

MEDICAL SCHOOL
DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHIATRY AND NEUROLOGY
MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA 55455

November 13, 1968

Dear Mrs. Meagher,

Many thanks for the care and interest you devoted to my letter, and for the speed with which you answered it. I look forward to being able to meet with you over the Christmas holidays if I can get up to New York and find a time which is convenient for you. My remarks about Accessories reflect on the book, not any kindness on my part. Even Harold Weisberg, in a rare moment, mentioned that he learned from it. By the way, I am curious why there is no prospect of a paperback edition of your book. It is the only book which is objective, all-encompassing, and has the added virtue of being interesting reading. In the question session after every appearance I make and on the radio I, like everyone else, am asked what can a citizen do. I, of course, reply that the first job is to become well informed, and yet the only book I can strongly recommend is yours which is still in hardback and expensive. Naturally I also recommend A Nation of Sheep, The Invisible Government, the FBI Nobody Knows, and others.

I have, like yourself, searched in -the volumes and ARchives for things relating to the message to Air Force I, but came up with nothing more than was in White and Salinger. I'm afraid that the possibility which you suggest is not discussed in the last draft of the article which I have seen. Before going on, let me explain a few items about the article. It was, as you know, originally Vince's idea, and I kept after him to write it when he first discussed it with me Thanksgiving a year ago. However, last Christmas when I returned home, I found that Tom Katen, who I had never heard of was writing it. When he finally delivered it to Vince we began reading it and naturally Vince liked it as he always does when he sees something which generally supports his views. After the first two pages I said, Vince, this is rotten and misses your entire point. After reading further, I pointed out many errors, so many in fact that Vince agreed that there was a need for a new draft rather than just correction of errors. Tom is apparently well informed about the War in Vietnam but not about the assassination. Consequently, I spent a week of long and careful work re-writing the first part of the article (which deals with the assassination), and then took the draft to Vince. He read it, made a few corrections, but liked it. Others who saw it in part or its entirety thought that it was clear and a fair handling of the topic, with no wild hypothesis drawn from inadequate evidence. When I visited Garrison in New Orleans last March, I was constantly being referred to as a co-author of that article, an article which I had not yet read in its final form. When, however, I read Matt Herron's copy, I was astonished to find that the article was essentially Tom's original with additions being made of some info I had dug up. The parallels to the Lincoln assassination came from my notes, for instance, although they had been changed. Then Penn Jones complained about errors which he had found and I called Vince and said that the whole thing should be gone over carefully and all of the stuff about laws of human action and inaction be removed in addition. There are no such laws, although there are likelihoods of action and inaction which could be discussed in regard to what seems to have happened in Dealy Plaza and afterwards. Furthermore, there is a great deal which should be in any article written on the subject of who might be behind the coverup after the assassination which is not in the article which has been dug up this summer in the Archives. More can be said about

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the
Paine, DeMohrenschildt, and military, not to mention the CIA which is all but ignored in the article.

To get back to your letter, I agree that those in Washington who opted for the lone assassin hypothesis early in the case were trying to prevent a tensing of the world situation. Dean Rusk, for instance, was chided by Gerald Ford for saying there was no conspiracy, and there were rumored to be calls from the Attorney General's office to Wade. This, however, does not explain the message to the President's plane, in my mind. It would explain press releases and many other things, but not messages to the President and the secret service who had to be concerned with the possibility of a widespread plot to assassinate our leaders. Quite the contrary, these are the only persons who had to know the absolute truth, and in fact an exaggerated version of any slight evidence pointing to conspiracy. There is also the Cabinet plane which had most of the cabinet in it (in violation of security regulations) and was flying over the Pacific, unprotected, for many hours following the assassination. Of course, we still don't know whether they got the same message, despite what Tom says in the article. In actuality, the message came either from Colonel Patterson or the Joint Chiefs who were meeting at the time of the assassination and also in contact with the plane through MayDay station, a signal corps base in the Midwest. Ironically, only the people heard something close to the truth, with the Dallas and other newspapers using the plural of assassin, talking about bursts of gunfire, and even the Voice of America that evening suggesting that more than one person could have been involved and making careful mention of right wing activities in Dallas preceding JFK's arrival.

