

25 June 1968

Dear Helen:

This will be only a partial answer to your good letter of June 19. There's no time to handle anything else (one assassination was more than enough to cope with; two was definitely burdensome, but three are overwhelming and impossible to keep up with) but I did want to give you what little I've been able to find out about Sahl.

I called the hungry i, the night club where he got his start and has appeared many times. Enrico Banducci, Sahl's discoverer and patron, was ill, but a man at the i said Sahl is playing in New York at the Village Gate. We looked up the New York Times entertainment section and the Gate's ad lists it at Bleecker at Thompson St., telephone GR5-5120.

The ad, incidentally, did not list Sahl (it was Dizzy Gillespie and someone else) but that issue was for Saturday, June 15, so his run may not have started by that time. Anyway, it might be worth while to try contacting him there. He used to maintain a home down near Los Angeles somewhere, but if he's on the road that would of course be no use. Also, I don't know whether, being a pro, he would be interested in a radio talk show, but he has stuck his neck out so often and so far on behalf of Garrison that I rather imagine it would be one of the few things he'd be interested in making such an appearance for.

We have been much puzzled by Mrs. Meagher's hostility to Garrison, especially in view of her excellent work up to that time. The only thing we can say for sure is that she and M.S. Arnoni, the editor of the Minority of One who has published her material often (including a comparison of the Ray and Oswald cases in the June issue) had the same sudden seizure of antipathy to him at the same time. Do you have her index of the 26 volumes, by the way? I think it was Lawrence Schiller who mentioned in a very derogatory account of her work on it that she had a long shelf of UFO literature, and also forgot to feed the cats occasionally while she was holed up somewhere working up the index. She should make a most interesting interview, and we would take the best care possible of your tape of it and return it just as soon as we can copy it. We deeply appreciate your offer.

We happened to be in Tucson a year ago last May having dinner at the Lorenzens when they made one of their appearances via phone on your local radio, WLCY. They also had a call from you right afterward (it must have been you) and Jim taped the whole proceedings and after it was all over we played the whole thing over again, hearing both sides of the conversation this time. We hope you don't mind, but you're entitled to know that you're not quite the stranger to us that would otherwise be the case.

We joined APRO as soon as we learned there was such a thing (it was when Stringfellow folded, and recommended APRO) and there were four or five years when we knew Jim and Coral only through correspondence. We were able to send them lots of clippings and now and then I was able to provide a little information from contacts made in my work. At one time Coral said something in a letter indicating she was convinced there was an organized plot in the press to suppress UFO information. I sat down and gave her what I considered to be the real picture -- more a combination of apathy, fear and self-serving indifference, and therefore more insidious and vicious. She later incorporated most of the letter in her first book, and it was repeated in the second version. I think it was in 1960 that we finally made it to Tucson on a vacation trip, and finally met them face to face. Since then we've been back twice, and they've been here, I think, three times.

We've not seen them since that time a year ago last May, but the correspondence has continued, and we, certainly, would not dream of going anywhere near Tucson without finding a way of getting together with them. We quite understand your feeling about Coral, and have much the same regard for both of them.

We don't have television, so don't know what Capote suggested beyond a TIME account which had him saying Oswald, Ray and Sirhan all three were programmed as Manchurian Candidate. I'm sorry about that teaser about Sirhan: I did have something of that idea about him, although I would say Oswald could not have been programmed in any way -- he was simply gulled. Ray has been on the lam for more than a year and doesn't need to be programmed, and besides there's no real evidence he was anywhere near Memphis last April. As for Sirhan, the strange way he is said to have been absolutely quiet about some subjects but very talkative and articulate about others did suggest to us that he well could have been acting under post-hypnotic suggestion. We have seen nothing since which appears to have contradicted that pattern, and a great deal that could support it. Certainly one can say that the Los Angeles job was infinitely more finished and sophisticated than either Dallas or Memphis, suggesting that a new team of experts was at work at all levels. Even so, a few holes have appeared. The coroner says (in grand jury testimony) that there were powder burns on the back of Bobby's head, indicating that the weapon had to be within two or three inches, not four or five feet as all witnesses agree was the minimum. There are the man and woman Sirhan was seen talking to, who never have been found. And some other men he was heard talking to in the Jordanian dialect by a man who understands several Arabic dialects. These haven't been located, either, at least publicly. Yorty's extremely peculiar behaviour is explained by newsmen as merely a hunger for publicity. This does not explain the willingness of a professional lawyer and politician to make statements he has to know would violate normal judicial procedures. Was he under some compulsion? Yorty always has been a political maverick, but this doesn't mean he's a wild man as far as his own career is concerned.

