

7/4/69

Dear Sheri Blair and Paul Frumkin,

Although I felt that Jerry Ray is a man who finds writing difficult and uncomfortable, I asked him to write me, for several reasons. There really has not been time for a reply to reach me. I also told him if he phoned I'd be prepared to tape him, so I could eliminate any possibility of error.

Since then I have completed much of the addition to the book I presume Russ described to you. In the course of this writing, certain things sharpened a bit in my mind. I write in the hope you can find time to answer a few questions.

From what your pressmen told me and the release I have Shaft Blair's (first?) interview in the book. I'd like to be able to hear all tapes of any interview with him and, if any, John. I cannot assure you the book will receive wide attention - or any - but I think you would find the attribution not ungenerous as it exists already and it will be part of an historical record. My own experience with interviews with people like him is that what may at the time be unnoted may later be valuable because of the kinds of people they are and the ways they talk and think.

Any impressions you may have formed. This may be quite important because he may be more important in the entire story than now appears. I have been told what you think of his dependability.

What, if anything, he may have told you that he knows or was told by James, especially as a decoy, as the killer, who his associates were. I believe there was a Raoul not named Raoul. Large parts of what Raoul believed are, I think, true. Much cannot be and I'm surprised he went for it.

How he was going to finance a trip to England (with John) as soon as James was arrested, and why he was going to spend this large sum. James told him not to.

Why he fixed on Percy Foreman immediately and how he thought Foreman's very large fees would be paid. Why he and John were so opposed to James. I understand one or both is racist. This should have made James more acceptable. He says they not only would not cooperate but actually fought ~~the~~ him.

Anything he may have said about J.B. Stoner and the NSRP and his attitude toward them. (You should see what I have on them) that a show that will make!

Why it required four hours to get James to sign the letter ditching Hanes - or what they then talked about. This is twice the time Ray and Hanes spent on their first interview, when the press were on immediate concern.

Where - with whom - he stayed in Memphis and anything about any people, if only names, with whom he then or on this associated.

If he knows or suspects, what is behind Hanes' utter improbability that this was some kind of "red" plot involving the Chinese or Cubans. Did it originate with James?

He saw James the day before James broke jail. Anything they talked about, his advance knowledge, whether James was in touch after he got out, etc. Or any time before capture.

Why James expected him and John to advance money to Hanes and where they were to get it - and how James was going to pay it back after he got to the U.S. James asked John to give Hanes \$600 and said Jerry would help him raise it.

Anything at all he may have said or hinted about New Orleans or anyone there. I believe the essence of what "uis wrote about this and much is confirmed. My own extensive researches and investigations there suggests several candidates for his contact and possible backer there - and more. For example, the man who backed General Walker's march on Oxford (Meredith affair). Where James stayed in N.O. is also fascinating. It is a small but fancy place, off by itself, in the northeastern edge of the French Quarter but in a tough area, a block from the waterfront. I spent more time within a block of that motel than any other place in New Orleans. It is unlikely he just blundered into that place and, because of the directions of the one-way streets, he could not have found it by wandering around the waterfront. Many other things make this provocative.

Another writer believes Key's backer or contact was named Tony. Did he ever mention this name? Or anyone from the Tennessee hill country? Or any Tennessee official, by name? Or description? Or anything about the Rebel Hotels (there were two similar ones near Memphis) or the owners or other people there?

I know you both stay busy. Yet I hope you can find time for this. It can be important. It is important enough for me to be writing you before daylight on a holiday.

From these questions you should be able to figure out some of what I must inquire into and satisfy myself about. I hope you will say nothing about it. It would be much safer not to. There is, without any possibility of doubt, a large involvement of the most extreme and dangerous people of the right extreme in the stories of the assassinations. One of them was gunning for King but could never find a situation where he felt he could get away. He died before the murder, after what a career! But his associates, in advance of the fact, almost blueprinted what really eventuated. This was taped and I have it. And this is only one of the things. These are bad people, with capability of doing very bad things. They are not all nuts. One phoned me at 2:30 a.m. to play me what he regarded as appropriate excerpts from the sound track of "Shane".

My apologies for this intrusion into your busy lives, and sincere thanks for anything you may be able to do.

Best regards,

Harold Eisberg