

10/17/68

To: Recipient
From: David Lifton

This envelope contains several items regarding New Orleans District Attorney Garrison and his prosecution of Kerry Thornley for perjury as part of Garrison's assassination investigation.

Open City, an underground newspaper in Los Angeles, and the main competitor of the LA Free Press, agreed to run articles on Kerry's situation written by Kerry and me.

These articles were run in two issues, which are enclosed. (Certain irrelevant pages of the newspaper issues have been deleted, to economize on mailing costs.) Kerry's article was printed in its entirety in one issue. My article ran in two parts. The first issue (Number 54, May 31-June 6, 1968) contains Kerry's article and the first part of my article. The second issue (Issue Number 55, June 7-13, 1968) contains the second part of my article.

Following the issuance of these articles, Harold Weisberg wrote two letters to Open City. The first letter was mainly an attack on Kerry Thornley; the second letter was mainly an attack on me. Both were published. These letters, and especially the tone with which Weisberg writes, speak eloquently for themselves. Kerry answered the letter attacking him, and his answer was published in Open City.

Weisberg's two letters, Kerry's published answer, and a 5 page memo that I have recently written responding to some of Weisberg's many scattergun charges are included in this packet.

Also included in the packet is a correction sheet regarding my first article, written by Kerry shortly after it appeared. There are several errors in the article----some typographical, and some due to minor misunderstandings of fact on my part.

Kerry's trial date has not yet been set. He has been arraigned on a perjury charge, and he has pleaded NOT GUILTY. At this juncture, Garrison's office seems to be awaiting for the Supreme Court to rule on the Clay Shaw case.

The information contained in these articles about how Kerry came to be involved in Garrison's probe will be very timely, and will probably be expanded upon at some length in the major news media, if Kerry's case ever comes to trial.

In the meantime, this material is being mailed to you either because Kerry has requested such, or because I felt you might be interested in this information.

Enclosed:

- 1) Open City, Issue No. 54, May 31-June 6, 1968; Contains article by Kerry Thornley; Also contains first part of a 2 part article by David Lifton
- 2) Open City, Issue No. 55, June 7-13, 1968; contains second part of two part article by David Lifton
- 3) Letter from Harold Weisberg to Open City, published in Issue 59
- 4) Letter from Harold Weisberg to Open City, published in Issue 60
- 5) Letter from Kerry Thornley to Open City, published in Issue 61
- 6) Memo (dated 10/10/68) regarding Weisberg's two letters
- 7) Correction sheet regarding first Open City article

Dearest Editor:

A flower in the mouth of Kerry Thornley is as appropriate as the word "love" in the mouth of a whore.

It is unfortunately typical of that major part of your issue of May 31-June 8, devoted to two lengthy diatribes by Dave Lifton and Kerry the Great (ask him) Thornley.

In all of this biased outpouring, which is in no way related to the charge of perjury against Thornley, there is not a single word in refutation of that charge. In fact, not a single word from it is quoted or, indeed, alluded to by even the most remote indirection. Instead, there is a drumbeat of lies, distortions and self-justifications (Lifton's, for all the bum steers he has so industriously fed).

How honest is your caption on the picture of the bearded Kerry Thornley? There are a number of photographs of him of the time of the assassination. Could you not have found a single one of them? Why not print one side-by-side with what you used?

If Thornley's testimony before the grand jury was anything like his deliberate misrepresentation of me and when I said what, there was no way for him to avoid a perjury charge.

For minor example, I described his magnum opus as of pamphlet size. Now, the outside dimensions of the page are 4 by 7 inches. Of what Thornley wrote, there are between the covers a total of 67 pages, with large areas of blank space. Included in the padding, which is half of the "book," are three dozen pages of Thornley's "testimony." He has trouble with the word "official." It sticks in his mouth, as your readers may recall. So, he "improved" on the "official" testimony by editing it, an appropriate contribution by this modest man. His benefactions extend to the questions asked of him. These, too, he edited!

Have you not seen many pamphlets with more than 67 pages of writing? And how many books of this size do you recall?

