

29 May 1968

Mrs. Helen Hartman
4666 27th Ave. No.
St. Petersburg, Fla. 33713

Dear Mrs. Hartman:

Coral Lorenzen faxed the first page of your letter to her dated May 20 and sent it to us with a note suggesting that we get in touch with you. She of course was responding to your uncertainty as to whether you and we might be duplicating each other's work, an uncertainty which I can relieve very easily and completely. We're working in a quite different area, which I shall explain shortly. And since I'm explaining, I'm taking the liberty of making a copy of this for Coral and Jim, who are overdue for a briefing on what we're doing. As you no doubt well know, they've been more than sympathetic all along, but as Larry is on public record as saying, everyone has his own hangup, and we have been delinquent in filling them in on our self-imposed exile from the rest of the human race, partly because they've got their own kettle of fish to fry (and I gather you feel as we do that they're frying it very well indeed).

Coral also forwarded the two pages of your job on CD85, and earlier she had sent along that most impressive thing you and someone else had done on the police radio transcripts, which we already had heard about through another channel, which conveyed at the same time some very heartfelt applause for your work.

We think you will place many people in your debt if you can complete what you're working on now. Anything that serves to put the material in the 26 volumes into some sort of order and to make it make sense (contrary to the intentions of the compilers) is most worthwhile. If you can get it published, you have one sure sale right here and I think we could round up several others faster than you could say George de Mohrenschildt.

What we are trying to do here, I suppose, is to assemble the published record, insofar as one couple in one location can do that. We know of no one else who is doing it in quite the way we are (they need help, man, if they are), and we feel that thus far, after the usual mistakes and false starts, we have no choice but to keep going because of certain advantages which it would be wrong to disregard. To explain, I'll have to backtrack a bit, but will try to fix you no longer than necessary with me glitt'ring eye,

From the beginning, we never have been able to escape the feeling that what happened in Dallas was the American equivalent of the Reichstag fire and trial. There are differences, inevitably, but the parallels and similarities persist in chilling preponderance. Naturally, we did not start clipping everything in sight quite as soon as we should have, but we did fairly well in that respect and since have been able to recoup on the first days and hours. This is a good place to do such a collection, because the area is highly cosmopolitan and more publications are available than in the usual American city except for New York. I also happen to work for the Associated Press in San Francisco,

and for a long time the AP carried far more material than the newspapers would print. There are exchange papers, too, at the office (when I have time to go through them) so I've been in an exceptional position to see what gets into print -- and what doesn't. We also have watched the magazines and, like everyone, have picked up some extremely interesting material from the most unlikely sources.

By the time the Warren Report was issued, our original folder of clippings had expanded many times and we had been forced to divide them off into categories -- Oswald, Marina, security forces, Warren Commission and God knows what all. At the same time we had started working up a card index classified along lines of inquiry -- Oswald, 1--+, medical, weapons, shots, and again, God knows what all. (No possible conflict here, I'm sure, with anything you've done).

When the Warren Report appeared it was plainly a whitewash with contradictions and vital omissions that were demonstrable internally or with the help of our files and index. Then came the 26 volumes, with still more contradictions and omissions; at one point we started a project vaguely comparable with your work on CD85, although our effort was undertaken in abysmal ignorance and never could have been as useful and informative as yours seems to be. We started to card index the Commission exhibits, and were threshing about in the usual tangle of dead ends and quagmires when we heard that Mrs. Meagher was doing her index, so we junked the whole project and went back to our clippings and indices. We did some work on the 26 volumes (actually Jenifer did nearly all of it) but realized that so much had been left out or misplaced, possibly deliberately, that people with no more time to spend than we had were not going to get very far and had better let the pros handle this sort of thing.

When the Garrison case broke, we had more than three years of material indexed under our own very peculiar system, including newspapers, magazines and a tape library of what is now around 100 talks, interviews, forums and debates, according to key or critical facts and/or statements. We have practically all the books ever published on the subject, but have made no attempt to index them thoroughly.

Then came Mr. Garrison, ^{halt} and the volume of material increased so drastically that we abandon filing by categories and start filing chronologically from that point on. This is of course what we should have been doing all along, but there was no time to go back and do it over. At any rate the new file, from Garrison on, is in good shape. In addition to the chronological files of clippings and notes, we have set up two card indices. Jenifer is doing a day-by-day chronology which gives a panoramic view of the clipping files, bringing out the developmental structure of the unfolding story and showing quite clearly where cause and effect are operating, or at least suggesting it. If you want to know when Garrison strayed into a Mafia-controlled restaurant at Los Angeles International ~~Airport~~ Airport, looking for a salad, just at the time there was supposed to be a Mafia contract for his execution, Jenifer's chronology is the easiest place to find it and what led up to it.

If you want to know when Clay Shaw got court permission to visit his aged ~~miss~~ mother on the Mississippi coast, or when one of his attorneys delayed a hearing because his wife was having a baby, Jennifer's thousand-or-more 4x6 cards in elite type will tell you when and what purpose may have been served.

On the other hand, I am doing a card index according to names. Suppose you want to know everything that has been carried on Walter Sheridan, my index will refer you to the sources for all the high spots I was able to recognize. Or for Lillie Mae McMains, or Donald Dooty, or Edgar Eugene Bradley, or Allen Dulles, and perhaps a thousand others.

It is clear that this is not much of a system, but the two indices, taken together, constitute a sort of do-it-yourself memory bank and retrieval system, and it's something we've thus far been able to handle. To suppose that you could be duplicating any of this is to suppose you are nuts in the same way we are, which is preposterous.

