

Dear Debra, *Conroy*

8/21/96

Recd 10/19/96

The surgery referred to in the magazine was relatively minor, removal of almost a quart of fluid from my chest. So also was the later surgery, in July, at Johns Hopkins in Baltimore, where cancer was removed from my left ear. Both hospitalizations, totalling six weeks, were for congestive heart failure and a few other things. It all leaves me weaker and more rushed, for I continue working.

After reading what you sent I decided that it is appropriate to say a bit more about the scandal mongers and the harm they do, especially when they practise their one kind of dirtiness. It may well be other than you wanted, longer than you wanted, but in haste I wanted something that cannot really be questioned honestly, as adequate an exposure as can be done in less than book length.

Feel free to edit it but then please let me go over it to be certain that by accident not even the slightest error was introduced by accident.

It is unfortunately true that honest and responsible writing about the assassination and its investigations requires time and knowledge few people have or will take the time to acquire.

And so it is that most people have been misled.

I've enclosed I think all the pages of their book I cite and copies of the FBI reports they misrepresent that I got almost 20 years, and by vigorous prosecution of difficult lawsuits, and those subject-matter ignoramuses did not know were already public. In them you'll also see that the notion of assassination relevance was that of a loony Memphis deputy sheriff and not Elrod's or the FBI's.

If you should phone, it is even more necessary now that I retire early and I am now doing that by 5 p.m. our time, 2 p.m. your time. It makes for a convoluted life but for me it works and it helps because I cannot avoid being up quite early.

Sorry my typing and writing cannot be any better.

Best wishes,

Harold

There is more I could have gone into some of which may be of interest to you. Because my interest in what Odio testified to was entirely different that these people represent I did spend much time checking into her. How they got that tape of my interview of the Castorrs I can only guess but it was never returned to me and I'd loaned it to Dick Billings. He was then a LIFE editor, I suppose he kept it as personal property. In getting the LeEs have it he certainly did that. Never spoke to me about that. They were long sessions at the Castorrs' home, more than one, and look at the wee bit they select to use as typical. I also interviewed Mrs. Rogers, of the Texas Instrument Hogerses with whom Silvia convalesced. It was not as the LaF's says. It was after a hysterectomy, I interviewed Father "achann, Sylvia's

New Orleans college professors uncle, Lorán Hall, Larry Howard and probably ~~of~~th herd.

The Castorrs, my wife and I developed a friendly relationship. They were separated or divorced ~~late~~^{at}. Bob had friends in Frederick. Last time I saw him, ~~and~~^{at} a large party, he told everyone there I was the most patriotic American he knows. He was not in intelligence. As I recall he was Vinegar Joe Stilwell's G-3. He did want to avoid letting any pro-Castro's get any help.

When I first interviewed Hall he was in the Los Angeles veterans hospital. For three full days he controlled the tape recorder. On that trip he said he could have gone to see Odio, that he did go see someone in that development, a dentist, but he had no recollection of whether or not he did go to Odio's.

To give you an idea the kind of man he is, when I left at the end of the third day he reached under his pillow and pulled out a hand weapon. I do not recall whether it was a revolver or an automatic. It looked very big at that minute. He said, "This is what I had if you weren't for real." How he got that into the hospital I do not know!

Last time I saw him ~~was~~^{when} the House assassins subpoenaed him. He phoned me on the phone of a reporter friend of mine in Los Angeles, Art Kevin. He had been subpoenaed and wanted me to sit next to him and counsel him. I told him he needed a lawyer, to get one, and that I'd get there if I could. By that time it was no longer safe for me to drive to Washington and I used the bus. After medical or legal appointments I then had to get to the Hill. When he decided to go to New Orleans after as a matter of law he did not have to, I persuaded him to do that in his own interest and explained how it would be. He then wanted me with him and with connecting motel rooms but I did not have the money. He did learn that I'd told him the truth in telling him that if he spoke only the truth he'd clear his name in N.O.

When I got to the House assassins hearing room there was not an empty seat. There was a young man who had a seat ~~also~~ⁱⁿ next to the door who had visited us and stayed with us. He gave me his seat. When Hall looked around as we ~~were~~^{were} awaiting the coming of the committee he saw me. With his typical profanity and loudness he hollered, pretty close to these words, hey they old asshole buddy! Glad to see you. He was then walking back to me and he added how about if after this shit we go have a drink? By that time he was next to me, everyone was agog, and I saw the Wash. Post's George Gardner. I asked Hall if he could join us, Hall agreed, Gardner phoned his office to say he'd be late, and when the committee cancelled that session we went to the Shoreham and drank until suppertime when Hall's lawyers drove me home, with him.

Without confirmation I'd never depend on Hall's word. He did talk freely all that afternoon. It was off the record but Gardner could make notes. He did.

I interviewed Harry Howard twice, the second time with Hemming, who also came here several years ago.

There was not a single person to whom I spoke who said a bad word about Odio. All liked and respected her.

If you read the LaF's book you are aware that although they had a chart of the jail they did not use it. The reason is obvious, *WV*.

That maximum-security section is off to itself and it does not face the elevators. It has three cells. ~~It here~~ there was anyone there when they got Oswald he was moved out immediately, Leavelle told me, and it makes sense. They put him in the middle cell and kept the other two empty. There was also always a policeman or a detective sitting on a chair in front of the third cell looking at the middle one with Oswald in it.

I've rambled. Hope some of it is of interest to you. There is much, very much more than can be said in criticism of the LaFontaine approach and their book. It does help errant government, does confuse and mislead the people even more, and it is obvious that after all the time they wasted on this nonsense they remain subject-matter ignoramuses.

And basic in what they have done is their assumption of Oswald's guilt.

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