

I Some statements in the article vs. the position put forward in
Inquest

Consider the following statements in the article:

"The conclusions of the Warren Commission, published some two and a half years before, had offered the authoritative judgement that Lee Harvey Oswald alone was responsible for the assassination. And although a host of doubts were subsequently raised concerning the adequacy of the Warren Commission's investigation and the reliability of its conclusions, it seemed incredible that the New Orleans District Attorney could declare, as Garrison had, "My staff and I solved the assassination weeks ago. I wouldn't say this if we didn't have the evidence beyond a shadow of a doubt. Indeed, the possibility that a local prosecutor had found the answers to questions that had baffled the investigative resources of the federal government seemed so remote to most journalists that, soon after the initial stir provoked by Shaw's arrest, news of the "assassination plot" was generally relegated to the back pages and treated about as seriously as flying-saucer reports."

"I, for one, however, was prepared to believe that District Attorney Garrison's claims might have some substance to them. In the course of writing my book "Inquest", I had found that the Warren Commission's investigation had been severely constrained both by bureaucratic pressures exerted from within and by limits of time imposed from without. Far from being the rigorous and exhaustive examination that it was taken to be, the Commission's work was, at certain crucial points, reduced to little more than an exercise in the clarification of superficial evidence. When one delved more deeply, some far more difficult problems than any acknowledged by the Commission began to appear. Even members of the Commission's own staff found this to be true." (p35, New Yorker)

"And once such a bridge was crossed, a whole new set of clues to why Oswald killed the President might have been found." (p35, NY'er)

"The fact that there was a marked increase...in the number of people who believed in a conspiracy when the Warren Commission became the subject of a heated controversy...may reflect a certain resistance by the general public against accepting a supposed "truth" that is neither clearcut nor obviously irrefutable. The idea that even a few points in the Warren Report were subject to dispute, or that even a few of its facts could be differently interpreted, probably led many people to reject, or at least doubt, the over-all conclusion that the Commission had put forward so emphatically."
(all emphasis added) (p74, New Yorker)

Comment: I think the above passages are entirely inconsistent with and a very unfair way of stating what you found in your book, Inquest. Your book says, in effect, that the WC condoned a false autopsy report in order to support the lone assassin thesis via the contrived single bullet theory, and that the conclusions of the report regarding "lone assassin" were, therefore, incorrect. You called these conclusions "political truth". A clear statement of your thesis in ordinary everyday english would be that the Commission lied to the people regarding the number of assassin involved, and that the weight of evidence that had to be falsified to support that lie was the autopsy report. (I do not imply here that you said the Commission had any evidence on who the other shooter(s)

were, or had any evidence on any specific conspiracy. Rather, in order not to rock the boat, they employed the contrived single bullet theory in order to support a lone assassin theses.)

I do not think, therefore, that the above statements I have quoted are representative of your attitude or of the position that you took in your book Inquest.

If you have changed your thesis, I think that you should say so. If you have not, then I think you should keep your writing consistent with your original position. Specifically, I think you should make clear two points. 1) Do you believe the Commission was involved in deliberately lying to the American people and falsifying any evidence whatsoever to support such a lie? (Your book states that they lied, in the sense that they misrepresented what they knew to be evidence indicating that more than one assassin had taken part in the shooting, and employed the single bullet theory to obscure this fact and present a false basis for their conclusion of "one assassin".) 2) Aside from your position on (1), (which involves WC deceit and the WC's integrity) do you, as an independent investigator, believe that the evidence supports the lone assassin thesis, i.e. single bullet theory?

These are two separate questions. I think that your book should make clear your position on both, especially if you have changed your mind on either of them since you wrote Inquest. Secondly, I think the tone with which you write should be consistent with your position on these two questions.

Specifically, Ed, if the shooting of President Kennedy is today still an unsolved crime, then Garrison's actions, and his success in gaining a following is a far more subtle and interesting matter than if your position is that the assassination is solved, and only kooks and paranoids might listen to one who propounds a conspiracy that stems from evidence indicating that more than one man participated in the shooting.

What I find interesting about the Garrison phenomenon is that this man has entered into a situation where there is an unsolved crime. The fact that the JFK assassination is unsolved is demonstrated by the many published critiques of the WR which show that there is more than one shooter. (These include your own, naturally.) Garrison has then built up his credentials and his following by a) cribbing on valid published critical research and b) combining it with his own theories of Oswald's activities and associations in New Orleans, using his office as DA of that city to make a host of authoritative sounding announcements regarding a New Orleans conspiracy. Garrison takes a perfectly fraudulent New Orleans "icing" and gently drapes it over a perfectly valid anti-Warren Report cake. He then claims the combination as his own, and pronounces it valid.