One of the things we have assembled, I feel increasingly sure, is the raw material for a history of the death of the American press. Or rather its degeneration into a collection of metropolitan throw-aways, which is the same thing as far as the effect upon the fate of the country is concerned. The local press is almost entirely useless now -- it simply doesn't carry the news. Last night we caught a scrap in a radio newscast indicating that Shaw's defense apparently has done what they were expected to do -- try to take their case into federal court and thus delay his trial indefinitely -- but not a word of this was carried in today's local papers. The New York Times is little better, but is useful for what a professedly newspaper of record will studiously avoid carrying. We get most of our news now out of the States-Item, the New Orleans afternoon paper. It's very conservative, just like the morning Times-Picayune, but both carry the Garrison case far more fully than any otherpaper we have heard of. Of the two, we prefer the States-Item because an afternoon paper has less time to have second thoughts about printing any particular story. Both papers obviously dislike Garrison, but apparently dare not neglect him too obviously because of local interest.

There are other things about living in this area ~~which~~ that have helped us. First, there is a Pacifica FM station in Berkeley. It's listener-sponsored, carries no advertising, and therefore can be completely independent and carry what it considers worthwhile. We have been able to tape many debates and interviews from it which have appeared nowhere else. Secondly, there is a seminar on the assassination and its aftermath conducted at the experimental college at San Francisco State College. We've been able to trade a great deal of material with the members of this class and its director, a young man totally dedicated to what he is doing and who works closely with Harold Weisberg. The class includes a number of remarkable people, any one of whom could take over the class tomorrow and conduct it with equal ability and effect. An example is Paul Hoch,

the brilliant young graduate student at UC who discovered the transposed frames in the Zapruder film prints in the 26 volumes and who got J. Edgar Hoover to confirm they had been transposed. We don't attend the class, because of working hours, but now and then part of it will come over here with their own material and there follows a revolving kaffe klatch with a satisfying exchange of notes, discoveries and theories. Sooner or later the photocopier (it uses 3M paper just like yours, and of course we deeply regretted having to deduct it on our 1040 form) is unlimbered and everyone gets a copy of what he needs for his file. Not like at the beginning, when everyone worked and sweated alone, despondent that no one else seemed to be doing anything, but all equally determined that come what may they were not going to be quite as supine and simpleminded as they were supposed to be. The members of this class have turned out some very fine work, and they know and have great respect for what you and your co-worker have done.

The sober estimate of the class, which I believe reflects the views of both Weisberg and Lane, is that the odds are against Garrison's ever getting Shaw into court. As you no doubt know, the trial had been set for June 11 (prior to the federal court thing I mentioned above) and if either Shaw or Garrison isn't assassinated, the defense is expected to overlook absolutely nothing that might serve to delay it further. If the federal court gambit should fail, the feds may try to get Garrison sidetracked on some sort of charge such as income tax evasion, no matter how patently phony.

However it works out, we at least have some sort of a representative record of what has been said and done about this whole dreadful affair. There may never be a chance for it to be used, but that won't be our fault. We have to feel that we have tried, and we know you know and understand that necessity. The longer we watch this thing develop, the more we are convinced that things never would have got anywhere near this far if it had not been for people like you. The vocal, articulate critics like Lane, Weisberg, Epstein, Meagher, Salandria, Thompson, Jones and all the rest are primarily responsible. But it may be doubted if they could have got as far as they did if there had not been tucked away in various parts of the country people like yourself who just refused to be had, who disdained collaboration even by inaction with this whole distillation of wickedness, and who were willing to put their work, as you have, where their convictions led them.

With routine but not very sincere apologies for sloppy typing and long-windedness, but with a most sincere sense of the pleasure it will be some day to meet you,

Jim and Jenifer White
35 Castle Rock Drive
Mill Valley, Calif. 94941

And now A Message, from the other half of this team.

Two things you said in your letter to the Lorenzens rang some loud bells around here, that you work on this stuff day and night, and that you start to run something down and get involved in a job that turns out to be bigger than you anticipate. It ought to be simple at least part of the time to look something up by just getting out what should be the proper volume - but don't you, too, usually end up with five or six? We finally had to build a walking bookcase to save time and wear and tear on the legs.

Here's a pretty puzzle for you to play with in your spare time. (Remember when spare time, sob, was part of the language?) This evolved out of something seen by the sharp eye of Paul Hoch. CE 1412 and CE 2966-A are the Fair Play for Cuba handbills. CE 2966-A (sent to the Commission by the Secret Service) is stamped with Oswald's name and address and has a set of handwritten initials. CE 1412 (turned over to the Commission by the FBI) has this stamp and the initials painted out.

BUT - it seems obvious from creases and other marks that both are the same handbill. AND - the handbill with the name painted over supposedly was taken from Oswald between June 13 and 20, 1963, before the one with the name stamped on it was taken from him Aug. 9, 1963.

We can't imagine what happened here, or why. If you're willing to tamper with the evidence by painting out the identification, you should be willing to manufacture it, and the FBI seems to have had a good supply of the handbills and also had Oswald's stamp kit. If you have any theories, wild or sensible, we'd love to know. For a time I used to wake up with this spinning in my head, obviously having been working on it in my sleep.

In trying to track this down I came up quite incidentally with a partial list of addresses for Oswald's New Orleans postoffice box numbers; 30061 when he wanted to receive mail, and 30016 (at that time a non-existent number) when he didn't. Nothing vital but interesting anyway because of the consistent pattern.

When I sat down it wasn't with the intention of writing a letter but to finish up a batch of cards I do need to get done today, and I'd better get to it. I know from experience it's going to take longer than the time I can allow for it.

*Incidentally, she says - par for the course.