

~~NORMAN MAILER'S WHITELASH~~
OF THE JFK ASSASSINATION

"History is exactly like novel writing. They're both fiction."

Thus spake not Zoroaster from Persia ^{ancient Persia} but fourteen centuries later ^{these are the words of} the aging former high priest of American ~~literary~~ novel-writing turned historian, Norman Mailer.

"Ultimately, nothing in history is ~~the truth~~ true," Mailer added.

In reporting these profundities by the winner of two Pulitzer prizes for literature on Friday, March 24, 1995 the Philadelphia Inquirer's headline was "A NEW GENERATION AT PENN MEETS NORMAN MAILER: STUDENTS WHO HADN'T HEARD OF THE PROVOCATIVE WRITER AREN'T LIKELY TO FORGET THEIR ~~ENC~~ ENCOUNTER."

Howard Goodman's account of the momentous literary occasion at the University of Pennsylvania begins:

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"To the world War II ~~gen~~ generation, he was one of the young lions who set out to conquer the Great American Novel. To the sixties left he was ~~was~~ ~~the young lions~~ an antiwar hero and feminists' foil. To college kids today, he's ~~is~~ "Norman Who?"

Goodman did not explain how ^{d/} why Mailer was that "feminists' foil." Aside from the content of ^{Mailer's 28} his 30 books and innumerable magazine articles ^{Goodman} he could have had in mind Mailer's accumulation of six wives or his having been charged with knifing one of them.

Not does Goodman report the occasion of Mailer's ~~appearance~~ proclamation of his new religion of the writer's responsibilities in our society. Of it, Goodman does write

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"The world-reknowned writer spent four days at Penn this week, reading from his work, participating in discussions on advertising, architecture, politics and 'spiritual ecology,' and meeting a generation that's estranged from the world he inhabits and signifies - a world of letters and of intense engagement with the issues of the day. The students in History 398 half-expected to meet the Mailer who appears as a character in the 28-year-old autobiographical literature they had been assigned: Fugnacious. Part ~~a~~ drunk. A tough guy, treating literary repu-

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reputation as a field of combat. In his opinions Mailer was as feisty as ever. But his manner was mellow, his attitude toward the twenty-somethings not a bit condescending. His 28th book, an 800-page nonfiction study of Lee Harvey Oswald appears in bookstores next ~~month~~ month, adding to a body of work that includes ~~The Naked and the Dead~~, Advertisements for Myself and The Executioners's Sons."

In short, Mailer was promoting his book ^{due in May} and his condensation of it that was to appear ¹⁰⁰ first in The New Yorker dated April 19¹⁹. The book, as Goodman reports incompletely,

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"Oswald's Tale is the result of six months' research in Minsk, where Mailer interviewed KGB agents who tailed Oswald during the accused assassin's puzzling 2 1/2 years sojourn in the Soviet Union."

Having described this book as nonfiction, Goodman wrote

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"Mailer said he decided 'it was likely' that Oswald acted alone in killing President ~~Kennedy~~ John F. Kennedy - not from the evidence, which is impenetrable, but because I got to know his character."

As Goodman does not note, this was Mailer justifying Mailer ~~is~~ in his contribution to the education of a new generation of Americans specializing in the study of their history. It was Mailer's justification for his great profundity that "history is exactly like a novel. They're both fiction." Of his saying, really undertaking to prove, that "Ultimately, nothing in history is true."

This is why Mailer spent those four days at the University of Pennsylvania with its students in History 398. This and to ^{going on} get the his propoganda to seal his book satirized before the major propoganda in The New Yorker.

How does history become a novel, other than by the ^{assassination: writing and book publishing} industry ^{is} treating the ^{as a novel?} assassination ~~as~~ that followed the great and lingering tragedy of that assassination?

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"Mailer said he decided 'it was likely' that Oswald acted alone in killing President ~~Kennedy~~ John F. Kennedy - not from the evidence, which is impenetrable, but because I got to know his character."

Adding his own amateur shrinkery to his new concept of history, in Goodman's words,

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"Moreover, ^[Oswald] this ~~is~~ is a man who has this idea of himself that he is ^d destined

for greatness,' Mailer said. 'That's the mind of man who does commit~~ed~~ assassination.'

Is it not a wonder that any of the world's political leaders survive at all?

Mailer, from the Goodman account, did not undertake to explain to those students ~~he used on the occasion he misused~~ why he said of the "evidence" of the assassinat^{ion} that it was "impenetrable."

Not did~~he~~ undertake ~~to~~ any explanation of his new book's subtitle, "An American Mystery."

The evidence as it relates to Oswald's guilt or innocence was never "impenetrable" except for the fact that Mailer began not wanting any such evidence. He began with his seer's vision of Oswald as the assassin, as we shall see, with his only question whether there had been a conspiracy, ~~no~~ others involved in the assassination with Oseald.

As we shall also see, when Mailer was offered this evidence free - by me - and more than two decades before he got ar^{ound} to his personal commercialization and exploitation of the assassination, he was too "busy".

In his promotions for his literary gimcrackery ^{Mailer} he palms off as an ~~authentic~~ authentic account of our tragic history, ^{or promotional he adds} in further efforts to justify his total ignoring of the anything but "impenetrable" evidence, ⁱⁿ ~~and~~ trying to prove that history is never true (other than as ^{in saying} he says he records it), and ~~is~~ that ^{history} recording it "is exactly like novel writing," in puffing up his New Yorker condenssation Mailer told the Associated Press, ^{his fiction} a beginning with reference to the great novelist, Henry James,

~~James~~ "James^{on} frightens me forever with his dictum that one must never put information into a novel unless it is ~~is~~ digested through the lens of a ~~profession~~ protagonist's perception. In 'Harlot's Ghost,' my protagonist is connected umbilically to the reader. ^{of} If everything flow^d from one character to the reader, then there isn't ^{that} the need for an intermediary, a narrator, ~~because~~ Now in 'The Executioner's ~~song~~ Song', I was the narrator because the information about Gary Gilmore and other characters is received information: I wasn't making it up."

