

Dear Larry,

3/4/73

An afternoon of clearing a piece of ground in the hope of being able to convert it into a garden gave me some thinking time today. One of the subjects to which I wandered is the crash in which Dorothy Hunt died. If I know of no evidence of dirty doings, there seem to remain questions that should and need not. I got onto this in thinking about the newest disclosures, of \$200,000+ of Vesco's money in Stans' safe, in \$100 bills, as I told you when I phoned you. (Caught part of a local TV news show last night in which Carl Rowan said this money was used for Watergatoring.)

I've done a fair amount of flying. I've been in planes that had to abort landings several times. No time was a real emergency. In every case, the plane was more than 1 1/2 miles from the runway when told not to land. I've landed through fog-hidden mountains by radar (don't recommend the experience), so I know the capabilities. When that was in 1968 and D. Hunt crashed in 1972, I can assume that Midway ain't with it.

I don't think I've ever been in a plane that wasn't centered on the runway that close to landing, going back to the days of DD2s.

The last time I was in Chicago I was going to and from Wisconsin, changing at O'Hare. When we broke through the overcast going there, we could not have been more than 1,000 feet up and we were deadcenter. That seems to be no big deal today. When I got to Washington, it was fantastic. Didn't even see the ground until we were about to touch down, that close. (The hostess who was sitting next to me was a bit uneasy.)

So, a certain amount can be attributed to the antiquities at Midway. For all the traffic they handle, they are out of date.

But the planes are not. The planes have certain known capabilities and limitations. The controllers are supposed to know all of these things. Yet the controller in that case told the pilot to turn 180° to the left and make a new approach. The reason I've seen given (no local coverage that I've seen at all) is that the plane was too close to a private job landing right ahead of it. Perhaps I am ignorant, but this makes no sense. If he was tailfinning, why was he not told merely to go up? Why the turn at so low an elevation and at that point in landing?

If that had been a prop job, I could understand it. But a jet? They can't bite the air like the props do.

Maybe the Midway radar is so old it can't tell elevation. That would surprise. But assume it. It can tell distance. And 1 1/2 miles is very damned close. So, the controller should know that the capabilities of the jet at that proximity to the strip are severely limited. I don't know what they are, but I think reasonable guesses can be made.

I doubt the plane was going much more than 180 miles an hour. They land at what? something like 100 or a little more? His landing gear had to be down, giving some resistance. His flaps were down to slow him. His motor was low-powered, relatively. If he was going at approximately this speed, he was but 30 seconds from touchdown. It takes an appreciable part of that time for the human to react and I don't know how much for the plane to react after the controls are adjusted to make it react.

Only another plane, it would seem, could require the second maneuver, the left turn. But there is no report of a second plane. I would assume that the ordinary think to tell the pilot was first, not to land, to pick up power and await instructions as he didn't land. Or to first get some elevation and control and then turn.

Frankly, even if the control tower didn't know the low elevation of the landing plane, it had to know the limitations of the speed at that close a distance, and I do suppose it was at least close on distance. From what I've heard of jets, they are close to unable to do what the tower directed. So, if your man covering the hearings knows, I'd like to know if these are reasonable questions, if they have come up, if they have been answered, and if they should come up but haven't. The pilot's finale of "I'm sorry" troubles me, too. He would not likely say that if he was about to crash, but he might about a blunder that he knew would lead to a crash. Like giving it too much power too fast. Covering up is not new. I'm curious about what is being covered by whom. F. Lee Bailey's controllers have been hollering so long and so loud that their silence is provocative.

Best,