

29 July 1967

Dear Penn,

Thank you for calling last night to let me know that the Larrie Schmidt who died is not the Schmidt who is involved in the assassination. I am sorry that we got into a scrap on the subject of Garrison, but it is a fact that information originating with him or his office frequently turns into dust and bitter dregs. Our disagreement was not the first I have had on this subject--in fact, it was one of the mildest. You should have heard Ray and me, or Vince and me! Never mind, I am still friends with them, and with you, no matter how apart our feelings on Garrison. The prospect of being "all alone" does not worry me in the least. I am governed by my convictions, not by the number of people who hold similar convictions...if I was the only one in the country or the world who was calling the Warren Report an ugly fraud, I would still holler; and if I was the only one who repudiated Garrison, I would still repudiate him.

Between January and March, I was on Garrison's side and did everything I could to give him information, without even being asked--I sent him my personal annotated copy of the Subject Index, and a number of chapters from my manuscript, and any bits of information that came my way that seemed relevant to his investigation. My disenchantment began in March, when Garrison put Messrs. Russo and Bundy on the stand. Russo had gone to the press on his own initiative, on February 24th, and told a completely different story from the story he told in court. This raised immediate questions about his credibility, and about Garrison's judgment and motives in using such a dubious witness. I asked myself at that time how a critic could reject Howard Brennan but accept a witness like Russo. As for Bundy, he was making an identification of a man he had allegedly seen once, almost four years ago, at some distance. How could any critic treat such an identification as legitimate while rejecting the identification of Oswald made by the various witnesses near the Tippit scene?

The Russo testimony began to smell even worse when Phelan published his article in the SEP. Phelan was friendly to Garrison, and his article was based on information and documents given to him personally by Garrison. Those documents included Sciambra's report of the first interview with Russo; and it said nothing about the party at Ferrie's apartment, about Oswald or Shaw or Clem Bertrand...This was admitted--the report contains none of that information, and Sciambra said that he had left it out because there were so many other details to put down. Can anyone really believe that Russo told Sciambra about the so-called "party" at Ferrie's but that Sciambra failed to realize that this was clearly the most important and urgent part of Russo's information? that he "overlooked" this allegation in writing up a report of his interview with Russo? I no more believe this than I believe some of the grossest lies and evasions of the Dallas police, or the Warren Commission. I cannot have one standard for the Commission and its star witnesses Brennan, Markham, Marina, Fritz, Day, etc., and a quite different standard for Garrison and his star witnesses.

In April I heard the tape of a Garrison interview that was broadcast by Mort Sahl, in which Garrison made the irresponsible and unfounded charge that page 47 of Oswald's address book had been suppressed and concealed. In fact that page is published in Volume XVI. To make unfounded charges of suppression means that legitimate charges of actual suppression are diluted and cheated of impact; and while I know that Garrison made this statement about the page in the address book in good faith, although mistakenly, it raised the question about his conscientiousness, care, and judgment as a "researcher."

Another incident: Garrison's office claimed to have established a link between Clay Shaw and Alex Gruber, via a record of a long-distance phone call between the two of them on 11/22/63. I was excited to hear this, because it seemed to establish firm evidence of a link between Shaw and Dallas--evidence which was otherwise lacking. But some six or eight weeks later, Garrison's office not only denied having this evidence but even denied ever having said they had it, insisting that there had been a misunderstanding.

A further incident: Kwik published a sensational interview with Garrison in which it was alleged that he had named Manuel Garcia Gonzales as one of the assassins of the

President. On instructions from his Paris office, Sauvage tried to obtain confirmation of Kwik's allegations. He called New Orleans and spoke to James Alcock, who said that Garrison had been interviewed by someone for Kwik but that he could not vouch for Kwik's version of what Garrison had said—he neither confirmed nor denied the accuracy of the Kwik story. But a couple of months later, when the subject of the Kwik story came up between Garrison and Dick Sprague (one of his most ardent admirers), Garrison said that he had never even been interviewed by anyone from Kwik, that the story had been made up out of whole cloth.

Finally, the so-called "code" P.O. 19106: Garrison got this from Jones Harris (who is on the most close and confidential terms with Garrison and has been given—literally—the keys to the office and full freedom to operate there, even to launching a violent, filthy-mouthed attack on a visiting reporter, in front of Garrison, calling this man a communist and an enemy of the country, without any interference by Garrison; does that speak well for his judgment, discrimination, or fairness?). But although Jones Harris first came up with the so-called code, Garrison has to take full responsibility for charging in court and in the press that both Shaw and Oswald had Ruby's unlisted phone number coded in their address books. Every person must be responsible for his own acts, irrelevant of whether his act is based on poor advice from an untrustworthy source (which he had no obligation to accept). You asked me last night if I actually had the audacity to expect Garrison to make a public retraction just to satisfy me; and I said, no, to satisfy the requirements of truth and integrity. If Garrison fails to retract the false evidence of the "code," how does he differ from the Warren Commission, which fails to retract the false evidence of the Warren Report? And since we know that he has failed to retract this false evidence, how can we be sure that his other evidence is not also false, and that he knows it to be false, but refuses to retract it?

Many people believed the Warren Report because of their faith in Earl Warren, and never mind the facts. Many still do. The critics have spent four years trying to reach those people and tell them the facts. Are we now to subordinate facts and truth to faith in Mr. Garrison? And what does that say for our integrity and credibility as critics, or for our attack on the Warren Report? You say you are working to save the country; but I do not see how we are to be saved merely by replacing one set of liars and charlatans with a new clique of liars, purveyors of fabricated evidence, and framers of innocent (though unpopular) people.

The benefit of doubt belongs to the accused, not to the accuser. Shaw is the accused; Garrison is the spokesman for the State. The evidence against Shaw consists of the sordid and discredited testimony of Russo and Bundy; and the so-called code, which is fraudulent. Do you really think that there is any moral justification for supporting the accuser instead of the accused? How do we know that the still-undisclosed evidence against Shaw, presumably to be revealed if and when he comes to trial, is any less fraudulent than the known "evidence"?

Suppose that Garrison fails to produce solid evidence and falls flat on his face? What immense damage that will do to the whole critical effort—it may even destroy all hope of reaching the people with the facts. We will be clubbed over the head with Garrison, and with our support of Garrison despite his methods. I realize that the "alibi" for his possible future collapse is already prepared and being tested—i.e., what could one man do against the immense power of the whole Establishment? The FBI and the CIA and Washington and the news media have sabotaged the Garrison investigation; and why would they do this if they did not KNOW that he really had something? But that is weighing inferences against concrete facts; and the concrete facts are damning, because they include unfounded charges, false witnesses, and fabricated evidence. So far as I am concerned, this makes Garrison the exact equivalent of the Warren Commission; and no amount of rationalization can change that. I don't care if I have to stand alone. But the fact is that others, who also started with extravagant admiration and praise of Garrison, have also become disillusioned and bitter—Labro, for one; and Arnoni, who was for a long time "neutral" and waiting for more information to emerge, but friendly rather than hostile to Garrison, has now made a judgment that he is a charlatan. Yes, I have even quarreled with Arnoni about

Garrison, when it was necessary. I am happy that he has now made an independent assessment that coincides with my position. I hope that before too long all the critics will reconsider the question and that the differences which now exist will disappear. I still love you, Penn.