Mailer "wasn't making it up" when he just assumed that Oswald was the assassin?

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He wasn't making it up in ignoring the readily-available "evidence" ^{3/} he lies, and there is no point in ~~his~~ mincing words, ^{he} lies knowing it was ~~not~~ ^{is} true; lies knowing he had made no effort to learn it; lies knowing full well that he had turned ^{actual assassination} ~~the actual~~ evidence down toward ~~the~~ end of 1973 when I offered it to him free; when he said he was too "busy" for it ^{after} ~~having already~~ stated repeatedly that Oswald was the assassin ^{no}.

In fact in "The Executioner's Song" Mailer did have an "intermediary" who was his continuing associate despite Mailer's characterizing him as a man who could not tell the truth, the intermediary who became his "associate" in his fictionalizing of history in Oswald's Tale, albeit unmentioned in the prepublication puffery.

Goodman does not mention him, nor does this AP story as quoted from the Chicago Tribune of April 3.

Nor did either ^{reporter} comment on or solicit any contrary opinion when Mailer says that any lie any writer chooses to regard as ~~a~~ truthful for his own purposes is properly included in responsible writing ^{if} he does not, personally, "make it up," if it is, in "Mailer's words, "received information."

Like the world being flat, the "received information" of Columbus' day?

~~Like~~ Like Poland invading Germany, the "received information" from Hitler?

Like ~~Oswald~~ Oswald being the assassin ~~for~~ and the lone assassin, the "received information" from the Warren Report, Mailer's only basis for his assumption that Oswald was the assassin?

This is Mailer trying to justify his own literary harlotry.

As we shall also see, it is Mailer justifying in advance his personal suppression of "received information" that was not congenial to his version ^{in Oswald's Tale} of "Oswald in Minsk," ^{in your mind} the earlier reported title ^{Mailer's} of his personally manufactured "American Mystery."

All of this makes appropriate a little of the readily available "received information" about Mailer other than ^{about} his accumulating and rejection of all those wives and his alleged abuses of ~~young~~ women; the dependability of his "information" when he is the "narrator" of it; and ~~and~~ aside from whether one can "digest" through a "lens," ^{what} ~~was~~ he told the AP, how the murk of his mind, "connected umbilically to the ~~read~~ reader," becomes the

truth, the fact, the reality of our history."

The history so precious to others that is "fiction" to him - and as he writes it for money that from the kind of life he led Mailer always needed more than most -really extravagantly ~~or~~ people can live well on/for his ~~alimony~~ alimony and for paying the large debts he accumulated by the kind of life he led.

On this we have some "received information" that can be considered "predigested" from opposite sides of the world, from Moscow from the London International Express of January 21-27 1993 ¹⁹⁹⁵ to California, to the premier issue of Prevailing Winds ^{quarterly}

"Our ^{Man} in Moscow" for the British publication, Will Stewart whose article will interest us ^{further} later as we examine whether Mailer is hobgobblined by the consistence of small minds, wrote under the subheading of ~~the~~ "Alimony" referring to what upset Mailer very much, Oliver Stone's powerful movie JFK, wrote:

Alimony

But the film JFK suggested that members of the U.S. government and anti-Castro Cubans, not Oswald, conspired to kill Kennedy.

At the end of his last book, Harlot's Ghost, Mailer — six-times married and twice winner of the Pulitzer Prize — left his fans in suspense.

His tour de force of the Cold War took them up to the Kennedy assassination, then said brusquely: "To be continued".

During his cold, winter sojourn in what is now the capital of newly-independent Belarus, Mailer — who at almost 70 has to earn £150,000 a year simply to pay alimony — has interviewed everyone still

with
alive who had any links to Oswald."

In writing about Mailer's "associate" in Oswald's Tales, Larry Schiller, in whom he have a special interest, this is what ^{appeared} ~~D.H. Christian~~ wrote in Prevailing Winds (page 80):

Few writing nonfiction would expect to get away with boasting that we lie,³ would expect publishers to accept that; or reviewers to tolerate it in silence; or audiences not to throw it in our faces; or those who book ~~speakers~~ paid lectures to want us after such an expression of arrogance and contempt for all of the above.

To say nothing of those who buy books expecting them to be truthful, not lies.

But Mailer is Mailer and what is position to mere mortals ~~is~~ is manna to him.

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So why has Mailer made this man his partner?
I don't know. But I feel that financial worries may be one key to the mysteries of Mailer, whose legendary tax problems bring Willie Nelson to mind. For many years, Mailer dodged (and for all I know may still be dodging) the IRS. In Manso's biography, we find the following quotes from Mailer's sixth wife: "All the while Norman was writing *The Executioner's Song* he was in serious financial trouble, and we were borrowing money every month." "After going through all the records and the bills, I realized what idiocies had been committed by his financial people." "The nut was \$1000 a day, a staggering figure." "So it's a given — owing number of dollars a year — and he's got to work like crazy to pay for it." In the late '70s the debt to his publisher alone was \$300,000. Mailer even resorted to borrowing a further \$90,000 from his own mother.
Has this scramble after bucks ever affected the accuracy of Mailer's reportage? To answer that question, one need only turn

Mailer's ~~declared~~ interest in the JFK assassination that he declared publicly predated ~~his~~ what Will Stewart wrote about it by at least two decades.

There is nothing wrong with making money, especially not if it is to comply with the judgement of the courts of to ~~back~~ ^{pay} back what ~~was~~ borrowed because of porfligacy. There may be wonder, however, about how one can so impoverish himself after a string of best-selling books two of which won Pulitzerz. But not about the need to pay what ones owes.

Most of us have the need to earn money. At least some of us care about how we earn it.