This, of course, is not the same as your analysis. For once one grants the fact that the solo-assassin thesis of the WR is demonstrably false, the critics of the WR come off as having valid intellectual credentials. Some of these people, and the general public, then get duped by Garrison. This can then be critically analysed and explained. If, however, you start with the attitude that the WR is correct, and that doubters are either paripatotic demonologists, kooks, or paranoids, you sneer these people unjustly,

give unjustified support to the Warren Report, contradict the position you took in your book, and---most sadly of all---miss the real mechanics of the behavior behind the Garrison phenomena.

II These are five statements Garrison made which you claim are "false or captious". Each has a bearing on Oswald's guilt. I think that the position you take on each determines to what extent you are willing to condone and promote misleading analysis of evidence put forward in the WR in the process of criticizing Garrison.

1. "They do not tell you that Lee Harvey Oswald's fingerprints were not found on the gun which was supposed to have killed the President."

You called this "captious" or "false". It is neither.

The facts are that Lee Harvey Oswald's fingerprints were not found on the rifle. There is a palmprint which, as the Liebelor Memorandum points out, simply shows that LHO held that part of the rifle at some time. Anyway, a palmprint is not a fingerprint. Secondly, as you yourself admit, there were no identifiable fingerprints found on the rifle. Garrison's statement, therefore, is factually correct. (I do not see how it can be termed captious or false unless you permit yourself, as an ad hoc assumption, or an act of faith, the privilege of assuming that had those unidentifiable prints not been so smudged, they would have turned out to be those of LHO!) Therefore, I think that this is a terrible example to use to attack Garrison. Besides, the reason the news agencies "do not tell you etc." is that the Warren Report takes a misleading stance with regard to fingerprint vs. palmprint, and the implications of those fingerprints that were found being not identifiable. Thus, what Garrison has done is take misinformation which was originally in the Warren Report and then popularized by the news media, and then postulated a conspiracy by "powerful news agencies" to suppress his New Orleans investigation. This, I think, is what ought to be pointed out here. But to do so will involve your making some rather unkind critical comments on the way the Report handled the fingerprint and palmprint evidence.

2. "And they do not tell you that it was virtually impossible for Oswald to have taken his fingerprints off the gun, hidden the gun and gone down four flight of stairs by the time he was seen on the second floor."

You reply: "A secret Service agent, simulating Oswald's movements reached the second floor from the sixth in one minute and eighteen seconds."

Again, I feel you have unjustly come to the defense of the WR. That simulation did NOT include the time necessary to wipe all fingerprints off those parts of the rifle, bolt, and trigger housing that could be touched in the operation of that rifle. It is well known to any student of this case that if you postulate, for the sake of argument, that Oswald wiped prints off the gun before he ran downstairs, you do further havoc with the already weak and tenuous time reconstruction necessary to get Oswald down to the second floor where Truly and Baker encountered him. In his book, WW I, and again in WWII, Weisberg thoroughly demolishes the validity of the Commission's time reconstruction on this point.

Again, I feel this is a terrible example to use against Garrison. And again, I make the same point: the news media, by and large, have simply repeated the information on this point that is in the WR. What is interesting about the whole affair is that Garrison sees in the media (and WR) version of this matter a conspiracy on their part to deceive the public as part of an effort to thwart him and his New Orleans investigation.

You also state, on this point: "In any case, it is impossible to ascertain exactly what time Oswald was seen on the second floor; it could have been as long as five minutes after the assassination."

I am astounded by this statement. Truly's statements (both immediate press reports, Sheriff's report, FBI report, and his testimony) plus Baker's all support the thesis that Baker was pushing his way through the crowd as fast as he could, once he heard the shots. Even the Commission recognized this as one of their major problems; the Truly-Baker-Oswald encounter borders on being an alibi for Oswald, an alibi which they went to great lengths to merely prove was not airtight! Yet you casually state that it could have been 5 minutes later. In the light of so much evidence that it in fact was so soon after the sound of the shots, I think you are obliged to present your own analysis of the testimony and documents involved to justify such an assertion as "it could have been as long as five minutes after...".

