

2/22/73

Sheriff Jack Harn  
Harris County Jail  
301 San Jacinto St.,  
Houston, Texas 77002

Dear Sheriff Harn,

Miss Diane Turner is a prisoner who, when I last heard from her, was in isolation.

I knew her in New Orleans in 1968 when she helped me with research for some of my writing. Intermittently since then I have tried to encourage her to write and to paint because she has a natural bent for both. She now says that she would like to try her hand at it. She would like me to edit and criticize it for her. There is also some work I would like to ask her to do for me, essentially biographical data about people who figure in my writing, past and planned. I write to seek your permission and to ask a few small favors because of the reduced vision I have. I have no objections to having you read the requests I would like to make of her and would not regard it as a violation of the First Amendment because, from previous experience, I am aware of your obligations and the natural and proper concerns of one in your position. I have a general understanding of prison regulations from correspondence with prisoners in state and federal jails, prisoners I have interviewed.

Most jails limit the number of pages that can be sent out at one time to two and envelopes, under most circumstances, to letter-sized. Yours is the first jail in my experience that prohibits the use of a ball-point pen. If it meets with your approval, I would like to provide Miss Turner with a ball-point pen and legal-sized envelopes. Her writing would then be less of a strain on my eyes and would also be easier to read because fewer folds would be required. Where she writes creatively, what she wants me to criticize and edit, and where she writes what I would like your permission to ask her to write for me, I would appreciate it if you would eliminate the restriction on the number of pages. I do not ask this for letters, only for this writing. I will ask nothing improper of her, of course.

Not too long before I met Miss Turner she was the victim of a very serious accident. I do not know whether it is possible for you to know details of the lives of your prisoners so I volunteer some information about her medical history as I know it, in your interest as well as hers. As a consequence of this accident she underwent repeated and serious, extensive surgery. One of your matrons can give you a report on the visible clamp marks. On one leg they extend from the instep to the point visible when she was wearing short shorts. There is a lingering weakness and a residual danger the full extent of which I do not know. I do know that even without a break it has been necessary for her to have the entire leg in a cast some time after the surgery. When I first met her the initial surgery had been completed and she wore no cast. I later saw her, when there had been no further surgery, and a cast was required. Injury to the other leg was not as severe from the visible scars but was nonetheless considerable. If her medical records are not available in Houston, it is my recollection that the original surgery was in the Ochsner hospital in New Orleans and that the time I saw her in the cast I drove her to Charity Hospital in New Orleans for an orthopaedic consultation. If what she and others have told me about her legs is true, I consider further injury could be rather easily inflicted. I presume this is less like with other injuries in that accident. A violent or even a playful inmate might inflict serious, painful and perhaps irreparable injury.

I know nothing about Miss Turner's present situation except the little she has told me. She claims she is innocent of a charge of possessing drug paraphernalia. If there is any information you can properly provide, I would appreciate knowing it - whatever the law does not require to be kept secret. Knowing her bail possibilities and when the case may come to trial would also be appreciated.

In the other cases in which I have been in contact with the prisoners, I was able to have a face-to-face meeting with the wardens first. It is not now possible for me to go to Houston and I am engaged at the moment in writing other than that on which I would like Miss Turner's help. So, if you can permit this, if you have any special regulations by which you would want me to abide I would like to know what they are so I can conform to them.

I have written Miss Turner's attorney. When I hear from him I will discuss this request with him.

Thank you very much for anything you can do.

Sincerely,

Harold Weisberg