Most of those of us who write what we regard as nonfiction would not think of boasting that we lie to sell books or for any other reason, real or imagined. Few of us would dare make this boast ~~in~~ claiming to write about our history to the faces of legitimate, professional history experts and that where they teach it.

That is totell them to their faces that they are professional frauds teaching lies. Yet this is what Mailer spent four days doing without any protest recorded in Goodman's account of it in the Inquirer.

Or in the AP's account. GA here

Bizarre as Mailer's method ^{is} in declaring that all history is lies and in this it is like novels, Mailer says that as a novelist he is also a historian ^{and} he is licensed to lie and he has the brazenness to ~~disclose~~ ^{boast} in advance that his Oswald's Tale is a lie.

Which by design an intent it ~~isxx~~ without question is,

In this he also reflects that he is a man of principle. Not the usual principle of your normal, everyday ~~w~~ writer without those Pulitzers and other honors and successes.

But principle it is to boast of being a liar who writes lies, abnormal if not unprecedented as ~~it~~ ^{just} is. *A Mailer, the principled liar, or liar, the liar of principle.*

There are other means ~~of~~ of understanding what ~~kind~~ ^{extra space} kind of man Mailer is, what kind of writer - historian or if you will, ~~p~~ novelist working in all that "received information," for all the world as though he is a historian and writes as one, with the obligations that imposes on an honest, ~~p~~ principled writer. In assessing this we have an abundance of ~~what~~ what he refers to as "received information that Mailer himself provides.

I have not been a Mailer-watcher or reader. His fame came when I was too busy with other matters to take the time for reading much of anything not related to my work. His adventures that got him into the papers were not of any interest to me. But when he declared an interest in the assassination of President Kennedy friends sent me accounts of them. Two of these items had the same date/although one probably appear appeared a few days later. This one is from the "CURRENTS" page of Publishers Weekly dated February 12:

► MAILER LAUNCHES HIS "FIFTH ESTATE"
Norman Mailer, fresh from his \$50-a-head 50th birthday party Monday night ("only about a quarter the size of Truman Capote's, but at least everyone paid to come to mine") took time out the following day to try to enlighten a puzzled press about his proposal for a citizen body to check on America's "secret police"--the FBI and the CIA. What he has in mind, he said, is a body something like Nader's Raiders or the American Civil Liberties Union, which could keep an eye on Governmental surveillance activities. He has some people in mind for a steering committee to study the idea, and the "take" from his party will get the funding started. Subjects he feels worthy of study by such a group would include the Kennedy assassination, "still a major unsolved mystery in American life," and such recent political events as the Watergate affair and perhaps even the Eagleton case. Stressing that he wanted only to see if anyone was seriously interested in the proposal, and would then back out, Mailer said "I want only to be a literary man the rest of my life. I don't trust myself to be anything else." Good news for Robert Markel, editor at Grosset & Dunlap for Mailer's forthcoming book on Marilyn Monroe; he says Mailer's copy is still coming in on time, and the book is to be a full-length one, not just a brief essay to accompany pictures of the actress.

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Whether a book on Marilyn Monroe that was "not just a brief essay to accompany pictures of the actress was Mailer being ~~just a~~ "only a literary man the rest of" his life is that or scandal-mongering may be a question but for his Fifth Estate to study the Kennedy assassination seems to state a serious ~~question~~ interest. And he did refer to it as "still a major ~~un~~solved mystery in American life."

Apparently I received the New York Times story on Mailer's party as it appeared in the San Francisco Chronicle before getting this Publishers Weekly item because to it I attached a memo to my friend and FOIA lawyer Jim Lesar asking if he could get Mailer's address for me so I could make him aware of the work~~s~~ on the JFK assassination I'd done for the previous decade. In that memo I noted that

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"When something like this gets known ~~is that~~ all the nuts with nutty notions they believe are reality latch onto the money, which is worse than just the waste of money. I seriously doubt ~~that~~ if any of the people Mailer can get to serve on his board will be in a position to evaluate. There has been so much irresponsible propaganda spread around as though it were the vibrant truth! ... The unfortunate consequence is that instead of the people being informed they are misinformed, and ...credibility is undermined."

Here I cited a few illustrations of what they had been getting attention. I noted that "All the crazy stuff about the CIA makes it look pure and wholesome," it was that ridiculous. ~~fix~~ Many "are dreaming up all kinds of theories and are persuaded of their truth by their affection" for them. "Ultimately this redounds to the benefit of the spooks," Has history more than confirmed that! I then told Jim, "I think this is the kind of thing Mailer is least likely to believe because he has been subjected to an endless din from people he knows and in many ^{of} cases may trust." I wanted to keep Mailer "from another futility" and I offered him access to the several ^a ~~thous~~ several thousand pages of FBI reports I had ~~by~~ then obtained." (More on this later.)

The news story adds to what Mailer had in mind:

Mailer Forms 'the Fifth Estate'

New York

NORMAN Mailer, the self-styled "embattled aging enfant terrible of the literary world," has just turned 50, and to celebrate the occasion Monday night he threw himself an elegant \$50-a couple birthday party at the Four Seasons Restaurant.

The party was intended not only to celebrate Mailer, but to let him announce the formation of what the author called "the fifth estate"—a "democratic secret police."

Facing 500 invited guests, the author said: "I want a people's FBI and a people's CIA — to investigate those two" — referring to the real Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Central Intelligence Agency.

"If we have a democratic secret police to keep tabs on Washington's secret police, which is not democratic, but bureaucratic, we will see how far paranoia is justified," he continued.

Mailer's notion was to "let the idea sink in tonight," and to form a steering committee to investigate the possibility of forming such a civilian secret police.

The meaning of the Fifth Estate, a nonprofit foundation that would receive its initial financing from the receipts of the party, was Mailer's secret until last night.

The birthday party was originally the idea of Lady Jean Simpson, Mailer's third wife, and Frank Crowther, an old friend. According to Crowther, when he suggested the party, Mailer at first declined, saying, "another ego trip? Who needs it?" Later he decided to use his birthday as "a launching pad" for the foundation.