3. Re car and eyewitness testimony of shots coming from the grassy knoll.

You reply: "None of the hundred or so Warren Commission witnesses who testified on the matter or were questioned by the H.B.I. said they saw a rifle being fired from behind the stone wall." With this statement, I feel you have knocked down a perfect straw man. There is eyewitness testimony of 2 people who saw smoke (plus FBI reports of 2 others) coming from the grassy knoll area. If you want to go into the question of whether guns smoke, that is another matter, but in view of the head snap, plus the gunpowder smells smelled up there, I would still be quite cautious before I bought the "steampipe theory", or thought I had earned the right to ignore such eyewitness testimony. Furthermore, there is enough eyewitness testimony to make an excellent case that gunfire was emanating from the knoll. I'm sure you know this testimony as well as I do, and the problems attendant to its interpretation (echoes; do rifles give off smoke etc.)

But in spite of these problems, I don't think it is "false or captious" when one states there was overwhelming "testimony" that shots originated from that area. --Does it finally boil down to the fact that Garrison is being criticized here for saying eyewitness testimony, and not being specific enough as to what was meant?

Again, what is captious of Garrison is to imply a vast media conspiracy not to report the evidence of shots coming from the knoll. But the press, for the most part, has simply rubber stamped what is in the Warren Report. And it is the critical books on this case that have brought forth the eye, ear, and olfactory testimony regarding the grassy knoll.

4. "You have not been told that Lee Oswald was in the employ of U.S. Intelligence agencies, but this was the case."

I think Garrison should be blasted for making the assertion "but this was the case." No one has direct evidence, as yet, that Oswald was an agent. But, in blasting Garrison for making this flat assertion, I think you should explain exactly what facts it is that

make critics think there was a covert relationship between LHO and the government.

I have in mind Sylvia's original TMO article (Oswald and the State Department) and the chapter in her book dealing with this matter; also, Weisberg's chapter on the Oswalds' Government Relations, WWI; and the material described in Chapter 1 of Ford's book. There is legitimate grounds for suspicion, here. But there has been no solid direct evidence produced, as yet, which proves the existence of the suspected covert relationship.

Yet you do not mention any of this material. You cite this as an example of black-and-white error on Garrison's part, and state: "Finally, the assertion that Oswald was a C.I.A agent, as has already been shown, was based on Garrison's own private interpretations of "missing" or classified documents that he had never seen."

I feel that to accurately assess what Garrison has done in this matter is to start by granting to the critics what is validly theirs. That means to start with granting the fact that it has been shown that Oswald's relationship with the State Department is positively exceptional, that his wife's relationship with them (the 243-G whiver she received) is unusual, that the executive sessions transcript that was released shows the commission astounded by the same matters, and finally the failure of the Commission to objectively investigate the Wade/Waggoner allegations.

Starting with that, you can then show how Garrison has elevated a suspicion into a flat assertion. Again, a far more subtle interpretation illustrating how a demagogue is using a valid criticism in the service of his own cause, embellishing it where necessary, than if Garrison's statements had no basis in fact (or at least, you might say, well researched suspicion!)

III Secrecy, as proof of the "second conspiracy" (p. 72)

I think that you are being too apologetic here, on the secrecy business. Frankly, secrecy is consistent with either hypothesis. One is that there is really nothing to hide, and that the secrecy is simply exercised to protect innocent person and prevent personal embarrassment. Granted.

But secrecy is also consistent with withholding information that might be pertinent to investigating a conspiracy.

If you hold that the assassination is an unsolved crime, and that the Commission falsified evidence to support a solo-assassin thesis, I don't see how you can deride Garrison for his arguments re secrecy.

What is interesting here, to my mind, is that the situation is in fact indeterminate. And that Garrison has jumped in with both feet to make the most of it, using the more incriminating hypothesis, of course. The demagogue is having a field day, but his gripe happens to be valid!

It may be that nothing of substance is being hidden. But an outstanding counterexample is that the January 27 meeting of the Commission is still classified! If what Ford (in his book) has revealed is an example of the kind of thing that is still classified, then I eagerly await the day for more and more material to be declassified! And, in view of this example of the Jan. 27 meeting,

I must reserve a certain amount of suspicion for classified documents of any type connected with this investigation. Isn't this a reasonable, non-demonological stance?

IVa Here is a point you seem to have neglected to make.

Garrison states: "Is it a Great Society which causes blackouts in news centers like New York when there's a development in the case?" Are you aware of the fact that this refers to the great Northeast blackout? And that he thinks that this was part of a "plot" to prevent the "real significance" of Dorothy Kilgallen's death to be known? (It is Kilgallen's death which is "a development in the case".) Why not go into this matter? -This is surely one of Garrison's most absurd allegations, and I think he got this one from Penn Jones. (See Forgive My Grief, on the Kilgallen death.)