We feel pretty silly, having told you all about Paul Hoch's discovery of the handbill anomaly when it appears it probably was you who found it in the first place. Paul is a very quiet person, and never says more than the bare minimum. When he mentioned it, he did so very briefly, and there actually wasn't time to explain a complicated story about how he may have got the problem from someone else, and we certainly had no time to ask him. The occasion was one of those confused briefing sessions which have taken place here from time to time, with everyone talking at once and no one really getting very thoroughly informed about anything. In any case I'm sure Paul is not the kind of person who would claim something as his own when it wasn't. He is a short, good-looking boy with a mop of red hair and, recently, a most magnificent curly red beard. He seems shy, most of all. We once spent several hours at the same meeting with him, when he was accompanied by a very nice young girl whom we assumed to be his wife. But the meeting broke up without his introducing her or indicating in any way who she was. This is just Paul. Shy and not talking unless he has something to say.

Jenifer is finishing up some cards and says she wants to keep going a while, so I'll finish answering your letter, after my fashion. You ask how it is that the press can see so clearly the multiplicity of Rays and/or Galts and yet be blind to the same plurality of Oswalds. The answer is that the press is chicken. It will print anything it gets from official sources because such ordinarily doesn't mean any trouble

such as libel suits. The press is getting enough stuff about Ray/Galt to keep it happy, and it has no self-serving interest in digging up anything on its own, and even less in uncovering something that could contradict the official story and thus upset the flow of alleged news from official sources. In the Oswald case there were many readable signs, easily recognized by managing editors and others concerned with maintaining comfortable relations with officialdom and advertisers, that any enterprise that led into contradictory paths would not only be unsupported by official news sources but actually lead to closing those sources. Newsmen could write what they pleased, but getting anything ~~that~~ published that challenged the official myth was an entirely different matter. The history of men like Richard Dudman and Mort Sahl are lessons well read by all newsmen in every medium.

Also, you ask, how can the same people who want to shut Garrison and other critics up be the same people who scream bloody murder about states rights. The answer is that states rights are fine as long as they uphold the status quo and don't lead to anything dangerous like equal rights for mere people or upsetting a system of government that has been shaped to keep things as they are. It's the same way with freedom of the press, which actually means freedom to publish. Newspaper publishers, with few exceptions, are businessmen, managerial types responsible to a board of directors who have personal investments in a business corporation. Freedom to publish is life and death to them. No publish, no profits. But the content of the news is something else. You don't publish news that will drive away advertisers who represent other business concerns and alienate the government that so obligingly keeps things the way they are.

Those are oversimplified answers, but in case there is the slightest vestige of anything in them which you haven't thought of already, they represent an honest opinion from the engineer room.

Enclosed are some clippings from a recent issue of the Los Angeles underground weekly, the Free Press (known generally as the Freep) which might interest you.

Thank you again for your good letter. Too bad it's 3 a.m. and a better answer has not been forthcoming.

All the best, and from Jenifer too.

jdw

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* Mrs. Meagher's cats appear to be something special. We might forget to eat ourselves, but our two owners are well aware of the organization of the cosmos and the priorities thereof. We would never dream of forgetting them, and could not possibly get away with it. Frankly, I doubt that Mr. Schiller knows much about cats, among other things.

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