About 5000 invitations were mailed for what

Crowther characterized as "a family and literary event — a night for the written word."

Jacob Javits, Paul O' Dwyer, Melvin Van Peebles, Bernardo Bertolucci, Mrs. Henry Heinz, Bobby Short, Shirley MacLaine, Andy Warhol, Jules Feiffer, Jose Torres, Murray Kempton and many other of Mailer's writing cohorts were there. In addition there were at least two Mailer ex-wives, plus his mother and his ten-year-old daughter.

At a news conference yesterday, Mailer clarified "the Fifth Estate."

He said that he is regretting calling the body, as he did in his original announcement, "a people's police," and explained that it was "open-ended," with a structure and specific goals to be determined after the formation of a steering committee.

Mailer compared the Fifth Estate to Nader's Raiders, the American Civil Liberties Union and Common Cause.

As several possible areas for investigation, he named the assassination of John F. Kennedy, the Warren Commission report, possible Republican involvement in the exposure of Senator Thomas

Eagleton's mental history, and the Watergate affair.

He was creating the Fifth Estate, he explained, because "we have to face up to the possibility that the country may be sliding toward totalitarianism . . . I have an absolute huge distrust of the American government."

N.Y. Times Service



AP Wirephoto

Five hundred guests attended a 50th birthday party for writer Norman Mailer (center) Monday at New York's Four Seasons Restaurant

So, Mailer had \$25,000 less the cost of the food for the ^Cbeginning of his Fifth Estate.

It appears to have done nothing, to have accomplished nothing and a little more than a year later it merged with another nothing. This is ^{from} Louise Lague's account of it in the Washington Star of March 25, 1974:

*Mailer
& simple
face*

Norman Mailer didn't look much like a media heavy, slipping in the front door that way, in a baggy pin-striped suit. With his pale gray quasi-afro and watery eyes, he could have been just anyone from around the neighborhood in Cleveland Park, a place where free schools flourish in rumpus rooms and cars still bear raggy remnants of McGovern stickers.

But it was Mailer and he had come to make his announcement again. A year ago, Mailer threw himself a 50th birthday party



NORMAN MAILER

at the Four Seasons and charged his friends \$50 to get in. At the end of the glittery, liquid and boisterous evening, a swaying, blood-shot-eyed Mailer announced he was starting the Fifthstate — a people's counterespionage organization designed to spy right back at the CIA and the FBI to keep the nation from "sliding towards totalitarianism."

THE EARTH didn't shake very much and people went home. The next day, a soberer Mailer said he was quite serious. But with the fuss over "Marilyn," nothing much

came of Mailer's Fifth Estate in 1973. Here and there, he slipped it cautiously into his speeches at colleges, and came up with a more or less solid 150 volunteers.

Meanwhile, some former-agents, former-journalists and Vietnam Veterans had formed in Washington something called CARIC — the Committee for Action/Research on the Intelligence Community — with an eye to ending clandestine foreign intervention and domestic repression and staving off Orwell's Big Brother from 1984.

CARIC already has two programs under way. The Intelligence Documentation Center is a library of information on "U.S. intelligence and secret government operations available to journalists, researchers, scholars and concerned citizens."

THE COUNTER-SPY campaign is an attempt to organize groups on the local level to gather the information.

Mailer read about CARIC in the Village Voice, got together with CARIC coordinators Tim Butz and Winslow Peck, and a natural merger was born. CARIC was working hard but wasn't famous, Mailer was famous but not working hard.

The merger, now called The Organizing Committee for a Fifth Estate, was announced Saturday night at a \$10-a-head wine and cheese party in the Newark Street home of Sam Smith, editor of the D.C. Gazette.

Speaking of Mailer again, Lague wrote:

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Finally he mounted a stair landing to speak. With one hand on the balustrade and the other gesticulating from the elbow, he spoke at great length about himself and his cause.

"This idea came to me through the aegis of an

angel," he said. "This angel said: 'You are the dauphin. You must ride forth and bring this idea. You must save France.' The angel was a drunk and he meant America.

So I said 'Okay, anything to relieve my illimitable boredom.'"

"I think this pooling of resources is a fine idea," he said. "The people from CARIC have brains, pluck, energy and dedication. I . . . I am just Phineas T. Dauphin. If this remains my plaything, nothing will happen to it. I just want to be remembered as old Uncle Norman who had something to do with it."

Neither the Star nor the Post, which carried Bethlyn Bates' story the same day, took Mailer or his spy-catching seriously. Both stories were with entertainment news. The Post's story begins:

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For months Norman Miller's Fifth Estate was nothing more than a Norman Mailer lecture tour.

But then Mailer heard about (CARIC, the Committee for Action/Research on the Intelligence Community: and joined with them to form the Organizing Committee for a Fifth Estate. Now he's in business—of a modest sort—to create a nationwide, nonprofit, non-partisan citizens' intelligence organization designed to check "technofascism," the Big Brother state of George Orwell's "1984."

A Bates' story ends with what the Star did not report:

Asked about his \$1 million deal with Little Brown for an as-yet-urwritten book, he said the contract was for 700,000 words and wouldn't describe the book's contents.

"It may take several years," he noted, "and during that time most of my speaking engagements will be for the Fifth Estate."

So we now have Mailer with, whatever may have remained from his previous literary successes, the million dollars he was to get from still another publisher plus whatever he got ~~from~~ from lecture fees on which he would be spending ~~most~~ ^{his} of ~~my~~ ^{his} time speaking for his Fifth Estate, with whatever assistance he got ~~from~~ ^{from} the 150 volunteers the Star reported he ~~had~~ had mobilized ~~it~~.

Has anybody heard anything at all about Mailer's Fifth Estate or about the CARIC with which he merged it or about anything Mailer or either group or the ~~one~~ ^{combination} when they combined? *Merged?*

With all Mailer had to work with? And without a lack of funding?