IVb Another point you have neglected to make.

Garrison claims PE 8 1951, a phone number on Ruby's bill and in Oswald's address book, connects the two in a conspiracy. It is Channel 11 in Ft. Worth. His statement is in a speech reprinted in the Free Press. See also, my "Notes and Comment" on Garrison, and my story in Open City. Why do you omit such an obvious example, or will it be in the book?

V The manner in which you deal with the published authors on the JFK assassination, and the critics.

I don't think it is fair to group everyone together and label them "peripatetic demonologists". In the beginning, it was the critics of the Warren Report (and especially Mark Lane) who brought the case to the American public. It is a fact that many of them act and even reason in a paranoid style. But I think it is also true that their suspicions, in the beginning, served as an aid in their research, in that they were not to be fobbed off the investigative track because of authoritative sounding pronouncements issued by the government.

Then, when Garrison came along, many of them flocked to his standard and condoned all sorts of outrageous conduct on Garrison's part, and showed themselves to have quite a double standard.

The outstanding and most well known example is Lane. Having had the brains and talent to write Rush to Judgement, and the courage to lecture on the case in the early days and bring it before the public, we now find him supporting a charlatan. Why?

This is the question that I think needs to be explored and written about: the fact that people who were capable of valid research regarding the 26 volumes of the Warren Commission, and its non-correlation with the Report, are perfectly capable of now becoming bedfellows with an investigative impresario who is conducting his own "pogrom" against certain right-wing characters.

If this matter is delved into, I think that the answer goes something like this. First of all, the critics who now support Garrison are very politically attuned. They were against the WR from the start because of its political implausibility. Furthermore, political motives motivated some of their initial research. I don't think there is anything wrong with this, up to a point. What I do think

(V, continued)

has happened is that they initially supported Garrison, continue to do so, and rationalize away his demonstrably false statements because Garrison's political theory of the assassination is politically plausible and pleasing to them.

These are the "knee-jerk new lefters". And, as I pointed out in my Open City article, the slogan seems to be: "Rally Round the plot, boys; its not much of a plot but its the only plot we've got."

These pages of your article give the impression that all the critics are a bunch of kooks. This is not true. The far more interesting story of how and why some of them have been misled, how they have been seduced by a charlatan, how they have betrayed their original standards, and how today they are a courtroom cheering squad for Mr. Garrison, has not been developed by you. Yet this is the story, I think, that is interesting.

Many of the critics, and especially the older ones, closely followed the Hiss case and the Rosenberg case. They will tell you how David Greenglass' non-credible testimony sent his sister to the electric chair, and how a slick job of forgery by typewriter sent Hiss to prison. Just as in the case of the Warren Report, they have carefully analyzed these cases and come to the conclusion that both Hiss and Robernbergs were framed.

Yet many of these same people are now willing to accept the testimony of Perry Russo, or of Barbara Reid! This is what I find incredible. Here is a double standard.

When Garrison announced that PE 8 1951 linked Ruby and Oswald in a conspiracy, and it turned out that that phone number is nothing but Chancler II's phone number in Ft. Worth, we hear not a peep from the pro-Garrison critics. But suppose Richard Nixon, in his prosecution of Alger Hiss, had discovered a phone number in Hiss's notebook that was also on the phone bill of some Russian diplomat, and announced that as evidence of "conspiracy"? What would these critics who now support Garrison have thought if it turned out that the phone number was merely that of a Washington DC TV station? Why, you would never have heard the end of that. That would have been enough to brand the prosecutor a demagogue with political ambitions. He would be thoroughly denounced and derided, and any future statements he made would be examined with a microscope before being believed. Yet Garrison has gotten away with PE 8 1951, and there is no uproar.

Another example illustrating the double standard is the reaction of many of the people who are now Garrison's supporters to the famous news conference of Henry Wade on Sunday, November 24, 1963, after Oswald was murdered. Isn't this the news conference that inspired Lane to write that defense brief for Oswald? Isn't this the news conference at which Wade made pronouncements for which he was damned as reckless and ill informed? Yet the critics who condone or ignore PE 8 1951, the code, and other outrageous pronouncements of Garrison react in an entirely different way when Wade did the same thing.

