

Dialogue

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Reason Enough for Trying

Several years back I reviewed topographical maps of the Big Thicket country and found there was no spot more than X miles from evidences of man (i.e., pipelines, oil wells, power lines, road, habitation, etc.). Memory fails, but X is less than five; I am sure. Still, present action apparently could avert even further invasions, which is reason enough for trying. Your contribution [Obs., Sept. 15] will be recognized as a very significant one in time, no matter what the outcome.—Larry Harrington, Box 7213, Winston-Salem, N.C., 27109.

An Unrealistic Statement

In regard to your statement "Parks should be open to all at no cost," [Obs., Sept. 15, in an editorial], it is a nice liberal statement, but it will not stand realistic inspection. *Someone* is going to have to pay for the \$75 million bonds—either it is going to 1) come out of the general fund (sales tax) or 2) from fees charged those who use it. If it comes out of the sales tax, those who will use it the least, i.e., the urban poor, will, in effect, pay for the parks used by Texas' mobile middle class. I don't think that is what you have in mind.—Bill Rubey, Box 22323, Houston, Tex., 77027.

The cost of parks should, in the Observer's opinion, be borne by the state's general fund. The major part of general fund revenue is not from the sales tax (though a good portion, about one-fourth, is from the sales tax). Texas' sales tax, of course, should be repealed.—Ed.

A Neglected Ticker

The issue of Sept. 15 neglected one of the most important of Big Thicketters—Mrs. Geraldine Watson, author of the column "Big Thicket, Past, Present, and Future," in the Pine Needle, published in Silsbee. It was she who knew of Dr. McCleod's paper on the Thicket, on which the "String of Pearls" proposal is based.—Mrs. J. Claude Evans, 3542 University Blvd., Dallas, Tex. 75205.

The 'Mysterious Deaths' Theory

Penn Jones, Jr. may be a courageous editor but he's a lousy reporter. His so-called "mysterious death" theory [Obs., Sept. 29] involving what he terms to be the strange deaths of people in one way or another connected with President Kennedy's assassination is based on nothing more than Mr. Jones' assumptions and suspicions. There is no basis of fact to Mr. Jones' assertions.

I can make this statement without reservation because I investigated many of Mr. Jones' so-called mysterious deaths in Dallas. His technique is simple. For

example, Mr. Jones says that Cabbie William Whaley, who drove Oswald from the bus stop to a couple of blocks from his rooming house, was killed in a head-on auto accident in Dallas and that the accident report is not on file at Dallas Police Headquarters. He's right. It's on file at the Dallas Sheriff's office because the accident occurred just outside the Dallas city limits. There were five witnesses and the driver of the car which caused the accident was a 83-year-old man stricken with cancer who was driving in the opposite lane on a rainy dark morning without his automobile lights on.

Or take the case of Mrs. Earline Roberts (correct spelling of first name), Oswald's housekeeper. Mr. Jones says Mrs. Roberts died of a heart attack, according to police, and that no autopsy was performed, clearly suggesting that there was something mysterious about her death. The fact is that Mrs. Roberts, 60, corpulent and ill for years, died at Parkland Hospital three days after being admitted. The police did not investigate the death because she was under a doctor's care. An autopsy was performed. The cause of death was listed as "acute myocardial infarction" complicated by a "severely calcified and sclerotic mitral valve and annulus which impinged upon the interventricular septum near the common conductor bundle." In other words the calcium deposits in her heart were so large that they choked the heart's action. But that wasn't all. She had diabetes, pneumonia, a lung infection, ulcers in her throat and cataracts.

Or take the case of the so-called mysterious meeting at Jack Ruby's apartment the night after Ruby killed Oswald. Mr. Jones suggests that the six persons present—Dallas Times-Herald Reporter Jim Koethe, Long Beach (Calif.) Press Reporter Bill Hunter, criminal lawyers Tom Howard, Jim Martin and C. A. Drobny and George Senator, Ruby's next-door neighbor—learned something so important that Koethe, Hunter and Howard were subsequently done away with.

The facts are far different. Tom Howard was not present. But then Times-Herald Photographer William A. Allen was, a fact overlooked by Mr. Jones. Allen went to Ruby's apartment under the instructions from the Times-Herald city desk to get some pictures of the place. He took reporter Koethe with him to write captions. Hunter tagged along because he was an old pal of Koethe, the two of them having worked together in Wichita Falls. Allen took five pictures of the apartment. He says they remained there 45 minutes asking Senator questions about Jack Ruby. The three newsmen left together. Says Allen today: "It's kind of sad that

people would get hold of this and blow it all out of proportion. I'm not part of any conspiracy—it's all kind of frightening that people can suggest such a thing. Nothing went on in that apartment that wasn't perfectly normal." The fact that Koethe was later murdered by a burglar and Hunter accidentally shot by a Long Beach detective is merely a coincidence.

Then take Tom Howard. Mr. Jones says that Howard was a friend of Jack Ruby's. He was not. Mr. Jones says that Tom Howard frequently drank with Dallas D.A. Henry Wade. Howard was never known to have drunk anything with Henry Wade. Mr. Jones says that when Howard was stricken by a heart attack, he was driven to the hospital by an unknown person. The unknown person was Tom's girl friend. Mr. Jones implies that Tom Howard's death was mysterious. It was not. He died of a "myocardial infarction" complicated by hardening of the arteries and diabetes. The death certificate was signed by a doctor associated with Howard's personal physician, both of whom knew that Tom Howard was in ill-health, was a heavy drinker and had refused to stop drinking.

I could go on and on but there's no point. Suffice to say that Mr. Jones' theory cannot stand the acid test of facts. It is not a theory but one man's weird myth. In his attempt to do his duty as a newspaperman as he sees it, Mr. Jones has unwittingly contributed a great disservice to his country by ignoring facts and twisting what few facts he does have to fit a warped and perverted theory.

Observer writer Robert Bonazzi should have been a little more careful with his facts. He says that no one has ever been convicted of fire bombing the offices of the Midlothian Mirror. True as far as it goes. But what about the teenager who confessed to throwing the fire bomb into Mr. Jones' office and who was packed off to a state mental hospital? Seems he'd done this before several times and his deranged act had nothing whatsoever to do with Mr. Jones' political stand. Mr. Bonazzi is guilty of glossing over this fact thereby implying that Penn Jones was the victim of a right-wing plot to silence him and his paper. The Observer falls into the same trap with its caption under Mr. Jones' picture "... fire-bombed in 1962." Penn Jones Jr. would like to have been the victim of a right-wing plot. Trouble is that he wasn't. It's been bugging him ever since.

Benjamin W. Cate, Houston bureau chief, Time magazine, 3015 Humble Bldg., Houston, Tex.

Looking Ahead to 1968

As liberals are aware, I made the last race for governor in 1966 against the Establishment because I felt compelled to keep certain basic issues before the people. It now appears to me that our progressive movement is somewhat in a dilemma as to what we are going to do in 1968. This dilemma primarily centers a-