

Lower Manhattan. We can be asking for his thoughts on the integrity of the Warren Commission.

PLAYBOY: In your book, you wrote that the Warren Commission—composed of some of the most distinguished figures in American life—"covered itself with shame." Are you accusing the Commission of lying to the American people?

LANE: I would not care to say that the Commission lied, but—however distinguished its members may be—it did issue a false report. I know this because I carefully compared the one-volume Report with the 26 volumes of evidence that "supports" it and, in many cases, I found no relationship whatever between the Commission's conclusions and the Commission's evidence. The most innocent interpretation of its shortcomings, as Hugh Trevor-Roper expresses it in his introduction to my book, is that the Commission members did what some poor historians do: They start with a preconceived theory—in this case, that Oswald was the lone assassin of President Kennedy—and sort out all the evidence supporting that theory, in the process unconsciously rejecting any contradictory fact or interpretation. I don't know if that's what happened here, but it's one explanation and, compared with some of the other theories that have been advanced to account for the Commission's behavior, a relatively comforting one.

PLAYBOY: Haven't your critics accused you of committing the same sin you impute to the Commission—selecting from the mass of testimony those facts that agree with your preconceptions and discarding the rest?

LANE: Yes. But my book is far more thoroughly documented than the Warren Commission Report, and none of the hundreds of book reviewers across the country who've examined it has yet been able to discover a single inaccuracy, distortion or out-of-context statement. And let me add right here that the statements I will make in this interview are based either on the Warren Commission's 26 volumes of evidence or on filmed interviews I conducted in Dallas that will appear in the documentary film Rush to Judgment that I made with Emile de Antonio. So I don't expect you to proceed with me on faith.

PLAYBOY: You concluded in your book that the Warren Commission's "criteria for investigating and accepting evidence were related less to the intrinsic value of the information than to its paramount need to allay fears of conspiracy." Do you believe there was a conspiracy to kill President Kennedy?

LANE: Yes, I do. A conspiracy, as defined by the law, is simply two or more persons acting in concert to secure an illegal end. There were at least two assassins. The evidence is conclusive on that score. The Commission wanted to disprove a

conspiracy, and this desire defeated its investigative function. Remember, a Gallup poll taken shortly after the assassination revealed that the majority of Americans believed there was no lone assassin, but an organized plot to kill the President. It was this public fear of a conspiracy, and all it implied, that the Commission was determined to allay. One of the Commission's members, John J. McCloy, said it was vital for the Commission to "show the world that America is not a banana republic, where a government can be changed by conspiracy." And another member, Senator John Sherman Cooper, said right at the outset that one of the Commission's major tasks was "to lift the cloud of doubts that had been cast over American institutions."

PLAYBOY: What was so wrong about the Commission's trying to dispel false conspiracy rumors?

LANE: Nothing, if the rumors were false. The trouble was that from the very beginning the Commission operated on the assumption that Oswald did it and did it alone, and relegated all facts to the contrary into this "false rumor" category. In other words, the Commission had concluded who killed Kennedy before they even began their investigation.

PLAYBOY: Let's get down to the facts of the assassination. One of the main points of your book is that the fatal shot was not fired from the sixth-floor window of the Book Depository, as the Warren Commission concludes. Do you have any evidence that shots came from somewhere else?

LANE: The Warren Commission said unequivocally that there was no credible evidence even suggesting that the shots came from anyplace else. This is vital to their whole case, because if the shots did originate from two locations, Oswald couldn't have been the "lone assassin." Let's look at the evidence. When the President was shot, his limousine had passed the Book Depository. To the right and in front of the Presidential limousine was a grassy knoll topped by a wooden fence. Some time before the motorcade reached the area, a young woman named Julia Ann Mercer saw a truck at the base of the grassy knoll, illegally parked halfway up on the sidewalk, protruding into Elna Street and partially blocking traffic. Dallas policemen were standing a short distance away, but they didn't move the truck on. Miss Mercer saw a man leave the truck and climb the grassy knoll. Another man remained in the truck. She drove off, and the truck was gone before the motorcade appeared. In an affidavit for the Dallas sheriff's office, she later said that the man was carrying "what appeared to be a gun case" about three and a half to four feet long. Miss Mercer was never called as a witness or even questioned by the Commission. All we have is her affidavit, signed before the Dallas sheriff's depart-

ment on November 22. I have not been able to find her. She's no longer in Dallas.

PLAYBOY: But this is just one woman's testimony.

LANE: Yes. We begin with just one woman's testimony, but let me show how it fits into a pattern of evidence proving that at least one of the shots was fired at the President from the grassy knoll. A railroad man named Lee Bowers was in a railroad tower overlooking the knoll, and he testified that he saw two men standing behind the wooden fence just before the shots were fired. Bowers did appear before the Commission and he testified that the moment firing broke out something attracted his attention to the fence. He described it as "something . . . which was out of the ordinary, which attracted my eye for some reason, which I could not identify." When asked for details, he said he had seen "nothing that I could pinpoint as having happened that—" Here he was interrupted by a Commission lawyer. When I subsequently conducted a filmed and tape-recorded interview with Mr. Bowers in Dallas, I told him that for a year and a half I'd wondered what the end of that sentence was about to be. He told me, "Yes, I was interrupted by the Commission lawyers. Evidently they didn't want to get the facts. I was just going to tell that at the time the shots were fired, I looked at the fence and saw a puff of smoke, or flash of light, just when the shots were fired." Bowers gave me a description of the two men on the knoll that dovetails with the description Julia Ann Mercer gave the Dallas sheriff's office of the two men in the truck. And another witness, J. C. Price, a post office employee, told the Dallas sheriff's office, minutes after the assassination, that he was standing on top of the Terminal Annex Building on Dealey Plaza—overlooking the route of the Presidential motorcade—when the shots were fired. Price later told me that when he heard gunfire, his attention was instantly drawn to the grassy knoll. In an interview with me, he said he saw a man run from behind the wooden fence and dash across a parking lot, disappearing behind the Book Depository. Price also said the man was carrying something in his hand that could have been a gun.

PLAYBOY: So you have three witnesses who contradict the Commission's conclusion that the shots came only from the Book Depository. Why are you sure these three are right, and all the witnesses the Warren Commission relied on are wrong?

LANE: There are many more than three. For example, three railroad employees were standing on a railroad bridge running across Elm Street above and in front of the Presidential limousine. They all said to me in filmed and taped interviews, or to Federal or local authorities,

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