

22 August 1968

Mr. Griscom Morgan  
Route 1, Box 275  
Yellow Springs, Ohio 45387

Dear Mr. Morgan,

Thank you for your letter of the 19th and the enclosed reprints, which I read with interest. As you requested, I am enclosing herewith a copy of the story by Bill Barry on the "Miami tape."

As to the philosophical considerations you pose, with great tact and obvious good will, in suggesting that I reconsider my position on Garrison, I will comment on them very frankly. Be assured that I have no desire to give offense, and that I do appreciate the spirit in which you wrote and the dilemma which you are seeking to overcome. Unfortunately, I am not always as tactful as I should like to be, and I hope that you will not be offended by my bluntness.

First, you suggest that "the time has come when we need to go beyond...traditional ethics." I am convinced that, on the contrary, the need is to return to traditional ethics and by fidelity to the principles and ideals that inspired the opposition to the Warren Report, to reach a valid judgment of Garrison. Your attempt to relieve him of the obligation to respect traditional ethics is based on fallacy, if I may say so, with respect. Garrison is not an Eskimo, or a Nauruan, or a Martian. He accepts, espouses, and claims to exemplify the "traditional ethics" which presumably motivated our commitment against the fraudulent Warren Report. But while Garrison seeks to be the foremost exponent of those ethics, he betrays them time and again and thus betrays a complete lack of conscience and morality at any level except that of rhetoric. The question of going beyond traditional ethics in order to accommodate Garrison simply cannot arise. But if it did, why not also accommodate the Warren Commission? or the Kremlin, in its use of brute force against Czechoslovakia? Or a President who decides to abrogate constitutional norms for what he claims as the higher purpose of annihilating Vietnam? If we are a country of laws and not men, no man can claim--for himself or for another--the right to do violence to traditional ethics, in the name of some "higher purpose."

Second, you point to the "underlying unity of purpose" among the critics. I assumed that such a unity existed, and for some years felt intense loyalty and one-ness with my colleagues, or most of them. Their readiness to embrace Garrisonism (or, in the case of Epstein, to embrace Warrenism as is now clear from his New Yorker article) shows this to have been a hollow assumption. So far as I am concerned, the critics who give aid and comfort to Garrison no less than Epstein are in "the other camp." As to "personal animosity at human failings," I cannot claim always to have been free of vanity, pride, and other frailties, without ever a lapse. But, in honest self-searching and at the risk of self-righteousness, I believe that my animosity toward other critics has not been personal but a response to unethical and immoral actions which violated the avowed principles and objectives of the critical effort and jeopardized its credibility.

At the outset, I was an impassioned admirer of Mark Lane, and later of Garrison. I felt honored to have the friendship of Vince Salandria, Maggie Field, Ray Marcus, etc. However, when Lane engaged in the appropriation of mail addressed to others (which I know from personal experience), when he cynically made evidenciary points which he knew to be false, on the public platform, on the premise that the audience would not know the difference, when he invented messages from RFK to Trevor-Roper, when he falsely claimed to be the first to make public the FBI Summary and Supplement<sup>1</sup> Reports (first revealed, in fact, by Salandria and by Epstein), when he plagiarized my work (in his second book, the published material on Jenner and the unpublished notes I gave him on Nizer)---well, it just did not occur to me to exempt him from the obligation of honor and honesty, and I learned to despise and distrust him.

"Our distress at poor ethical and legal standards...should not keep us from ...united endeavor." I find your reasoning here hard to grasp and I wonder if under the verbiage you are not really saying that the ends justify Garrison's means. That I reject. I do not believe that Garrison is committed to the same purposes to which I am committed, or he would not use methods which make a mockery of them, and I think his only role is to compromise and discredit the critical achievements and to bring us to complete disaster. But even if we were somehow to be guaranteed immunity from damage, his "poor ethical and legal standards" would still be repugnant to me and disqualify any co-operation. We should not overlook the terrible harm being inflicted on vulnerable individuals by Garrison's "poor ethical and legal standards" and the more distaste I may feel for such as Bradley and Shaw, the more obligation I feel to defend their rights most scrupulously. It is no great trick, after all, to defend the rights of those whom we find sympathetic; it is the ability to put aside distaste and fight uncompromisingly for the rights of those we dislike that is being put to the test.

"I can appreciate Jim's mistakes...If we will honestly admit them...etc." It is not I who must admit "Jim's mistakes," I have been shouting them as loudly as I could, and also his deliberate frauds and his entrapment exercises and his fabrication of codes and library cards. Insofar as Garrison has made inadvertent and innocent errors (and he has made some), far from admitting them, he has received clarification and correction and then knowingly and deliberately repeated the same erroneous claims, at which point they lost all entitlement to "innocence." We have all made mistakes. I was mortified when I learned that I had published the mistaken allegation that Orest Pena did not receive his passport within 24 hours; I immediately retracted this publicly. Your appeal for honest admission of mistakes should really be addressed to Garrison. Your appeal to me, to be charitable towards "Jim's mistakes," overlooks the real grounds for my opposition to him--that is, not his inadvertent errors or defective scholarship, but his knowing resort to fraud, fabrication, demagoguery, and persecution of victims against whom he has not the ghost of material evidence.

"I don't know if you or Vince is fundamentally right..." I don't think you should be guided by Vince, or me, or anyone else. You should examine the record of Garrison's words and actions and reach an independent conclusion about him. I consider Vince to be profoundly mistaken about Garrison, and it is not the first time he has made reckless judgments or gullibly accepted and invested credence in rather grotesque phonies. You will recall that the affair of the shirt in the doorway narrowly missed making of the critics an international laughing-stock. And Vagonov. And the lady purveying a Negro-CIA-agents' conspiracy. May he not be equally mesmerized and mistaken about Garrison?

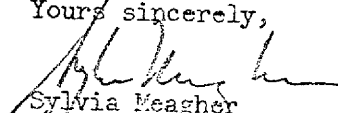
Regretfully, I cannot accept your premises or agree with your concept of our basic rules of procedure. Garrison, for me, raises the most profound moral issue, and it is one on which I will never compromise.

Those who identify with him and condone his charlatanism, whether disingenuously or in self-delusion, have a bitter denouement awaiting them. I have not the smallest self-doubt or uncertainty that my position on Garrison is right and that it will be fully vindicated, if it has not already been, in some eyes. I find no merit in your arguments or appeal for unity--I would as soon engage in unity with the Warren Commission as with Garrison and his handmaidens.

I enclose a copy of my recent letter to the Los Angeles CCI, on this same subject.

I am sorry that we seem to be far apart on this issue. In this letter I have not sought to convert you to my position, but only to explain as fully and clearly as I can the convictions which make that position unalterable.

Yours sincerely,

  
Sylvia Meagher  
302 West 12 Street  
New York, N.Y. 10014