

Sunday, 24 October 1976.

Dear Harold,

I am enclosing a copy of my preliminary dissertation proposal, which I finally managed to draw up. I had a great deal of difficulty writing it up as I was not sure exactly what is expected in this sort of thing. My faculty advisor, as I mentioned earlier, was little help in the matter. I gave it to him September 29 and it sat unread -all six pages- until last week when he advised me that he had looked at it, it seemed okay, and that he would submit it for university approval as a subject for dissertation research. In the interim, I shopped around for two more major advisors on my thesis. I managed to interest two of the most powerful men in my department-its chairman, Prof. David Manwaring and a professor of American government, Gary Brazier. Neither men know all that much about the Warren Commission but both seemed genuinely interested in my projected thesis. Prof. Brazier, realizing that my faculty advisor was not doing all that he could, offered to become my main advisor on my thesis. My faculty advisor, Donald Carlisle, seemed pleased when Prof. Brazier spoke to him about it. I've had to proceed very gingerly in this matter as Carlisle could hurt me in my final thesis defense.

Regarding my proposal, hopefully its vague enough to get through a conservative committee. I felt that by expanding the scope of my study to include the internal workings of

the Warren Commission as well as certain international events (mostly connected with Cuba), I could easily bypass the inevitable comparison with Epstein's book and silence any criticism about my leaving the area of international politics (in which I did most of my graduate work) to take on an almost entirely new area of American bureaucratic politics. Also, in reading the fifth volume of the Church Report, I could not help but notice the way the CIA wanted to stir the investigation away from anything that remotely seemed linked with Cubans. I have always wondered if Robert Kennedy suggested the inclusion of Allen Dulles on the Warren Commission to President ~~KENNEDY~~ Johnson because he knew that Dulles would side track the issue of the assassination attempts on Fidel Castro should they have been brought to the Commission's attentions. Similarly, I could never understand the eagerness of the Russians to turn over their information on Oswald to the CIA-From my own unpleasant dealings with them, I found the Russians won't tell you what time it is, let alone share anything bureaucratic in nature with anyone.

As to the second part of my proposal-on source material-I didn't know quite what to write. Since I haven't seen the materials, which you offered to me, I didn't know how to describe them, and I didn't want the committee to know that-so I wrote a bluff section. Actually, I am reading a lot of material on the Kennedy era (Sorenson, etc.) to try and get an understanding of the international situation. Also, I'm reading up on how bureaucracies function, etc. I really don't know much about public administration-and Carlisle is insisting

that I come up with some sort administrative model theory so that my thesis won't slip out of the realm of academia into journalism. As much as I hate to admit it, Carlisle is right on this point-much of what I have written in the past and past<sup>ed</sup> off as academia was political journalism. So I'm trying to write an abstract chapter for him using terms and headings such as "parochial priorities and perceptions," "~~factored problems and fractional power~~" etc. But, as prof. Manwaring told me, what passes for a dissertation then can be altered for a good book.

The third section of my proposal was very hastily written and tacked on to the proposal ten minutes before it was handed in. At that time, someone said that I was supposed to have a section showing how my proposed work differed from that already done in the field. Had I had more time, I would have written this section differently. But again, I find myself facing the problem of not being exactly sure of the focus of my dissertation and unable to really contrast it with other work done in the field.

Within the next week or two, I should be hearing some sort of decision on my dissertation, and will let you know the result.

Sincerely,

Nanny

PRELIMINARY DISSERTATION PROPOSAL

Nancy-Stephanie Stone  
September 29, 1976.

I.

My proposed area of study for doctoral research centers on the Executive Sessions of the Warren Commission. At the outset, it should be understood that this work is not intended to dwell on the assassination of President Kennedy. Rather, the primary focus of my work will be to investigate the relationships between a fact-finding commission, the government that creates it and the larger political sphere which envelops them both. The purpose of such investigative committees-"to ascertain, evaluate, and report on"\* the facts-implies an autonomy, isolation and freedom to pursue the truth which often belies the actual outcome. This discrepancy may be accounted for by realizing that a committee can be no more autonomous or isolated than its creators.