Thornley paints a picture of a new kind of "Communist," a man whose idol was Orwell, who to Thornley's knowledge had a secret security clearance in the Marine Corps while getting Communist literature openly in the mail (and the officers telling the enlisted men to forget about it,) a man who never spoke another word to him once Thornley called him a Communist.

Naturally, it does not come out this way in the piece he did for you, where he refers to "scuttlebutt" that Oswald had a secret clearance (every man in the outfit, a U-2 unit, had at least "confidential" clearance, a new kind of outfit for a "Communist"). His testimony before the Warren Commission is subject to the kind of misinterpretation he offers you and your readers if one has that intent, for he does refer to a "rumor." However, at the bottom of page 84 of Volume XI of the hearings, after swearing that Oswald had worked in the "security files" (another new kind of Marine Corps assignment for "Communists"), when asked, "And that was a level of clearance--," he interrupted to say, "Probably a secret clearance would be required." And this relates to but a part of Oswald's assignment, not his major function.

Of that the officer in charge gave this testimony (Volume VIII, page 298):

"He must have had secret clearance to work in the radar center, because that was a minimum required of all of us."

To this I add the assurance that top secret was not high enough for what this new kind of Thornley-anointed Communist, Lee Harvey Oswald, really did. His clearance, above his top secret, was "crypto."

Having only recently read some of Thornley's vitriol, in which he laments the leftish tendencies of Wall Street and assails any concept of its regulation (Thornley, defender of widows and orphans!), I am surprised to find him in your columns under the banner of "peace and freedom."

But wouldn't it be nice if, with all that crap on which you wasted type, you could have found space to tell your readers the charges against Thornley, wherein he is alleged to have perjured himself?

And wouldn't it have been nice if he had told you that, after being interviewed by the FBI, he went back, on his own, to stool-pigeon? Now, the day after the assassination, he was interviewed by the Secret Service. Two days later, the FBI. Two more days, and he went back to the FBI, on his own. "Libertarian" is the word with which he describes himself, this FBI-seeking Thornley, the same Thornley who pinned a bum "Communist" rap on the murdered Oswald when his other Marine Corps buddies would not.

Here are the words of the FBI report of November 26, 1963:

"KERRY WENDELL THORNLEY, 1824 Dauphine Street, New Orleans, Louisiana, voluntarily appeared at the New Orleans Office at 12:30 PM November 26, 1963...

How does this come out of Thornley's mouth? Interviewed on WTVT-TV, Tampa, January 14, 1968, beginning 1 p. m., and asked why "they (federal agents) approached you so quickly," Kerry the Truthful said, "I know exactly why they came to me so quickly because later I learned that a man named Tony Slumbosky (phonetic), an artist in Pirate's Alley, had called them."

According to the FBI itself, not until December 3, or a week after federal agents first interviewed Thornley, did they speak to the artist. I enclose a copy, of as good quality as the character of the archive to the martyred President provides, thinking your readers will find it of interest. While it is not possible to authenticate the words attributed to Thornley (the Warren Commission, with great delicacy, not having embarrassed him by asking him about them under oath), his former girl-friend said he had told her, "If Oswald hadn't killed President KENNEDY, he would have done it himself."

Dig that flower in the mouth! Thornley, man of peace

and freedom, flower-boy!

Why not have another article by him, consisting of just the letters he wrote friends and editors about President Kennedy and his murder? I think you'll find it not inconsistent with the above.

And may I ask with his own language from the TV interview above, does it seem so utterly impossible that Thornley COULD have committed perjury?

