

Dear Joan,

8/22/79

Your letter came at the right time for an answer: I don't feel right and until it clears up I'd best do no outside work or anything having to do with the FOIA cases. There have been more of such days recently, and I suppose it has to do with the clotting factor of the blood or what controls that and the circulatory impairments. A week ago today the doctor reduced the (high) level of anticoagulant because that week's test showed that chemically I was at the point where I hemorrhaged internally. I don't know if that is a factor but today I'll hear from yesterday's test.

The impression one gets of Dealey Plaza only from being there is its smallness. Out another way, no point in it is a difficult shot to any other point for a good marksman. ... Five years ago the "museum" was a rugby place, beyond improving. ... and as I'm sure you saw, there was no shooting from the street's sewers.

While I have no basis for interpreting what Michaelides told you I think it is a great line/scene for your book, perhaps more effective as a note.

We all change so if I can understand your lack of sympathy for the woman of your novel, and I think I can and do, is there not another emotion that would enable you to get that behind you, compassion?

I don't know who designed the Dallas JFK # "memorial" but I know the wretch who built it - a multimillionaire West Pointer of the most extreme of the right, a buff, a miser, and a man of sure fine spirit that he told his daughters when he established estates for them that no man would ever marry them for love.

Odd you should mention Dial and a King book and the Pepper I take to be a lawyer named Bill Pepper. I've been longing more and more recently to work my way out into freedom to write what I hope I can make a short book, one I think can be close to unprecedented. I have done the original work and I have once-secret official records the extent of which you have seen.

From my prior experiences with publishers and my lack of an agent or reason to believe that either an agent or a publisher will be interested in a factual, straightforward non-theoretical book I'd decided that I would again publish it myself. With a large documentary appendix only in facsimile. I know what I have, know what it means, know what can't be refuted and unfortunately know what I went through with publishers who were afraid and I believe remain afraid. I have lived to find complete confirmation of my own original thinking and then investigating in official records, even the actual proofs of my analysis.

Pepper is an impressively able lawyer who joined Flo Kennedy in the principled representation of Jerry Ray before the House assassins. In combination he and Flo were magnificent. I've had only one conversation with Pepper, when he called to ask my help and I replied that I'd have nothing to do with anyone in any way connected with Lane, who can only destroy. Earlier Pepper had tried to crib some of my work from my good friend Les Payne of Newsday, who didn't bite. I doubt Pepper has anything new and original. If factual.

No assassination book will be a financial success if it is like those commercial publishers did in the past and there is little reason to expect a good reception from what is represented by the Times and the professional reviewers. Any book keyed to these is going to fail. To have a chance to succeed, as commercial success is measured, the book has to be promoted in other ways. And at the risk of sounding as I do not intend, I don't know anybody else who can do it. I am less able than I was as a young man of 62 when I brought my last book out, the encyclopaedia on which the committee could not improve (on fact). But I think I could do enough.

But I'm not about to try to contend with the folkways and mores and political imaginings as well as the political realities so I'm not going to waste what time remains for me trying to make my way around the commercial publishers. I'll again publish a rough draft that for all its limitations and liabilities will have some impact regardless of how few copies I'll be able to sell. And in this I'll have met my obligations as I see my obligations.

The one thing that could interest me in any offer would be an advance that would enable me to continue to pay Rae to help more than she has, in getting this enormity of official paper ready for archival deposit and locating records to use in appeals.

If it involves no confidentiality I'd be interested in what the supposed new evidence is.

As I measure importances and significances I will do an important and significant book. I've lived too much to predict what it will do but I know what it can do and if I can get to it before the next election the possibilities of accomplishment for it might be greater. I can do what the most costly Congressional investigation did not do and in fact dared not try to do. God and body willing, I will.

Excuse the typos. It is time to call the doctor for the results and then I must get to work.

Glad your spirits seem better.

Best,

Joan Mellen  
Elm Ridge Road  
Pennington, New Jersey 08534

August 18, 1979

Dear Harold,

You cannot know how happy, how delighted I felt to receive your letter. When it arrived I was in Dallas, taking a few days off to attend the convention of the American Bar Association with a friend (not a lawyer) who was picking up an award for editorials written in the Philadelphia Inquirer. And Harold - sitting up there in that revolving tower, what should I see but: the book depository and Elm Street, and so I thought of you! And then, having had enough of lawyers, we went down there. And it seemed small and vulnerable, none of the underground tunnels from which assassins escaped, as Jim Garrison has had it. Just this little place. So in Greece when I talked with Mr. Michaelides about Hemingway and Moby Dick and the oil crisis. Yet: does this mean he didn't do it? Also he made jokes about murder. A friend who didn't care didn't call me in Athens to see if I was ok, so Mr. Michaelides said, call him, don't wait until your body is cut up and put in a trunk and sent home. Do murderers use the imagery of murder even despite their desire to prove they didn't do it?

Oh, it's all great fun, as you gathered in your letter which came at so propitious a time. And your examples of your own courage mean much to me. I am registering them. You do understand; I am suffering the aftershocks indeed. Well, as I may have mentioned, I haven't lived alone since 1967 and this was a 10 year old marriage that should have ended long ago. It was warm and comfortable but I wasn't taking care of myself, choosing and being independent. And if you're not independent, you cannot love. Still, the aftershocks: I live in a place similar to yours and when I hear sounds in the night, I think, it's the porter knocking on the gate, as in Macbeth. This calms me down, it's so crazy.

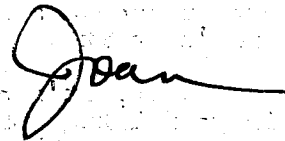
By the way, we went to that shabby little JFK museum which you've no doubt seen: the horror of it. And of the books displayed, none challenging the official version, Oswald indeed! People take their children there, but

we of course were not children. And what do you think of the so-called Kennedy memorial, that slab of stone out there?

v The problem with the novel is that it's askew. Meaning: the person who wrote it originally is not the one doing the revisions. I reject pain now. I want to live and the book is about a woman's humiliating quest for a man who does not want her, and her compulsive seeking for him, as Aschenbach seeks for the boy in Thomas Mann's *Death In Venice*. I have no sympathy with that woman now, I'm not even interested in her. Thus the problem. The novel keeps changing in tone. Well, at least I've figured out what's wrong and my editor At Dial Press (which is also doing the Bruce book) is a wonderful woman named Joyce Joyce. (She was approached by a person named Pepper and someone else purporting to have new evidence on the King assassination, and would she be interested in doing the book/ Now, I don't know what that "new" evidence was, but I do know she met with them and rejected the proposal).

Harold, be well! I appreciate our new friendship enormously, so stay in touch.

. Love,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Joan".