The particulars of such a discrepancy may be viewed as the result of varied and complex interactions between the commission and the appointers (be it a person or a nation) on the one hand, and the appointer and the larger political climate on the other. These interactions define the relationships which I find significant in assessing the political place of a fact-finding commission in a crisis situation. For better or worse, the political place of such a commission in turn does much to define the "facts" which are found. For this reason, I will use scrutiny of the products of the Warren Commission (the Executive Sessions

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\*Executive Order 11130.

and the Warren Report) as a tool to assess the relationship in which the Commission stood to the office of the Presidency, the United States and the international sphere. Utilizing the transcripts of the Executive Sessions and pertinent supporting materials, my study will examine these Commission meetings, compare the members' private deliberations with their public statements as well as with the Warren Report itself and newly available evidence. It will try to make more comprehensible the interaction of the Commissioners individually as well as with the Commission staff and other government agencies during a period of potential political instability, a time when the legitimacy of the new administration had yet to be established. This completed analysis will then direct the study to those areas in need of explanation--the "whys" of e.g., the commission's method of investigation, contradictions, inclusion or exclusion of evidence, etc. The solutions to which, I suggest, might most profitably be sought in the larger political sphere and understood as a function of the commission's relationship to that sphere.

Relevant historical documentation (tentatively specified in the following section) of the period will serve as my data for the latter portion of the study, which will be the explicit attempt at piecing together the network of relations between the international sphere, the United States and the Warren Commission. It is my contention that given an understanding of these relationships, we can

look at the products of the Warren Commission and realize that we could not have expected otherwise. That is to say, the Executive Session transcripts and Warren Report were as much a product of this complex political situation as the Warren Commission itself.

## II.

The research for my study is based on a number of sources. First, for a general understanding of the background and events of the Kennedy era, I will rely on the established writing from that period-i.e. the work of Sorenson, Hillsman, Schlesinger, etc.

Another source will be the transcripts of the thirteen Executive sessions, which were obtained from the government by Harold Weisberg. At the moment, I only have access to the transcripts of eleven sessions. I do, however, expect a favorable ruling in a case now pending (CA75-1448) on the May 19 and June 23 sessions.

A third source will be the Warren Commission report as well as the twenty six volumes of published testimony and exhibits. Related to this source but not included in the published material are the investigative reports of various governmental agencies as well as the working papers of the Commissioners and their staff, which are in the National Archives. In addition, through the interest of Harold Weisberg, I have access to the private papers and correspondence of the late senior Senator

from Georgia, Richard Russell, the chief dissenter within the Commission.

A fourth source of material results from the government's own investigation of the intelligence agencies. The fifth volume of the Church Committee's Final Report is an especially enlightening source of information on governmental operation during a period of stress.

Needless to say, I do not plan to limit my research to the four major sources mentioned above. I do, however, believe that they form a firm basis for a beginning and a framework for my dissertation.

### III.

A large number of books and articles have recently appeared on the Kennedy assassination. In this next section I shall try to show how my proposed study differs from work already done on the subject.

Possibly the best known book on the assassination and its aftermath is Mark Lane's Rush to Judgment. In his book Lane is primarily interested in tearing apart the Warren Report and establishing Oswald's innocence. Rarely, does he mention the Commission<sup>staff</sup> or the individual Commissioners. Essentially, what Lane accomplished with his book was the placing of all the Report's points of conflict and existing rumors under one cover. On the other hand, possibly the least known and best book on the assassination is Sylvia Meagher's Accessories After the Fact. In a systematic

manner, Mrs Meagher scrutinizes the twenty six volumes of testimony and exhibits and contrasts the Commission's own evidence with its Report. But like Lane, Mrs Meagher is primarily interested in the Report itself, not in the workings of the Commission nor the environment in which it functioned.

In contrast to these two books, Edward Epstein's Inquest is concerned with the functioning of the Commission itself. But for Epstein, the Commission was its staff not the individual Commissioners. His particular focus is explained by the fact that he relied heavily on material supplied to him by a junior staff member (W.J. Liebeler) for his understanding of the Commission as the transcripts of the Executive Sessions were classified at the time (1966). The material supplied by Liebeler was limited in that the staff was itself excluded from the Executive Sessions and therefore could not have a complete picture as to what was going on. Consequently, the Commission which emerges from Epstein's study is one functioning in a vacuum with little interaction in a greater political sphere. It is just the opposite position from what I hope to bring out in my study-i.e. the Commission was an integral part of the existing political system and could not function in a vacuum.