Those lies Thornley wrote about me are not worth dignifying. Suffice it to say that, when he had the chance to confront me on his local radio station, he did not. Does the above give a slight indication of why? However, I think it worth reminding him and your readers of what he neglected to burden them with. In early November 1967, I sought out his "literary agent," Clint Bolton, and asked him to tell Thornley that if Garrison knew but part of what I did about Thornley, his interest was inevitable. I suggested that as an aspiring writer it was possible he knew fact the meaning of which was lost upon him, and that if he were unwilling to go to Garrison I would be glad to discuss what he knew with him. The eminent and judicious Mr. Bolton thereupon wrote a letter to Thornley not dissimilar from Thornley's own writing in your pages. Through the anti-Semitism, it was clear that Mentor Bolton also recommended this course to Thornley. It is surprising Thornley did not heed Bolton's advice, for is there not this highly literate dedication in his "book":

"To Clint Bolton, who first said to me: 'Go home and write - ya bum!'"

Famous first words!

It is unfortunate that you did not adequately inform your readers about the credentials of Dave Lifton, who writes of what he calls the "theories" of others. Dave is best known for the deep conviction that President Kennedy was assassinated from papier-mache trees in Dealey Plaza. More recently, he has been the associate of Wesley J. Liebeler, most active member of the Warren Commission staff, the man who wound up in charge of that part of the work of which Thornley was part.

Yours for "peace and freedom" - and truth,
Harold Weisberg.

Below is an excerpt from a communication that was sent me by Kerry Thornley shortly after the first Open City article appeared. It contains certain corrections to the May 31 article, as written by Kerry.

I have indicated, with an asterisk located in the left hand margin, those corrections which have already been penned in on the page itself, in those cases where the newspaper was mailed along with this errata sheet.

David Lifton
10/17/68

On the front page:

1) "Thornley was about to leave with his unit for a tour of Japan..." would more correctly read: "Thornley was about to LEAVE HIS UNIT for a tour IN Japan..."

2) "Thornley found Oswald to be an interesting character, who professed beliefs quite the opposite of his own" -- as well as all statements in elaboration of this point -- is incorrect. At the time I knew Oswald I was a democratic socialist and by no means the "right winger" I sometimes term myself today in indication of my present philosophy of individualist libertarianism.

On page fourteen:

1) "Shortly after his release from the Marines, Thornley studied at USC for a while, then decided to leave school and finish the book he started" -- is incorrect. I went to USC for a year BEFORE going in the Marines.

* 2) The second full paragraph in the first column should have run as the fourth full paragraph in the fourth column in place of "At the end of the book Johnny Shelburn defects to Russia" -- which should run as the second full paragraph in the first column.

3) "Thornley retitled his book "Oswald," and completely rewrote it" -- is not the case. "Oswald" and my pre-assassination novel entitled "The Idle Warriors" were two entirely separate books, though brief excerpts from the latter appeared in the former.

* 4) The sentence in the final column reading: "Thus, Garrison had a theory, provided by me, about Thornley's involvement in the assassination" should have read "about Heindell's involvement..."

Two paragraphs above this typographical error is another -- Mr.

* { Garrison's full statement to Mr. Lifton was: "After the fact there IS no truth; there is ONLY what the jury decides." It is thought-provoking that a man who in public pounds on George Orwell's 1984 as if it were his Bible, should express such a Big Brotherly opinion in private. Unfortunately, it is not for Mr. Garrison unusual, though. He has also said: "An advocate cannot afford to be objective."

PAGE EIGHT

LETTERS

Dearest Editor:

In two fields David Lifton can lay genuine claim to expertise: In "weaving Kennedy-assassination theories" and in framing people. His own distortions in your second attack on Jim Garrison and me establish this. Dave is less irresponsible when he works on his own pet "theory," that the assassination was committed from papier-mache trees somehow, mysteriously, removed in the middle of the night, while thousands of unseeing looked on. Such, he once explained to me, is the power of the power-elite in Dallas, all those visitors, too, were intimidated into silence.

Kerry Thornley will be fortunate indeed to survive Dave's "friendship," particularly its manifestations. Dave will be lucky to survive his own self-indictment as a "critic" of the Warren Report, all the recent manifestations of which are of collaboration with the major framer of the frameup, Wesley J. Liebeler, the Commission lawyer in charge of the "conspiracy" part of the case against Oswald.

