

BOB CONSIDINE

Unmasking the Warren Report Detractors

IF THERE IS a residue of doubt in your mind about the truth of the Warren Report on the assassination of President Kennedy, I'd suggest you scrutinize the report's best-known detractors.

Best way to do that is let Richard Warren Lewis and Lawrence Schiller assist you. Their book, "The Scavengers and Critics of the Warren Report," published simultaneously in hard and soft cover by Dell, thoroughly debunks the probers who have gained fame and fortune while riding on JFK's shroud.

They interviewed and observed Mark Lane, Edward Jay Epstein, Harold Weisberg, Penn Jones Jr., Mrs. Sylvia Meager, Mort Sahl, Mrs. Shirley Marth, Mrs. Margie Field, Vincent Salandria, Harold Feldman, Leo Sauvage and half a dozen others who have made a living, or part of a living, peddling suspicion of the Warren Report. Their assessment of these persons should shatter all the credence their works and lectures have acquired.

One of the critics, George C. Thomson of Glendale, Calif., an engineer by trade, as-

ured the authors of "The Scavengers" that he can "prove" that 22 bullets were fired in the course of the assassination—under the direction of Lyndon B. Johnson!—but that President Kennedy wasn't even there. His place in the presidential limousine had been taken by a stand-in (officer J. D. Tippitt). JFK is still alive, Thomson confided to the Messrs. Lewis and Schiller, and made his most recent public appearance at Truman Capote's masked ball.

Gives you an idea of what can be hawked in the wake of a national tragedy.

"The Scavengers and Critics of the Warren Report" would be a handy book to have around, next time somebody bugs you for believing steadfastly that there was no conspiracy to kill Kennedy and no sane reason to doubt that the FBI and the secret service did a better job investigating the matter than, say, Mark Lane or Jim Garrison.

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JACK WHEELER, a giant in our business for a long time, sets me straight on a recent piece about Dick Merrill, the pioneer-
ing airline pilot. I had Dick shooting dice on

the floor of a DC-8, trying to make a four (preferably the hard way), while the plane groped its way through a storm in search of New York.

"The crap game took place on a DC-3 all right, but it was not a scheduled flight," Jack writes. "It was the year Omaha won the Kentucky Derby—1935. Ben Smith, known in Wall Street as 'Sell 'Em Short Smith' and Stanley Kahn had chartered the plane from Eastern Air Lines and invited a lot of sports to travel to Louisville and back as their guests. Yours truly was in the group.

"Deac Aylesworth, then head of NBC, had a bad time at the races. He was fouled off Omaha and bet on Nettle Flag, and went from bad to worse, financially. He rode to the airport with me in a taxi, and on the way stopped to buy some dice—hoping to recover his fortune. The weather that night was very bad and the regular commercial planes were not flying. However, we took off.

"We are going to fly with the angels" Capt. Eddie Rickenbacker said at take-off time.

"Once airborne, the crap game started. I was in it for awhile, until Ben Smith said, 'Let's put a little life in the game—I'll bet \$2,500. I remarked that I was sleepy and thought I would go back and head awhile. I managed to depart with the \$750 I was ahead—without a protest.

"After a while I looked down the aisle at the game and saw that Dick Merrill, our pilot, was in it. It occurred to me it would be just my bad luck to have been a winner and have the plane fall down. Dick lost a substantial amount by the time he had to take over the controls and land us safely in Newark. Because of Dick's popularity, Anton Carter, Smith and the rest, except Wheeler, went to Mr. Carter's suite in the Pierre hotel to continue the gambling. Merrill made a good recovery.

"To repeat, Rickenbacker was on the plane. You know him as well as I do. As head of Eastern, Captain Eddie would never permit any of his pilots—not even Merrill—to play craps while flying paying customers. We were different. We were expendable."