

Excerpts from a letter dated 12 October 1968

Dear Miss Murray,

Your remarks about Accessories are very gratifying and I do thank you for commending the book.

As to Garrison: In fact, when I first learned of him in January 1967 I did "get behind District Attorney Garrison and support his investigation." I can assure you that I fervently and wholeheartedly hoped that Garrison had, as he claimed, solved the assassination and would bring the guilty to justice. I took the initiative in sending him material, including major portions of Accessories, which might be helpful and placed myself completely at his disposal for any assistance which I might be able to provide.

I was first disquieted when Garrison placed on the witness stand Perry R. Russo and Vernon Bundy. I found it hard to believe that three conspirators had discussed their plans to murder the President in the presence of a witness (Russo) who was left at liberty to report them, before or after the fact, to the authorities. I was also disturbed because Russo had gone to the press on the 24th or 25th of February 1967 and volunteered a story completely inconsistent with his testimony in March 1967. My misgivings were later greatly intensified by the revelation that in his first interview by a member of Garrison's staff, Russo had not only said nothing about the conspirators' discussion in his presence but had given information in direct conflict with that later version. I am now completely convinced that Russo's story is, at best, delusional and completely divorced from the truth; and I cannot exclude the possibility that his testimony of March 1967 was deliberate and collusive perjury.

Bundy's testimony seemed to me to be valueless for the simple reason that I would reject an identification by any witness of a person or persons viewed on a single occasion, from a distance, almost four years earlier. I was dismayed that any district attorney should display such poor professional judgment as to treat such an "identification" as serious evidence. Later, it emerged that Bundy had apparently told a fellow-inmate in jail that he invented the whole story in order to improve his prospects for earlier release from prison.

I became completely disillusioned with Garrison when he announced his discovery of a "code" for Ruby's unlisted phone number in both Oswald's and Clay Shaw's address books. This was completely insupportable, depending as it did on a misrepresentation of the entry in Oswald's notebook, assumptions about the entry in Shaw's notebook which Garrison did not even trouble to check out and which proved completely unfounded, and an arbitrary manipulation of numbers by Garrison so as to produce the desired result of Ruby's number. Even after it became clear that the so-called "code" was a compound of error and flummery, Garrison made no attempt to overcome the objections which had been raised, by me and others, but repeated his original claim about the "code." At this point, I could only regard it as fabricated evidence, and that is how I do characterize it today.

It would take a great many pages to catalogue all the other misstatements, falsehoods, and absurdities authored by Garrison since that time. He made false allegations in his Playboy interview (October 1967) about the alleged destruction of a CIA message; about a supposed meeting between Clay Shaw and President Kennedy in 1963 (which never took place); about the police alert broadcast at 12:45 p.m. on 11/22/63; about four frames of the Zapruder film; and about many other items of evidence. Some of his errors no doubt resulted from careless scholarship and excessive readiness to make public pronouncements despite uncertain or inexact grounds for his assertions. But other "evidence" announced by Garrison was pure invention and fabrication, or merely capricious and lacking any shred of foundation.

In other words, Garrison showed himself to have as little respect for the truth and for justice as the Warren Commission had displayed. Although he asserted that Oswald had not shot anyone on 11/22/63 (which I strongly believe), he did seek to incriminate Oswald as a conspirator and an accessory before the fact on "evidence" even more flimsy and deformed as that of the Warren Commission.

I am committed to the truth about the Dallas assassinations, not merely to a version of events different from the version in the Warren Report but also contrived, manipulated, and dishonest. Naturally, then, I considered it an inescapable duty to denounce Garrison's chicanery in the same way I had denounced the Commission.

Some critics of the Warren Report apply to Garrison's "case" a completely different and far more "charitable" standard of judgment than they applied to the Report...even while admitting (as one critic did in a recent published article) that Garrison has "developed certain witnesses whose credibility...leaves much to be desired" and that he has made "sensational charges...which may be of dubious value"...I often wonder how the critics who support Garrison would regard his cause if, on the basis of exactly the same "evidence" he has claimed, he accused the Students for a Democratic Society, pro-Castro rather than anti-Castro Cubans, or other groups on the left. I suspect that they would then recognize his "case" as a clumsy, transparent agglomeration of irrelevancies and improvisations.

Those of us who claim devotion to the truth have a clear moral duty to accept nothing less, from a presidential commission or from a district attorney. The sorry fact that many of my colleagues among the critics condone the one while rightly denouncing the other is tragic, not merely in principle or in academic terms but also because it retards the credibility of all criticism of the Warren Report and therefore retards the reversal of a monumental miscarriage of justice and a shameful falsification of history. (I am dismayed that Edward Jay Epstein, in his definitive critique of the Garrison "investigation," was so soft on the Warren Report as to disqualify himself as a "critic" and greatly to weaken the impact of his devastating account of the Garrison hoax.)

You are correct in guessing that other readers of my book have asked me the same questions you asked about my position on Garrison, and that I have tried to answer them as fully and frankly as I could...I do understand the reluctance which attaches to questioning those we have placed on a pedestal, having had just that unhappy experience myself with respect to Garrison—but if it is not done now, it will still have to be done later.

Again, my thanks for your generosity toward my book,

Yours sincerely,

Sylvia Meagher