

1/18/69

Dear Dick,

As by now you could anticipate, I am not going to N.C.; I have an enormous amount of filing to do to return to an accessible place all the many things I had prepared to take with me. Therefore I make brief response only to your letter of 1/14.

GH321 Harness does not in any way identify the location where the tramps were picked up. He says merely in the yards. LPH540 refers only to "on the yards", which again does not say behind the TCB or not behind the post office. You also cite "Rush to Judgment", p. 215. This is not on that subject, deals only with Oswald's transfer. I have searched all references to Bowers in this book and none is applicable. The closest thing to relevance cannot, it seems to me, be "correlated" with anything. That is page 43, which is not Lee Bower's statement to "Mark Lane" but Mark's paraphrasing, which then says merely "that at least 50 law enforcement officers were engaged in searching the parking lot and railroad yards..."

You cite nothing to support your statement that "Harkness arrested them in the box car directly beside the tower and escorted them through the parking lot, down the Elm Street extension, to Houston Street and down Houston to the vehicle entrance to the sheriff's office..." Can you, by your photos, establish that one of the policemen in these pictures is Harkness?

Ordinarily some of your assumptions would be valid. Under most other conditions, I would assume police or various sorts would tend to keep records of those they handled. Even if Harness made the arrest, under the circumstances I can find more reason for believe he would expect those to whom he turned the men over to make the record. I would be willing to assume that, when Elkins received them, he assumed the record had been made. I agree with your doubt that Elkins made personal delivery to Fritz. With the command of language displayed by those who that day recorded it, I would be inclined to take this to mean to Fritz's bureau, homicide.

To the degree I can I am following this down, by remote. I have no reason to doubt the honesty of my sources, who are rather well placed and not in basic disagreement with my overall view. Those things you suggest that are possible have been in the works since early November. These are busy people who are helping me as they can. I trust both. Neither has any reason to deceive me, ~~with the exception of the~~ neither has, to the best of my knowledge. As with the enclosed memo, I will let you know what I learn.

I must confess disappointment that those who were in a position to at least make the effort and who originally sought to make what on the basis of ^{what} now seems most likely not to be so seem also not to have made any effort at all to ^{what} I now have to take time to do. I am confident you realize the potential of the public misuse of this picture. Perhaps, without my awareness, they did make at least perfunctory inquiry of the police. However, I am not aware of this and have no reason to believe this elemental thing was done. When this is the record of a professional, I am even more disturbed. Dick, I urge caution on you in this regard. When we try and place anyone anywhere at any given time, we must be certain it was possible and that the comparison is not with what can be established as someone else. Sorry my hasty language is so much like that of the sheriff's office. I know of nothing further you can now do on this save to wait and see what I can develop. I will let you know.

Sincerely,

Harold Weisberg

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1/16/69

Memo on "tramp" pictures, Buddy Walther

Harold Weisberg

I have received information I trust from Dallas that the police in these pictures are E.E. Bess, Marvin Wise and Ray Vaughan, from left to right in the picture that has Vaughan's back to the camera.

These men had wine when picked up, showed signs of having been drinking and reportedly looked as though they had been in the car for a week.

Buddy Walther was murdered about two weeks ago. I have been told this happened when he went to a motel, to the room in which there were a naked man and a naked woman in bed, that in the rather virgorous fight that ensued this man got a gun and killed Walther and, with another officer, was himself injured. Both are expected to survive. This man was an escapee from Atlanta, where he had been serving a life term, and is a reported narcotics addict. There seems to have been little public attention to this.

I expect further information on these men and the conditions and location of their arrest or whatever really happened to them.

One of my sources, who is in a position to get information from some of those involved, reports they have a clear recollection on what is inconsistent with what Dick Sprague has reconstructed from the evidence. The new information above does not contain a pinpointing of what is clouded.

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