In between Mailer's two pay-to-be-admitted ^{for himself} parties the late Bernard "Bud" Fensterwald organized a conference of speeches to mark the ~~the~~ tenth anniversary of the JFK assassination ^{it was} to be held at Georgetown University in Washington. I declined an invitation to speak as soon as my suspicions, that it was to be a gathering of the nuts who would spout their nuttiness, was confirmed. After several more refusals to be there, when I was promised that at the beginning I would be able to try to inject a dose of rationality into the certain irrationality I agreed, and when I did ~~it~~ just that the denunciations of me as a CIA agent ^w were immediate. *He sat in silence in the back, accompanied by two younger and attractive women.* Mailer was one of those Bud got to be a sponsor. He was there. Although I have no notes on it we did speak then and he did, apparently make an offer to help me that I accepted, by getting his literary agent to take me on. This is stated in my December 19, 1971 ~~1973~~ note to Jim Lesar attached to Mailer's letter to him of December 11 a copy of which I had just gotten from Jim. I described Mailer's letter as copping out. Of one of his copouts I said that "if he has a novel in mind for 15 years and will take two ~~years~~ more to write it must be War and Peace."

Mailer represented being quite impressed by a copy of ^{w/} that in the lawsuits are called a Memorandum of Facts Jim had sent him. He said it "is fascinating and incidentally quite well ^w written. I wouldn't be at all surprised if you could find a magazine to publish it. Ramparts perhaps, or even one of the Playboy-type magazines. And if you'd like help on ^w this I'll be happy to send it to my agent who ^w might have some thoughts on the subject."

Whether or not Mailer's agents had any thoughts, nothing came of them.

In all the many lawsuits Jim filed for me he and I used them to make a record of facts about the assassination and its investigations that would be part of our history,

my friend Dave Wrone, professor of history at the University of Wisconsin at Stevens Point, signed my affidavits, which were long and detailed and documented, that I was writing history while it was happening. And Mailer did have his declared interest in the assassination and in taking the truth to the people.

Mailer also wrote,

"ON the other hand, as far as getting together with Harold goes, I have to confess to you that it is impossible to think of another book other than the one I'm on. I have this novel I've been promising to write for fifteen years, a huge work, and haven't gotten near to doing anything more than the foundations of it to now, and have made a vow to myself that I will do nothing else for the next few years."

This from the man of those professed interests in having the people know the truth about the assassination after I had offered him the several thousands of pages of FBI reports on it I had gotten when they were rather scarce and few had any copies of them.

It is also from the man who shortly thereafter, as quoted above, had said that during the "several years" on which he would be working on that novel his many speaking engagements would be devoted to the Fifth Estate. For that, and for the money he got from those speaking engagements, he did have time.

When I was invited to his party reported above from the Star and the Post I wrote him. I got no response.

That was a year after he had announced his determination to study the JFK assassination like Nader's Raiders or the American Civil Liberties Union would do it, his organization of his "democratic police" that was "to investigate" the FBI and the CIA, to "keep tabs" on them. It was also a year in which he had nothing to show for his work or that of his "democratic police." a year in which he had done nothing at all in the President's assassination or its investigations. Other than

Other than to promote himself. Which meant to get more speaking engagements for which he was paid large fees and sell more books on which he got royalties.

My letter began:

It is worse than "too bad" when people engage in futilities. ^{It can be fatal.} When we kid ourselves we get Hitlers and Nixons.

I felt great when I read of your idea for the Committee for a Fifth Estate. We sure need something like it. Particularly pariahs like me. We become pariahs by doing what those who enjoy a less unwelcome status cannot or do not do.

But Norman, that was more than a year ago. And now for next ^{week} month you are holding a benefit for the organizing committee?

Will you have it organized and functioning in time for the coronation?

And will it spend scarce resources on such projects as Bud's lamentable counter-productivity at Georgetown? Or fail to learn that failures are failures, as his CTIA was before you pitched in?

At Georgetown I told you that if you want to let the greasy kid stuff go, come and see me.

The CTIA was the defunct Committee to Investigate Assassination. "Greasy kid stuff" was the tag line of a then popular TV advertisement.

I reminded Mailer that at Georgetown he said he would speak to me later and after four months he had not.

After recounting some well-known political futilities he should remember I needed him a little:

Since your 50th birthday present to yourself of this still-coming Fifth Estate I have wondered if you would also talk big and do nothing. What you have done that I know of was not helpful, was hurtful, and should have cost you some money. That was the Georgetown fiasco. It required little sophistication to know it held no other possibilities. ~~I went after twice, refusing only because Bud asked it as a personal favor. The money you put into that would have done more good if you had tossed it in a toilet.~~

If you dream of inventing the wheel, dream, Norman. But in silence.

We have a wonderful generation of young people. Life and the world you and I have given them will disillusion them enough and fast enough. Please don't add to it. And don't make frustrations for yourself.

It takes more than fine words and noble dreams to do something. One has to know how and then dare. ~~The Hollings and Tamm, rich as they were and with all the public support they had, went to jail when they had committed no crime. I had not a penny, no public support, did not even get tried, and to this day that committee has never dared print my testimony.~~ ~~Mr. Norman Mailer~~

~~It was not that I bragged, but my purpose is not to brag.~~

Not ^{having} taken the time to learn if I indeed have that which is now so topical, and having avoided any appraisal by others, you don't know if I bragged at Georgetown, either. Is it unfair to take this complete lack of interest as a measure of your intentions for the Fifth Estate and as a forecast of what it may and may not do -if you get past parties with it?

~~Committee for a Fifth Estate~~

25
I concluded by repeating that there was a need for what he had announced and celebrated with his nice celebrity-starred party and done nothing else about and then said "there is no need for more futilities" which I saw him reorganizing again, "no more futilities"

which his Fifth Estate was, no "more self-deceptions by or "propagandizing of the paranoid" and then I told him in Mailer-like language that all he had announced, and had supported been involved in ~~what like equating masturbation with love,~~

was futile and empty, ~~like~~ and was by those who equated masturbation with love.