Dave is Liebeler's advance man. It is in just that capacity that he intruded into a debate arranged between Liebeler and me in Reseda, California, this past February. Liebeler could not turn it down, for I had published a detailed account of his own career in framing history and Oswald. Instead, Dave butted in and raised new "conditions" of the debate and, between him and Liebeler, got it called off.

If anyone doubts the truth of this, let him arrange an identical debate NOW. Like Lifton, who has talents. He can both arrange and moderate it. We can have the very same debate anytime Dave arranges it and Liebeler agrees to it. But will Liebeler, who was really in charge of this part of the investigation, its crux? Will Dave, whose heart bleeds so for the fascist-minded?

Dave's literary techniques come right from Goebbels:

"...Barbara Reid, an alleged practitioner of witchcraft..."

Thornley, something less than an impartial source, is the origin of the allegation that Barbara, a writer and a TV producer, is the "key witness" (Dave's word, or the only witness in Kerry's representation) against Thornley.

Aside from his slurs on those who refused to be conned by his own gross errors, what has Dave in this second opus? The detailed story of how he fed false affidavits to Garrison and how he and Thornley plotted to frame John Rene Heindel. Of course, he has a few lies, too. Like:

"In the fall of 1963 Thornley lived in New Orleans and was in the city during a two-week period when Oswald was also there."

If Dave doesn't know better, he should have said nothing.

"Thornley has been charged and arraigned for perjury because of this disagreement."

No wonder neither Dave nor Thornley troubled your readers with a printing of the indictment!

It is perfectly proper for Lifton and Thornley to cook up an untrue story on John Rene Heindel. And it is perfectly proper procedure for Lifton, AFTER he has filed the affidavits with Garrison, to check out the story and find it is untrue. Noble man, he then telegraphed Garrison. And terrible prosecutor Garrison, he didn't just forget it there, did he? Or is this his crime, wondering why Thornley would swear to what was not true, to point the accusing finger at the wrong man? Shades of the Warren Report and Wesley J. Liebeler, how can that be wrong?

Let me digress for a moment for Dave's delineation of a true-blue Warren Report "critic," David Lifton.

"Lifton met Thornley in 1965 and they discussed the Heindel matter."

Garrison's investigation became public knowledge in mid-FEBRUARY 1967. So, this stellar critic does what?

"In SEPTEMBER 1967 (after waiting seven months) Lifton called Jim Garrison..."

About what?

"Thornley's and Lifton's theories of Heindel's possible involvement as a 'co-patsy' with Oswald in a two-gunman assassination plot..."

How anyone, even Dave, could connect Heindel with a gun, Dealey Plaza, or anything else besides a bad assassination trip I'd like to hear. THIS theory is invention, nothing else.

Dave says of Kerry, "I knew he just didn't want to go any further" than making wrong affidavits. No reason other than a dislike for Garrison (stemming from that solid base of having once served him dinner) ever occurred to Dave? Like Thornley knew it just wasn't so?

Again, Dave's words, "explaining" how Thornley ultimately appeared before the grand jury in New Orleans. "Kerry, in order to prove he had nothing to hide, went voluntarily."

Is that what it means when you are hailed into a Tampa court and the judge orders you to go, Dave? "Voluntarily?"

To those of us who wondered about his association with Liebeler, Dave's explanation was that he was just trying to get cookies of information from Liebeler, that they really detested each other. I have had earlier signs of this mutual "dislike." Here is a grand one. Liebeler is responsible for this part of the Warren Commission case. His self-description is of the ten-fingered Dutch boy with a twenty-holed dike. Albert Jenner, his associate, was too busy running for the presidency of the American Bar association to do any work, so Liebeler had it all to do. True. Liebeler did. And none of this Thornley bit is in it, aside from his misrepresentation of Oswald the Marine, who had the highest security clearance possible while openly getting Communist literature in the mail and who was anti-Communist. From Thornley's testimony this comes out that Oswald was a Communist.

Who is Dave REALLY "defending?" Can it possibly be his "friend," Thornley?

Or is it Liebeler and the Warren Report?

Yours for truth
Harold Weisberg.