

The next time I recall visting at any length with Gary was after his house on the land in Kenner was built. I seem to recall it was Slim's idea that we go out and "spend some time with brother-in-law." It is not clear in my mind whether there was one, two, or three such occasions, but I recall sitting there near the door, across the room from Gary, with Slim on the sidelines, discussing the following:

1) HOW ONE MIGHT GO ABOUT ASSASSINATING JOHN F. KENNEDY. I recall proposing the use of a remote control rocket, for example, a sort of home-made missile to bomb the White House. As far as I was concerned this was strictly a bullshit rap. All Gary and I had in common was our political enemies. He didn't like Ayn Rand because she was a woman and he even said, during one of these discussions, "don't talk to me about that raving Red" in reference to Barry Goldwater. The discussion wandered on at an easy-going pace for a long while, possibly all afternoon. Finally at one point during this discussion or these discussions Gary said words to this effect: "I think the best way to pull off a political assassination and get away with it would be to have a whole lot of people working on it, but kept under the illusion they were working on other things, so that afterwards even those who participated in it would not know it. Don't you think that would be a good way to do it, Kerry?" I agreed. (In other words, before using me, he even obtained my moral sanction!) He next observed that in order to do this one would have to have control of a very large bureaucracy which, as far as I was concerned, established that the whole discussion was purely academic.

2) PEOPLE GARY DIDN'T LIKE. Gary was soft-spoken and light-humored about his admiration for Hitler and other Nazi leaders, and without expressing any particular hatred in his voice used to say frequently that he did not like Jews, blacks, gypsies, etc. He also had absolutely no empathy for jailbirds -- which was the exact, quaint expression he used. I do not recall vividly, but he may even have suggested setting up a "jailbird" to take the blame for the assassination. The use of that one word in the Watson testimony in the Atlanta papers certainly did ring a bell with me -- immediately Gary popped into my mind.

3) LEE HARVEY OSWALD. During the period of time that I met Slim and Gary was when I was working the hardest on the first final draft of The Idle Warriors, my novel based on Oswald's defection to Russia. Then and thereafter I frequently brought up the themes and characters of The Idle Warriors, and I know we discussed Oswald, but certainly never in relation to setting him up for an assassination.

4) HITLER AND THE GERMAN HIGH COMMAND. Gary had some interesting ideas about Hitler which he was as prone to introducing into conversations as often as I was prone to introducing the subject of my novel. In particular, he believed that the secret to Hitler's power had been that he was the least powerful and least ferocious of all the Nazi leaders. He had no independent base of power -- no DIRECT OFFICIAL control over any bureaucracy or branch of the armed forces or police, so he was able to function as a middle-man, a compromise candidate that all the others trusted more than any of them trusted one another. He said he was going to write a book on this subject with the working title of "Hitler Was A Good Guy" and its prime focus was going to be on what a bunch of utterly ruthless ideas the other Nazi leaders had. He induced me and I think possibly even paid me some small amount to do research for him on this book, which as he portrayed it would not advance Nazi ideas (which I wasn't sure he was serious about anyhow) but which would convey this notion of power politics. I'm positive I read at least one book on the subject, made notes, and turned them over to Gary, after which the project seemed to peter out.

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(more to come)

KERRY THORNLEY