No summary or evaluation of the assassination literature is complete without a consideration of the work of my friend Harold Weisberg. His first three books in the Whitewash series are concerned with a systematic dissection of the

warren report and the suppression of certain points of evidence. The fourth volume in the series deals with one of the Executive Session transcripts and his attempts to secure its release from a classified status through a series of court actions. But Weisberg's focus in Whitewash IV is less on the transcript itself than on the government's attempt to suppress its declassification. Post Mortem, Weisberg's newest book, deals again with the subject of suppressed evidence. But his focus in this book is not with the transcripts. Instead, Weisberg's concern is in obtaining the medical evidence related to Kennedy's death.

There are numerous other works on the assassination aside from the ones discussed above. Many of them verge on ridiculousness. Others were written for the express purpose of cashing in on the interest in the Kennedy assassination. The books, which I have mentioned, are the best known in the field. What makes my study different from these books is the enlarging of focus from the Report or the Commission to the larger political environment. To my knowledge, no author has yet done this.

Ms. Nancy-Stephanie Stone  
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11/1/76

Dear Stephanie,

Urlet 24 came today. I read it on arrival, respond in haste while some electrical repairs are being made. I'm deep in hundreds of FBI pages I've just received via FOIA.

It is good news. It will work out. You are lucky to have the other profs interested. I'll read the outline when I can head it.

I also agree that it should at least sound scholarly. The changes required for popular reading should be minor. Keep it in mind as you write, though.

Wish there were a speaking engagement up there so we could sit and talk about this. I can afford to travel only when there is a paid speech.

Do not be misled by the supposedly new and not new Cuban stuff. It is not relevant without a basis of relevance being established. It was not and there is no reason to even suspect Castro involvement. Actually, all the so-called secrets of the Schweiker report are non-secrets. I've already ticked off the suppressed names in court, subject to DJ cross-examination. There was none. Nor is it true that the Commission was unaware. I read the last 3 or 4 pages of the 1/22/64 ExSess transcript, as you will in time, in the appendix of Post Mortem. I think Hanwaring and Brazier will have their minds blown by that one and 1/27 in WW IV.

You speak of a conservative committee. Do not for a minute believe that this subject breaks down into parts of the political spectrum. It does not. Conservatives, meaning of political belief, hold views identical with liberals save for a hope that Oswald did it.

No chance RFK suggested Dulles. I'll talk about that when we are talking. Too much to write. It was LBJ and his gang, though. Maybe Fortas. I've never asked him.

My experiences with the Russians are like yours. In this case they were terrified, not without cause, so they were at least on the surface anxious to cooperate. It was easy for them because LHO was not their guy.

On source material, say once-secret Warren Commission executive session transcripts, relevant published and unpublished Commission files, the records of litigation to pry them loose, and formerly secret and top-secret FBI and CIA records made available under FOIA. You can include published works but for your actual reading be careful at the beginning not to be influenced by the ripoff artists, commercializers, haters, etc. And nuts.

If you have not read Schlesinger, 1000 Day, suggest it. Especially section on Cuban Revolutionary Council for background on the realities of that political situation. Also, later, some of E. Howard Hunt. I have extensive files that are relevant. Incidentally, I have the reports of some later presidential commissions. Suggest you get and read Rockefeller commission. They I'll let you read, copy if you like, what they suppressed. I have it from the CIA in particular. These commissions are all alike. They do for the president what he can't do any other way, as I think you'll come to agree. Would this truth fit your "administrative model" need? Bantam, by the way, published earlier commission reports. The GPO bookstore may have them, as your library should. I would not regard this chapter as no more than the need of the dissertation. I think a book needs what it should say.

If you are asked to add to what you have said about the difference from other work, I suggest you say it will be broader in scope, deeper in examination, based on once-secret materials not available earlier and with the benefit of the passing of time and what it tells and makes comprehensible. There really is no other work in the field of which I know. Epstein's was a popularization that began with an angle and lacks fidelity.

I'll be at U.Wisc. week 11/9. If I have any questions after I read your outline I'll ask Dave Wrona, who is an authentic professional scholar. Hope your mother is well.

Best,