There is no question that Accessories indicates your ability to careful research and weigh evidence, but I think that you are partly to blame for the letters you have received because of the concluding paragraph of that book. Most people probably reasoned that little was known of the Garrison case when your manuscript was finished other than many charges made by the news media to which responsible replies were made from New Orleans. Popkin's defense of Garrison in the New York Review of Books examined the charges of the ~~Saturday~~ Saturday Evening Post (which took a pretty definite stance given the evidence which it presented in support of that stance) and Newsweek. The latter, of course, were not only falacious, but there were indications of foul play on newsweek's part. Just as bad treatment of Garrison by the newsmedia says nothing for the validity of Garrison's case, foul play by Garrison never justifies attempts at bribery and intimidation on the part of the news media. For example, NBC's allegation that Eugene Davis is Clay Bertrand is utter nonsense as judged by the Testimony and Hearings, not to mention Davis' sworn statement. The attempt to bribe and intimidate Perry Russo and his girlfriend are another example. Although I now understand and largely agree with your position in regard to many aspects of the Garrison investigation, I did not feel the same way when I read Accessories when it was first available. Perhaps you had access to something to which I did not. Furthermore, whether or not it is true, both Vince and Harold claim that Jim came to New York to see you and they asked you to become his devil's advocate, but you did not even meet with him. This story is widely known, and if it is not true, please inform me when we meet and I will do my best to pass the word around. This is something which upset me a great deal when I first heard it because from what I have gotten from those who know you, you command a great deal of respect and would be a perfect person to keep Garrison in line, in addition to being an ideal devil's advocate on the basis of your knowledge of the case.

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Garrison knows little about the case and is easy to keep on the right track, except for the fact that he is surrounded by hero worshippers like Steve Burton and the LA crew, a number of incompetents, and Mark Lane and Mort Sahl. In other words, it is not his capacity for nonsense and back-stabbing which disturbs me, it is the fact that he engages in it and is then rewarded for it.

You have done a good job of summing up my arguments as I stated them, but I don't think that my logic is as bad as you indicate. First of all, his nonsensical and sometimes dishonest public statements about things like the code, seizure victim, etc. reflect on him, not his case against Shaw or anyone else. Likewise, his being gullible and fed planted info, probably by govt. connected persons, reflects on him and not what will be presented in court. In other words, despite misgivings one must have about Ronald Reagan due to his consulting of fortune tellers and his superstitions, whether or not he benefits California will be judged by the laws, etc. which he puts through as governor. I am in full agreement, of course, that as you point out, all of this should indicate a dissociation from the Garrison investigation on the part of self-respecting critics with a careful accompaniment of the reasons why which should be given to Garrison. Anytime he says something about the evidence in public I can understand why you jump to point out its inaccuracies. I will do the same if asked, although I do not take the initiative. However, we are not in a position to judge whether or not Garrison's case is fraudulent since we have not yet seen it. If, for instance, the Warren Commission had not published any of its evidence and the Zapruder film was not available, then we could attack them for not releasing it, but not call the Warren Report fraudulent since we wouldn't have seen the evidence on which it was based. The little which has been released which deals with the Shaw case tells us nothing about the remainder of the case. It is standard legal practice to let the defense see as little as possible at an indictment hearing, and if Garrison could get away with Russo and Bundy it reflects on the judges, not him. I see no bias in his favor, in that court, although I have only read only part of the transcript. The cases he has won, the perjury convictions of Dean Andrews and Layten Martens, are justified as far as I can see, and involve no foul play on his part. In fact, Andrews claims that he perjured himself because someone of power warned him that he would get his head blown off if he didn't. Garrison has, in the case of Martens, done a number of things to protect him and has done anything but persecute him. Shaw was not pressured into admitting he was Bertrand when he was arrested as far as I could tell. Furthermore, the case against Novel, even according to Novel's own public admission, seems to be a good one. Garrison wants him for conspiracy to rob the munitions, and Novel has already admitted robbing them on behalf of the CIA. The evidence that the munitions were stored at 544 Camp and in Ferrie's apartment seems pretty strong also. Garrison's statement that Oswald was present at the meetings as an informant for the BBI is conjecture as far as I know. The deal about LHO sending a message to Hoover comes at least in part from an uncorroborated (thanks to Lane's incompetence) statement from William Steven Walter, security clerk of the New Orleans office of the FBI, to Mark in front of a witness. But until the case gets into court, there are no grounds in my opinion for a rejection of it. One can make a case for Garrison's backstabbing, attempts at fraud, gullibility, nonsensical statements, dishonesty, etc., but still not judge his case against Shaw, especially since all of these things have increased greatly with time and are not apparent in things relating to the Shaw case. The important thing is that Clay Shaw will have the upper hand in court since all of these sort of attacks have gotten wide publicity, so that it would be hard to argue that the courtroom will not be a fair place to at least air the evidence. This is why I refrain from attacking

