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Only In America

By HARRY GOLDEN

The Warren Report Critics

Let's start a rumor you and I there will be a point to it. Charles Whitman, the psychotic sniper, sat the night before he wrought his carnage writing a letter.

He told his friend Larry Fuess he was writing to a friend of his in Washington whom he hadn't seen in five years. This was one of the letters the Grand Jury in Austin suppressed.

The Grand Jury suppressed Whitman's last thoughts because, it argued, his letters libeled innocent people. But let's say they didn't libel innocent people—let's say they were inflammatory, let's say they contained terrible charges.

Who would he charge?

Well, we don't know. We can only make rumors. But we can guess that Charles Whitman served in the Marines about the same time another famous sniper named Lee Harvey Oswald served. Perhaps they knew each other. Why not?

And if they knew each other, is there any reason why Charles Whitman couldn't have been the second assassin? The assassin who some believe helped Oswald murder President John F. Kennedy? Maybe that suppressed letter is a confession.

Maybe Whitman went atop the tower to prove what a crack-shot he was after he had signed his confession.

Absurd? But of course this is absurd. Whitman was psychotic.

Even I who have little truck with the theories of Sigmund Freud will testify that Whitman was acting out a classical Oedipus complex: he killed the mother whom he loved instead of the father whom he hated; he mounted a tall tower and asserted his omnipotence by killing people below.

But my rumor, hereby rescinded, is no more implausible than the spate of books which now question the findings of the Warren Commission.

I can think of four off-hand:

Mark Lane's Rush to Judgment (Holt, Rinehart and Winston; \$5.95), Harold Weisberg's White-wash (Harold Weisberg; \$4.95), Edward Jay Epstein's Inquest Viking; \$5), and Jean Stafford's A Mother in History (Farrar, Strauss and Giroux; \$3.95).

Many critics insist there must have been two assassins. The basis for this insistence is that if Oswald succeeded he needed a fantastic amount of luck. Which I believe is precisely why Oswald did succeed. He had a maniacal courage and there is something about maniacal courage which commands luck.

The main criticism leveled at the Warren Commission is that it proceeded on the assumption of Lee Harvey Oswald's guilt. I see no reason why men cannot make presumptions about facts.

The Mark Lane book makes much of the nonsense that Jack Ruby was in on it because he had such easy access to police headquarters.

But what Mark Lane doesn't know is that every town in America has at least one Jack Ruby; the fellow whose pockets are filled with police and sheriffs "courtesy" cards, and who is always "butting in."

Not only do you see him at police headquarters when they are bringing in someone, but you'll also see him at big fires, wearing a fireman's hat. And any semi-intelligent conspirator would have had to be insane to take a Jack Ruby into his confidence.

But to say that the Warren Report withheld vital evidence, as two of these books charge, is to say also that the Chief Justice and his colleagues, who included at least three very "tough" men; Dulles, Rankin, and Gerald Ford, were in on a conspiracy to protect Jack Ruby.

Why? But there's no need to ask why? You are involved here with the renunciation of logic against which no logic can prevail.