

July 28, 1967

Mr. Richard Salant
President, CBS News
524 West 57th Street
New York, New York

Dear Mr. Salant:

Between what I hear on CBS News and do not hear from you, I have begun to wonder if you have a THING. The more I listen to CBS and for answers I do not get, the more I fear this is a THING on me. That disturbs me, for CBS News has enough troubles without a THING on me. This is not to say that CBS has more troubles than it deserves, but it is to say that it has or has earned, without yet harvesting all, more troubles than it wants and certainly as many as it can cope with if it is concerned about its reputation and that of its staff members.

Hearing Dan Rather tonight on the CBS News without Walter Cronkite, it suddenly occurred to me that you and your people are or will be embarrassed. As I say, you have more than enough to worry about without developing another THING. I knew it is not one on honesty, for if any of you had a THING about that, among those too many things that would never have been aired is a series of four shows.

I prefer the indirection, which makes for truthfulness, for there were four and they were "shows", whatever else they were or were not. By this time you should have learned enough about it to welcome not hearing the title.

Well, sir, tonight I came to realize the nature of this THING about me that bothers you people. I was again listening to Dan Rather, happily in a smaller dose than before, when I heard all these words that have that special ring, the one of familiarity.

Rather was talking about the new Commission the President has appointed, the second that is guaranteed to do nothing, and that too late. This one is like the first, composed of already-too-busy eminences of both parties. Only this one is to be different. How do I know? Rather-you-CBS told me so. How is it to be different? It is not to be like critics (I am certain I detected the plural, but with the spoken word I was as unprepared as I was for the flattery) of the Warren Commission say that body was. How was that? Well, the staff was not to do the work, the members were (how Governor Keerner and Mayor Lindsay will find the time Justice Warren and Senator Russell couldn't you didn't say). This was not to be a "cover-up". There would be no secrecy this time. Etc.

Now, the strange thing is this: You recently found space and time for critics of the Warren Report who have written books. Two of them, that is, not the first and not the one who first published each of the criticisms you attributed to these two alone or to no one or to yourself. This includes also what no one else had ever said. You may recall I wrote Mr. Midgley about this, sending you a copy.

Mr. Salant - 2

How consistent you are! It seems like these two men, now associated in the minds of your audience as the critics, neither charged nor used the word "cover-up". Neither says nor believes the members of the Commission were not responsible for the work. Both, in one form or another, say the opposite. In fact, both focus very much on Chief Justice Warren. The very odd thing is that it is I who say and have said, from the introduction to my first book, dating to February 1965, that the Chief Justice and other Commissioners were too busy, did not do the real work, and that the staff did all the work. In my second book, the one that has "cover-up" in its title, I go further and say the Commissioners were fed a pre-digested pabulum.

There is no need to labor this further.

Really, the reason I am writing is because the sad state of "news" in this country today is such I do not want it to suffer further from any psychological problems you may develop. So, I want to console you. You are not alone. You did not start it. And who knows, by the time CBS News has to face it, its news may no longer be Salanted (excuse the repetition; I like the phrase and I am weak and indulge myself). If it gives you even a teensy-weensy bit of relief, let me tell you that NBC went so far as to use my (copyrighted) title "WHITEWASH" in promoting and advertising an appearance before the cameras of these two other men, neither of whom says or believes, for different reasons, that this investigation was a "whitewash".

So, now you understand. I just do not want you to have a guilt complex. It may be naive of me to consider you susceptible, but as I say, the state of reporting is such it can tolerate no additional burdens, and I want you, therefore, not to suffer this one.

There are a few other things I can do to help - for the time being, anyway. For example, I do not have to rush out and tell everyone why you did not use the Lovelady reports your staff asked of me when they could not find them, even after I published them and their source. For additional example, I do not have to rush out and tell everybody why you did not use the picture of Billy Lovelady that you took - and all about the shirt he was wearing. For a little while longer, that shirt can be a secret between you and me - and the Loveladays who, alas, are in need (he has cancer, I understand).

This is not an implied threat, for certainly you are grown men, experienced newsmen, and knew these secrets would not keep even as long as you can hide the truth. But I won't hurry it; I'll wait for a propitious moment. Those on your staff in charge of digesting the work you never credit by now knew that I have published only part of it, without mention of CBS News. If they are all on vacation, recovering from the labor and trauma of their great effort, let me tell you (so you won't have to read the entire book, PHOTOGRAPHIC WHITEWASH: SUPPRESSED KENNEDY ASSASSINATION PICTURES) that it is at the end of the index.

You do really flatter me, Mr. Salant. I appreciate it so deeply that I ask a great favor of you. I asked a similar one of Les Midgley, but he is probably too honeymooned with his White House bride to be able to respond. I asked him to send me an autographed copy of the transcript of those four shows (they really were "shows", too). May I ask you for just a little part of tonight's newsscript, autographed - only this Rather commentary? Until I get around to writing another book, for which, with

Mr. Salant -

my continuing work in this field I have as yet set no time, I will cherish it.

That book is titled, "Dick Daring In The Hellbox, or, How I Got Rich In Six Months". It will be the story of the WHITEWASH Books.

There may be a spin-off if it gets too long. If there is, I think I'll call that "Letters To Finks".

Yours,

Harold Weisberg