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Garrison other than to point out that I have misgivings. Clay Shaw's lawyers have repeatedly utilized the attacks on him to stay out of court. The longer this drags on, the longer we will have to wait for a full investigation. Let's get the thing into court and get it over with. *When it is, the whole thing might be re-opened.*

I agree that with Garrison as a founding father and some bad by-laws in the articles of incorporation, hope for success of the new committee is not great. But it will be even less given the fact that some of the best people on our side# will not be there to oppose Garrison. This is like leaving Germany in the face of fascism. Someone like myself will be able to do virtually nothing in keeping Garrison et. al. in line, even though I will have partial support from Vince and perhaps full support from Harold. I work day and night on this case, both as an investigator and public speaker, trying to fulfill both roles of the critic, and yet all this is meaningless in terms of what I will be able to do, both because of my age and because I am not one of the "Name" critics. This is, by the way, the major reason I am working so hard on Vince, other than the fact that he is a close friend and I see him when I am home. Please don't read this as though I am preaching moral responsibility, but rather an opinion which probably arises from a different view of what either complete demolition of Garrison will mean or a continuance of what is going on now. Lane gets worse by the day, so I imagine Jim does too.

By the way, I do not denounce the Warren Commission for false and tainted evidence, and that is why I don't apply the same epithets to Jim's case. I denounce them for ~~###~~ bias, maintenance of absurd conclusions in the face of evidence to the contrary, etc. They are guilty of holding themselves aloof from the plight of the witnesses, as the fine dedication of -your book suggests, just as Garrison is responsible for some of the same attitude towards some witnesses. The FBI, and some commission lawyers, are a different case. But again, one cannot judge what one cannot see, so why not emphasize that both Garrison and Clay Shaw should get their day in court. Not that the verdict is always just, but that it will be much more just than what is going on now for both parties, and that the evidence can be aired so everyone can reach their own verdict.

I disagree when you say that you are not attacked whenever Garrison is, because for the majority of the public I'll wager you are. Only a handful of intellectuals know that there are critics who are against Garrison, and the one who they generally know about is Epstein who uses criticism of Garrison as an excuse for further apologizing for the Commission. Epstein is now, for certain, a defender of the Report. My attitude is therefore that I will disavow anything he says which is false or distorted and will say that I have misgivings about some of his case, some of his methods, express worry about his being fed false info by agents and others, but emphasize the need to get the Shaw case into court. Otherwise, we are judging the Warren ~~####~~ Commission on the ~~#####~~ basis of his public statements or bad methods, without first reading the Report and in fact, before the Report is even out. This is why I was hoping that you might join the committee and try to help form a block of persons to keep him in line until he gets his day in court. If that doesn't work, I would have expected you to quit and make public your reasons for quitting. You would not be alone in quitting, I suspect.

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So, while you are justified in complaining about the attitudes of others towards you, perhaps you have been a bit hasty in forming an attitude about those who either openly or silently support Garrison. I don't see that there are necessarily irreconcilable differences on basic questions of principle, values, and morals, although in the case of some critics, and perhaps you may now think in my case, ^{there are} ~~there are~~. If and when we are able to meet I would like to discuss whether or not several types of behaviors can arise from similar attitudes and principles and the questions I have raised in this letter, not Garrison. I think that we are in essential agreement on him, # although I doubt if any two people could agree completely on the motivation behind many of his actions. I have some ~~theorems~~ ^{ideas}. There are some things relating to the good "old evidence" which I would like to discuss and get your opinion on, and I would very much like to meet you, having admired your work for quite some time.

Many thanks again for finding time to write.

Sincerely yours,

Gary Schoener

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P.S. This letter requires ~~no~~ answer as I imagine you are as busy as I am.