Instead of criticism, we find, in the recent CCI newsletter, an apologetic paragraph that goes like this:

"Mr Garrison has developed certain witnesses whose credibility, on the surface at least, leaves much to be desired. He has made some sensational charges from time to time, a few of which appear to be aimed solely at focusing attention to his investigation and

which may be of dubious value; some of his charges have been incorrect. A single individual, however, with a relatively small number of assistants who has undertaken so overwhelming a task and who is constantly obstructed by a hostile press and news-media, and by nearly every governmental agency is bound to err, to falter along the way." (From a signed article by Maggie Field)

I think that the reason for the double standard is that the critics involved have selectively applied careful research standards only when it suits their political theories. They are really not first class researchers. They merely employ research in the service of propoganda when it suits their political theories to do so. It is this that explains why the same persons can condone in Garrison what was found to be repulsive in the case of Wade. These people are simply not devoted to the truth, with a capital "T". The men and the boys were separated the day Garrison started making demonstrably false and demagogic pronouncements. For it was then that one group of critics insisted on applying the same standard to Garrison as had been applied to the Warren Report, and another group did not.

In your New Yorker article, you do not go into this matter at all. The critics have been lumped together, and an interesting story revealing the double standard subscribed to by some of them has been ingroned.

This does an injustice to the early work of almost all the critics, and oversimplifies the entire situation.

(If you want to rewrite any of this, it would involve reorganizing the section you call "phase three" of Garrison's investigation. You would have to go back to Feb 1967, and trace the appearance of some of the critics before the Grand Jury in New Orleans (Marcus, Lane, and Weisberg), quote from the published letters of Sylvia to show the opposition that Garrison was generating, and deal with the article in the Minority of One that was so critical of Garrison. Another source of material that would be useful are the news letters put out by the CCI here in LA. I think you should also include the fact, that, in the beginning, some of whom are now Garrison's most arid supporters had deep suspicions that he might be a CIA agent, sent out to discredit valid research on the WR. Its up to you how much detail you want to include, but I donot think all the critics ought to be lumped together; and I think a distinction ought to be made between their original research vs. their subsequent behavior.)

VI pp54-55

The general tone of how Garrison altered his theories to agree with the latest critic, or what he thought was their "consensus" is perfectly correct. But I think these details ought to be straightened out. As I pointed out to you in my letter of August 6, details regarding your description of what Ray Marcus says about the photographs are incorrect as they are now stated. It is in in describing their contributions in some detail that you might want to indicate the appearance of critics before his grand jury. I think that is an important fact, and is whatson the hearts of those who testified.

Also, despite Weisberg's denials of his own involvement, on the back of Photographic Whitewash is a Washington Post news story which is quite revealing.

Another one is from the London Times. Both are apparently inspired by Mr. Weisberg, himself, and both attest to his prowess in steering Garrison down the right track.

(Sample quotes: "One mystery of the rather mystifying investigation of the Kennedy assassination now being conducted by Mr. Jim Garrison, has been cleared up. The source of much of his information is Mr. Harold Weisberg, the author of Whitesas: Report on the Warren Commission." (sic) ; "The scenario...can be glimpsed in any bookstore. The investigation is Garrison's, but the script apparently started with Harold Weisberg..."It's sure following my book," Weisberg said delightedly yesterday...")

VII Arrests in Dealey Plaza

I have always been under the impression that there were other arrests in Dealey Plaza that day. Doesn't the radio log support the thesis that people taken off the railroad trains in the railroad yard were taken into custody? In any event, there is a news story in the Dallas papers on about Dec 10 reporting the release, from City Jail, of one of those arrested after the assassination on November 22. This was first reported by Joachen Joesten in his book "Oswald: Assassin or Fall Guy". The news story does exist; I have read it on microfilm of the papers. Also, the Ft. Worth papers report arrests, and Dick Sprague has pictures of these arrests, I believe. (There is also a news story describing an arrest after the shooting.)

Despite this, Garrison does have his foot in his mouth when he says he can connect these people who were arrested with the CIA, and I think that this is his weak point. But I don't see how you can deny the arrests, or cite Hollingsworth's opinion of what the pictures contain, when that opinion is demonstrably false. If you have ever seen the glossy prints involved, it is quite clear that the police are taking someone into custody. What we have here is a case of Garrison putting an unsubstantiated interpretation of his own (that the men involved are CIA agents) on a perfectly valid and substantiated unanswered question: who was arrested that day and then later released?

I think that this is the point that ought to be made, not simply to denigrate the validity of the unanswered question.