

The Least East

Rick Friedman

'FORGIVE THEIR INQUEST'

A few days ago a heavy-set, dark-haired young man carrying a clipboard came into the *Manhattan East* office. "I'm Warren Lewis Schiller," he told Watts, our editor. "Freelance author-photographer and album jacket writer. Are you interested in buying an article on the Warren Commission?"

"Which angle are you investigating?" Watts asked. "The single bullet theory? The missing movie frames? The unsolved deaths?"

"I'm not investigating any of that silly business," Warren Lewis Schiller replied.

"Then you're defending the Warren Commission Report?"

"I never read it. Who could get through all those 26 volumes? I have trouble just getting through the *New York Post* when I'm on a 42nd Street cross-town bus."

"So what end of the Warren Commission Report are you investigating?" Watts asked.

"I'm investigating the people investigating the Warren Commission Report," Warren Lewis Schiller explained. Investigating the Warren Commission is becoming old hat. The field is getting all crowded up with farmers, weekly newspaper editors, housewives, and lawyers. But investigating the farmers, weekly newspaper editors, housewives, and lawyers investigating the Warren Commission, now that opens up a whole new, unexplored market. And believe me, it's a damn site easier to do than trying to defend the Warren Commission. I know because I tried once!"

"What are you basing your investigation of all the people investigating the Warren Commission on?" Watts wanted to know.

"That all the critics of the Warren Commission are just out for a fast buck. That they are nothing but a bunch of garbage collectors! That's what I'm calling my exposé of them—"The Garbage Collectors." How much are you willing to pay to run it in *Manhattan East*?"

"Wait a minute," Watts said.

"Do you have any proof that what Lane, Jones, Weisberg, and the rest of them are saying is wrong?"

"Better than proof," Warren Lewis Schiller claimed. "I show that the Warren Commission critics are just a bunch of no-good, money-hungry amateur detectives by showing them up for what they really are."

"Which is what?"

"Let me take them one at a time," Warren Lewis Schiller replied. "First is Mark Lane, author of that accidental best-seller, *Rush to Judgement*. Did you know he wears stylish English mod jackets? He's obviously a Beatle-type atheist. And that he — get this one now — he has stooped shoulders and rasps, he actually rasps, with a nasal Brooklyn accent!"

"Would you give credibility to anybody who wore English mod jackets, had stooped shoulders, and rasped in a nasal Brooklyn accent? And if that wasn't bad enough, he's a scofflaw! How can you believe a scofflaw's conclusions on the Warren Commission Report?"

"Gee, I never looked at Mark Lane as a stoop-shouldered scofflaw before," Watts mused.

"Then's there's Harold Weisburg," Warren Lewis Schiller continued. "The author of another

book, *Whitewash*. A Maryland waterfowl breeder! A dethroned National Barbecue Cooking Champion — the capitals are mine."

"What does being a dethroned national barbecue cooking champion have to do with his criticism of the Warren Commission Report?" Watts demanded to know.

"Weisburg's a loser," Warren Lewis Schiller answered. "A born loser out to get all those great winners President Johnson appointed on the Warren Commission."

"That does put him in a bit of a different light, at that," Watts admitted.

"My most intensive investigation." Warren Lewis Schiller went

on, "my most thorough job of discrediting was done on that grizzled, elfished-faced country newspaper editor, Penn Jones, Jr., author of the book, *Forgive My Grief*."

"I travelled all the way to Midlothian, Texas, out there on Highway 67, to find him sitting at his *Midlothian Mirror* office desk, between the garden club news, luncheon menus for the Mills Elementary School and announcements of the Ellis County cotton stalk destruction deadline.

"There he sat with a boney knee protruding from a hole in his green fatigues — the ugliest boney knee I ever saw! But he couldn't fool me by dressing up in a Neiman-Marcus country editor's outfit. I've been around and I knew right off it was just a cover-up for all the money he's made from *Forgive My Grief*. He's made 12,000 over-the-counter sales alone from his dusty newspaper office. And the town has only 1,521 people in it!

"Jones sat there with a pint of bourbon in his hip pocket. What do you think of a man who carries a pint of bourbon in his hip pocket?"

"It must be hard for him to sit down," Watts answered.

"There's more," Warren Lewis Schiller continued "On the wall of his dusty newspaper office was a picture of Batman and Robin. Jones is only five feet-two so he's too small to think he's Batman. He must think he's Robin!"

"Then we went to his house. And he took his shoes and socks off right in front of me! It's high time the public knew that Penn Jones, Jr. was a 52-year-old boozier who thinks he's Robin and runs around without shoes."

"That *could* hurt his image," Watts admitted.

"Now let me tell you about the Housewives' Underground," Warren Lewis Schiller said. There's Shirley Harris Martin in Oklahoma. A graying Agatha Christie fan, I learned. That should give you some idea of her credibility.

"And Mrs. Joseph A. Field, Jr. in California. She keeps a vicious German Shepherd around to intimidate unwanted investigators such as me from getting into her \$250,000 home while the likes of

Mark Lane float around in her swimming pool!

"And Mrs. Sylvia Meagher right here in a West Greenwich Village apartment. Edward J. Epstein, author of the book *Inquest*, says he saw books on flying saucers in her apartment and it made his heart drop!"

"Don't let him see the last couple of issues of *Manhattan East*," Watts said, worried.

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"Sylvia Meagher is another fast buck operator. Her book *Subject Index to the Warren Report and Hearings and Exhibits* sold out its initial run of 1,000," Warren Lewis Schiller continued. "It lifted her right out of years of obscurity as a research analyst for the World Health Organization."

"Why are you so interested in exposing these Warren Commission critics?" Watts asked Warren Lewis Schiller.

"I see it as my duty as a patriotic freelance author-photographer and record album jacket writer," he replied. "In fact, the article I'm offering you for the right price is only Chapter One of my book."

"You've written a book exposing the Warren Commission critics?" Watts said, surprised.

"Yes. I expanded it from my record album jacket text. It's called *Forgive Their Inquest*. I'm also writing a play called *Julius Jones, Jr.*"