest formulation(s). And we do have a Ferris certainty: he left N.O. so fast after the Marcello case ended the day of the assassination he can almost be said to have fled. And, without apparent reason, kept phoning back. Then he returned voluntarily. I think this is consistent with having something to fear, not vacationing. Or he prospecting business opportunities. So, with the entire world knowing JFK was offed, what did he have to fear? I doubt it was the violence of some of what he said about JFK needing offing. I think it is more likely that he knew LHO in the CAP. If nothing else, that, combined with some of what he'd said, is enough to have scared him. Why was he calling back? To see if anyone was looking for him. By the time G. Wray Gill got the message to him he knew, as the world knew, that the official line was a lone nut assassin. So, he spent the night with a moderately strange and antagonistic character Tommy Something I interviewed, and then went to Garrison's office. To face incompetence there and disinterest from the FBI and SS. I doubt there is any Ferris connection with the crime itself. This means that with the passing of time and access to more records I see no conspiracy of which Ferris was part.

I assume that the CIA tears up what assassination writing it can and I know very well the FBI does. With the nutty stuff it has little trouble. With what it cannot fault it plays its own kinds of tricks. Esp. with Hoover in any way involved. Next time you are here look at its contortions to tell Hoover he was right when he was wrong and I used a picture to prove that he was wrong. He'd been asked by the WC why Oswald didn't shoot as the motorcade was approaching the TSED. His response was that there was in his way. The fact is that Houston is the only street without trees. But the FBI satisfied Hoover that he was right when he was so very obviously and irrefutable wrong.

I assume also that the FBI and CIA have analyses specially filed not to surface on searching. With the FBI, I assume some of the 94 files at FBIHQ and SOs in the field offices. We've seen only what was disclosed in the main assassination files.

These agencies are always concerned about criticism of them because it can always be ^{used} ~~used~~ against them in ways we rarely think of. For example, the Congress. So they are prepared to respond to criticism, and not uncommonly they equate what they cannot address with what is silly. Except for this one con job on Hoover's ego (I think he knew what was what) they ~~addressed~~ addressed me and my work with false political rhetoric and slander. In effect, by blackmailing the audience, from LBJ down. They tried to do this with all of the first of us, even using another Edward Epstein to redbait him.

For your understanding of the FBI, the first law is cover its ass, the second cover your own. And regardless, it is always right. On the rare occasions it is forced to justify itself, it always has control and contrives a cover up. As in the Hosty flaps. their investigations of which I have in a separate subject filing. They held the Congress off until they'd rigged their deal. And it worked.

Again in haste,

January 31, 1985

Dear Harold,

I appreciate your 1/24/85 and the time and energy (scarce resources) it took to provide me with all of the very-substantive criticisms and comments.

I see what you mean about Ferrie-assumption versus prof. Do you think he has any relevance to LHO? to a conspiracy?

Valuable observations about Patterson - thanks. Garry Mack wrote me saying that soon he will talk to a Dallas man who claims to have bootlegged a Z-film copy from Kodac in Dallas when Z brought it there (an unspliced, "unaltered" Z-film Mack asserts). Who knows, maybe he has something. If a bootleg copy has not surfaced for 20 yrs, then it was not really such a direct threat to a putative CIA doctoring of the original.

Do you really think that FBI and CIA tear apart assassination articles, behind the scenes? Why should they bother? I can see them doing that with a big book that has impact, but for articles in the Third Decade?

I will rethink my Z-film piece based on your critique and Paul Hock's comments. Thanks for your brutal candor.

Best Regards,



Phil