"History is like ~~to~~ novel writing. They're both fiction." This is what Mailer told the history students at the University of Pennsylvania. As self-descriptive,

which is not what he intended, ~~it was~~ he had proved it long before then. *and he was proving it all over again in Oswald's Tales.* ~~history~~

"Ultimately, nothing in history is ~~is~~ true," he also told those students.

He has spent more than two decades proving ~~the truth about the JFK assassination~~ how he has done his best to see to this being the ~~the~~ ^{the} added tragedy of the JFK assassination.

His Oswald's Tales that without intended it he described so perfectly at Penn is his latest effort to prove it ~~all over~~ ^{still} again.

The maturity, the understanding, the wisdom and what he had derived from his experiences that qualified him not only to make these startling statements to those history majors majors but as he reflects it in his book, given the attention to that book and the well-established means ^{has in getting attention will} of his publisher ~~of it should~~ be evaluated further for our non-novelist's history.

(His book is not Oswald's tales. It is Mailer's tales. His original title was close to what his book is. That was Oswald in Minsk. But when we examine his book we will find that Mailer was selective in what he used and careful in what he suppressed from it.)

It will be interesting if on his tour to promote the book announced by Random House prior to publication he is asked by a holocaust survivor if it is a lie that there was Hitler; if it is a lie that there was a holocaust; if it is a lie that Stalin had his ~~own~~ own murders of his own people in the millions and of so many of his supporters; even if the Japanese attack at Pearl Harbor, ~~was able to catch us by surprise,~~ is one of histories lies. He did not say some of history is a lie. He said all of it is.

It is not history that lies.

It is some of those who write history who lie.

Like Mailer.

Harold -

CONFIDENTIAL

Notes made during telephone call from a source in California 1/4/67

*Please use
with utmost
discretion.
Lynn*

Holds no brief for Larry Schiller. Knows little about him or his background. Has good reputation as sports photographer. Describes himself as journalist also. If KIAC has any axe to grind - it is personal concern re. "journalism-by-check-book".

He is strictly concerned with broadcast journalism. Has great respect for journalism on TV - radio. Knows its great power. Believes it is a mature and responsible news medium. Is concerned about many things going on, i.e. backroom attempts to curtail freedom of information; Supreme Court attempts to restrict information. He is interested in freedom of speech and press and "Journalism-by-Checkbook" is real and growing threat to freedom of press.

People are buying and selling news; they are dedicated to what is "saleable", not to what is true.

A man cannot serve two masters. Has found there were so many inconsistencies they are hard to list, with regard to what occurred on the purchase of Ruby's secret tape by Schiller, for himself or for Capitol Records.

Not too sure what the Capitol Records - Schiller relationship is.

To enumerate:

Capitol gave all newsmen copy of the record, played it like the latest Bobby Darin, and a press release.

Joe Pyne had a conversation with Joe Towhill, who was gracious but angry with the Ruby family. He got no money for devoting a lot of time and dedication. Joe Towhill told Crane that Capitol Records paid between \$10,000 and \$25,000 to Ruby family - Right after Ruby died.

.../...

Many papers of 3 January 1967 and wire services were reporting with transcripts that Schiller had obtained the interview with Ruby; they reported this before Ruby died or was even comatose.

It came to Crans's attention - via Joe Pynes's producer, Hal Parets - that Schiller had approached Parets on Tuesday, December 27th and offered to appear on taped Joe Pynes program for national syndication. He was taped on 28 December, to be played first in Los Angeles at KTTV (Metro-Media, sister to Channel 5 NY), on Pynes, as local program on following Tuesday, i.e. 3 January 1967; then to be syndicated around the country at later dates and times.

The release date for record was the week of January 1 - 7. To get on the Pynes program for that week, he had to "get in" early.

He promised Parets solemnly - and asked solemn promise in return - not to divulge the existence of the Ruby (or Walthers or Penn Jones) segments of the record. He played 50-60 seconds of the Ruby tape. It was taped, with Schiller and Pynes, and recordings of the three participants, including a portion of the Ruby secret tape. Schiller was treated with the utmost respect. Nothing was said at that time about any payment to the Ruby family: Schiller gave impression of scoring a journalistic "scop",

The Schiller tape was "in the can", signed, sealed and delivered. A pact was made that Pynes could promote the fact that he had something "sensational", nothing more. (Pynes has daily live radio show; he is a personal friend of Crans.) Crans and the whole news department were also sworn to absolute silence.

On Saturday 31 December 1966 the assistant program director (Jim Ramsberg) was called by a Capitol Records record-promoter who offered him a "real hot exclusive" - not as a journalistic venture but a record promotion. Also offered on a personal basis to disc jockies and other Capitol Records confidants on New Year's weekend.

Crane talked to Schiller on 3 January 1967 and he said that on 31 December he had contacted Tom Pettit of NBC and, according to Schiller, he played the full track of the album on 31 December for Tom Pettit without any restrictions imposed. He had already offered it for public consumption to NBC news, three days before it was to be given to Pyne exclusively.

On the day of Ruby's death (3 January 1967) Pyne's date to break the exclusive story - death occurred 8.30 a.m. Dallas time or 6.30 Los Angeles time. At 10.32 a.m. KMPC radio (Golden West Broadcasters) played the whole Ruby record segment.

They (KIAC) had been betrayed. With co-operation, they got an audio track of Schiller's canned appearance on the Joe Pyne show. They got a "photo tip" 11.15 a.m. of a press conference at Capitol Records (Los Angeles) to play Ruby secret tape.

Scrambling at KIAC, somehow got audio track from KTTV and about 11.30 a.m. - i.e. 15 minutes after the news conference - KIAC played the entire audio (10 minutes) of Schiller's appearance on Pyne's show, including 50 seconds of Ruby's voice (and Jones and Walthers) originally intended for that night. Wyman went to the news conference (He was in Dallas two days before Christmas appealing for a "pool" to tape Ruby's last words - as CBS News Departments in Dallas and Los Angeles; Radio Television News Directors Associations; Sigma Delta Chi representatives all agreed there was an urgent need that Ruby get his last wish - i.e. a lie detector test. A Polygraph expert volunteered to do it, to pay his own way to Dallas etc. They were told it was impossible because because of the tube in Ruby's chest, mental condition, etc. Urgent efforts were made by Metro-Media news branches all over the USA as a news organization to get agreement to such a last Ruby statement. All news media in general were behind a pool arrangement - KIAC volunteered to supply the tape etc. They contacted Elmer Gertz in Chicago, about

ten days before Christmas; Gertz said he thought it couldn't be done for health and other reasons but "will consider your suggestions"; however, there was not much hope it could be done (at this time he had already sold the Ruby statement to Capitol Records and the tape was recorded on Friday or Saturday 16 or 17 December 1966).

KIAC thought it was dealing in good faith. Wyman went to Dallas. Decker told him (22 or 23 December) that four conditions must be met:

- (1) permission of the authorities, i.e. the D.A. and those under him;
- (2) doctors;
- (3) family and their lawyers;
- (4) the Court-appointed lawyer (i.e. Phil Burleson).

If all agreed, it would be OK, but under no other circumstances.

All this was after the secret tape, but he feels Decker did not know. Burleson said - he is a silent protester, does not like whole Capitol Records deal, but Gertz and Earl Ruby set it up - But he stayed silent, again, because he was sworn to secrecy. Burleson said "I don't think you will be able to do it". Opposed, but did not wish to buck the client or other attorneys. So Wyman got nowhere on this with Burleson. Talked of Burleson's personal and professional sacrifices for the Ruby case.

Talked with Peter Geilich of Parkland Hospital, who stated exactly as Decker the four conditions. He did not seem aware of the secret tape.

Crane on phone with Gertz, Rabbi Silverman, etc., all in good faith. (Silverman had been asked by Burleson to give Ruby spiritual comfort). No go.

Wyman went to Alan Livingston's news conference armed with Townhill's statement that \$10,000 - \$25,000 was paid for secret tape. Livingston "copped out" and said, "No, not that much." In press release, nothing

is said about any money paid for the secret tape. Nothing on album jacket about money being paid.

How much was paid?? Schiller at simultaneous conference in NYC had distributed the album for general use. No one called Pyno to "regret" or apologise. Livingston said "not as much as \$10,000" then said he paid an advance, "a normal advance", later a "nominal advance" (just as to any artist). Wyman asked if normal royalties would be paid to Ruby's ~~wife~~ ^{medical} and legal costs. He said "Yes, royalties will be paid".

Crane called Schiller in NYC on "Beeper" and interviewed him (at Drake Hotel) by phone. Asked him, "what did you pay?" He answered "Not a payment. It was a donation. An infinitesimal amount of the usual amount." "No royalties, no nothing" would be paid.

Right after Livingston said, "Yes, royalties will be paid".

Crane then called Burlison, who said his understanding was that the proceeds would go to the Kennedy Library fund. (Burlison had been given the sugar pill of the Kennedy Library).

The Kennedy Library has denied it would accept funds from any commercial venture such as this.

Livingston and Schiller contradict each other, despite the fact that Schiller works for Livingston. Burlison says his impression was that money was not the major consideration to Ruby, who really wanted to say something. But the motive was different for the family - the Ruby's really need the money. They owe Balli, Foxhill and lots of people. Gertz found a way to get the money for them.

Livingston said Gertz and Burlison were in the room when the secret tape was made. Burlison denied that and said he was never in the room, he had nothing to do with it.

Who made the arrangements? Schiller replied, "I did, on 9 December 1966 when Ruby was taken to Parkland Hospital. I happened to be there in Dallas." "Burleson was not contacted; he was entirely ignorant." But Burleson says Schiller called him and he turned him over to Gertz. Livingston, on the contrary, said "Capitol Records" made the contact.

Schiller said "I don't work for Capitol Records".

Schiller contradicts Livingston on who made the contact and on whether Schiller works for Capitol Records.

Alan Livingston said, 17 minutes were taped, of which Capitol Records Co. excerpted a 3-4 minutes segment. He said the Company was in possession of 17 minutes of tape and had selected for the album 3 1/2 minutes.

Schiller said, not 17 minutes - 12. What happened to the rest? "I don't know" Who edited it? "I did, in a hotel room in Dallas. 20 minutes after it was recorded I left Dallas with 4 minutes of tape. I don't know where the rest is - it would be available to the press, but I don't know where it is".

He said he would have to call Gertz in Chicago to find out if the rest was "still in existence" (8 minutes) (vs. Livingston, 13 minutes).

Unclear how he could leave Dallas with 4 minutes and still be under the impression there were 8 minutes "somewhere". Livingston reiterated "17, not 12 minutes". 13-minute segment is being made available to members of the Warren Commission or "interested or concerned officials" (i.e. Government people on local, State or Federal level).

Asked "why not available to the press?" Livingston said - Just not, but it exists. Schiller said - Just ask for it, but I don't know where it is or if it exists.

.../...

Livingston was asked why the Ruby family did not designate a TV network or press organization. He said, because Capitol Records are a recording company. They wanted to get it electronically, whereas the press might make the Ruby statement subject to mis-interpretation.

So Capitol Records took the 17 minutes and took out the 3 1/2 minutes "wellfelt was pertinent" (i.e. Capitol Records' interpretation of pertinency). (No journalistic track record for either Schiller or Livingston).

Schiller says, part of the deal was that the album would not show Ruby's name "big" or out of proportion with names of other participants.

Livingston says (re balance of tape, a nebulous 8 or 13 minutes - who owns it? Where is it? Does it exist?): The family attorneys have restricted its use to Warren Commission or ex-Warren Commission personnel.

As a newsman, Crane is not inclined to take a stand - except on the availability of the segment of Ruby tape restricted by the attorneys. On legality: They questioned Livingston, who said their attorneys had said, "nothing illegal". Considers the project parallel to a magazine.

Wade, as D.A. of Dallas, Decker, etc., and Burleson, say: there is no law covering the situation, for or against.

Schiller said to Crane, he would not say if he was in the room, it would "compromise his journalistic independence".

The tape was given to Pettit Saturday - 3 days earlier - in any case.

If Schiller was in the room, even disguised as a doctor, no law was broken. Could not have masqueraded as police, though.

KIAC has Gertz on tape saying Schiller was not in room. Gertz says so.

What guarantee, what independent evidence, it is Ruby? Except from those directly concerned with the prosperous sale of the record?

Motivation? Livingston said it was a profit item - designed as a profit item.

Livingston said, we had hoped to create an album of living history, and because of the fortunate - or unfortunate - death of Ruby, it may become a best-seller.

When pressed further, Livingston said, this was not designed as a profitless item, no. Livingston implied that no action had been taken to promote the album before Ruby's death.

But Hal Parets said, Schiller came on our show to plug his record. No doubt about that. Parets said that Schiller had exploited him.

Schiller is proud that he got into this field of audio-journalism, has produced LSD, Homosexuality and Lenny Bruce albums.

Re pictures, Schiller said he had abjured the opportunity to take photos of Ruby's family in grief. He could have, but did not do it "to keep things in perspective."

Livingston said, I believe pictures were taken in the hospital room, yes. I have not seen them and if they exist, we do not have them. But Livingston believed pictures were taken.

Wade, today, asked if pictures were taken, said that Eva Grant took photos of Ruby in hospital room for Life Magazine.

Wade definitely says photos were taken by Eva Grant.

Gertz today said, absolutely no photos were taken by anyone.

Livingston said, he did not consult doctors because he did not think he would get permission.

.../...

Police? "No, no", it would never have been given - i.e. He decided to by-pass both doctors and police.

Schiller implied, then denied, then implied, then denied again that he had sought advice from two Warren Commission counsel, and they told him it was "the right thing to do" - implying Warren Commission sanction of his secret tape.

Gertz said he was in and out of the room all day. Denied knowing exactly when tape was taken. Does not know when, how much, just either Friday or Saturday. Careful to give no other details. Will not say who made it, probably Earl Ruby. Further said, no pictures taken - Schiller was definitely not in the room.

No other tape left - Gertz denies any unused tape (though he does not know how much was taken).

Then retreated behind "protection of interests of the client" and refused to discuss any further. Gertz said, no royalties.

Ruby family dept: \$35,000.

Suggested Earl made tape.

The poor quality and background noises on the secret tape have been attributed to the air-conditioner in the hospital room. A check was made with the engineer at Parkland Hospital, who claimed that there is an all-year unit in Ruby's room.

The authenticity of Ruby's voice: People are asking how a man with a tracheotomy could speak so clearly. Livingston said there were tubes up both nostrils, tubes draining both sides of the chest, and a "precautionary" tracheotomy - and that a person with a tracheotomy was able to speak.

Schiller said that Capital Records did not have a "dip filter" to screen out the noise, but has done so since and made better-quality tapes. But it is known that Capital Records has the best audio-equipment in the world. Schiller says, take a voice print, it will prove it is Ruby's voice. Are there other tapes of Ruby's voice?

.../...

An important marginal tape was put on record by Capital without using a dip filter - Are they covering up the voice or not? or did they botch the job? No one outside the power structure has seen Ruby in over a year. Schiller was not in the room when the tape was made; therefore he does not know whose voice it is and he cannot vouch for the authenticity of Ruby's voice but must accept the word of Elmer Gertz, Earl Ruby and other family members. They are selling it. So is Schiller.

If at end of dupl, with an extra space before This

For Mailer making outrageous statements is normal. He does it all the time. From his reporting days and from his experience he knows that is one way of getting attention. He knows, too, that what is controversial is attractive to those with TV shows as it is to the papers. The more attention he gets the more attention there is to ~~his~~ ^{his books} and the more copies of them are sold. Not being a ^{Mail} Mailer watcher ~~and~~ (and not relishing that now) I do not know how much of this is put on. He may actually believe the nonsense he spouts when it can get him attention. In any event, what he said at Penn and got him that attention in Philadelphia seems to be a natural, for Mailer at least, progression from some of what he said earlier.

The Nation Institute held a debate in New York City after Oliver Stone's very successful and highly-controversial movie JFK was out. It was held March 4, 1992. The New York Times had William Grimes cover it. His story appeared the next morning, He quoted Mailer as saying, among other things that range from preposterous to false, that

"... the surplus of theories about the JFK assassination makes a factual movie on it the subject impossible;"

"J.F.K. should be seen not as history but as a myth,' the story being 'a huge and hideous event, in which the gods warred and a god fell;" and

"J.F.K. was perhaps the worst of the great films but one with the power to make new history '."

*indent
single
space*

These statements can be seen as the origin~~at~~ of the nonsense he uttered at Penn and did get him significant attention in ~~the~~ Philadelphia if not also elsewhere.

But ~~he~~ ^{then} also said what is as diametrically opposite ^{his} the basic assumption of his book as can be because his book is based entirely on his assumption that Oswald was the lone assassin. He then referred to what is the only possible reason for his book as "the mind-stultifying myth of the lone assassin."

How it can be at one and the same time "the mid-stultifying myth" and the basis for a book that could not be written other than on the assumption of this "mind-stultifying myth," naturally, Mailer never addresses. But as he writes history, he proves that it lies.