

c/o 2700 Tulane Avenue
New Orleans, Louisiana 70119
January 12, 1971

Dear Mr. Joesten:

Thank you for your kind remarks about "A Heritage of Stone". * I am sure I don't have to tell you about the counter-attack which it brought from major elements of the American press. I am particularly grateful for your incisive understanding of my objectives in trying to communicate to the public the truth about the assassination of President Kennedy and about what is happening to America. Consequently, although the book moved fast I am afraid that I am really reduced to seeking to arouse random individuals concerning the reality which surrounds them. The great mass of the public seem to be happy captives of the fictions fed to them on television and the even more unreal fictions announced daily from Washington.

In your December 1st issue of your truth letter you observe that I have not shared with my readers all that we have developed. You are entirely correct and I would judge from such insight that you have spent a good part of your life in intelligence work **, recognizing as you have omissions which are not referred to even indirectly.

From the beginning I have had the problem of having to withhold a good part of what we, at first, stumbled across and, subsequently, developed by hundreds of hours of digging in sterile soil. The problem has been that I am, first of all, a prosecutor. By American custom and by my own inclination to lean over backwards to assure Clay Shaw a fair trial I refused to comment on the specific facts of the case. Consequently, during the two years the defense succeeded in delaying the trial the national press indulged itself in a carnival of speculation that left reality far behind. Later, it did not hesitate to give me full credit for its wild speculations so that by the time of the trial I found myself as more or less the entrepreneur of what had already been established in the public mind as a circus. Witnesses whom we had located by the most painstaking methods were universally denounced for falling short of the intellectual level of Bertrand Russell or for lacking the sartorial elegance and savoir faire of Lord Mountbatten. The story of the trial itself by mindless speculation in countless tabloids had been reduced to a tawdry melange of coincidence supported by witnesses whom no responsible prosecutor would ever present in a court of law. Moreover, the conspiracy to kill Kennedy had been reduced -- by similar repetition -- to an unacceptable plot hatched in New Orleans (making it immediately meaningless) by a motley collection of characters who plainly could not successfully have robbed a small restaurant.

In other words, the government did not waste the two years' delay it obtained. While I attempted to follow the customs and ethics of the legal profession by refusing

* See my review of Mr. Garrison's book in the December 1, 1970 issue of TRUTH LETTER.

** This assumption is incorrect. I have never been for even one minute in intelligence work, though I have written a number of books on the subject.

to comment on the case ahead of trial -- hardly a good start in a battle against the dirty tricks division of a major intelligence agency -- the case was torn to pieces ahead of time. Moreover, by the time of trial the defense had obtained, through a most effective penetration of my office, copies of all of our files as well as our trial outline. Inasmuch as most of America still believes that domestic intelligence does not exist here (except in the form of Eric Ambler and Graham Greene novels, as well as Alfred Hitchcock films) nothing could have been accomplished by a public comment except to add to my unbelievability. The matter of my credulity had been steadily worked on for some time by those news organs close to the government -- which is to say virtually every major news medium. Least of all was there any use in mentioning the attempt to accomplish a false arrest of me at a major airport. That would have brought the strait jacket for sure.

So I learned to read the twisted news articles and learned to look at the distorted cartoons, steadily pounding away at the question of my mental condition, until the time for trial finally arrived. By that time, however, the effectiveness of the counter-effort against us and the demonstrated hopelessness of explaining to friends what had happened in Dallas -- and why it had happened -- had made it clear that the deal was too rich for the average jury of Americans. It would simply have been unbelievable -- and, furthermore, much of the intelligence backgrounds and motives could not be introduced in a courtroom. It had become apparent that any recitation of full actuality would be precisely as believable to the average juror as Alice in Wonderland. Consequently, I made the decision to present to the jury the simpler aspects of the case -- which is to say, the pre-assassination conditioning of Oswald in New Orleans (a. Creation of the scapegoat pattern; b. The "Cubanization" of Oswald, never used later apparently as the result of a "swap-out" made between the remaining civilian leadership and the newly dominant military leadership).

Understandably, the logical objection (and it did indeed prove insuperable) is that such an oversimplified approach fails to give a reason for the conspiracy. However, from the legal point of view it was preferable because the conspiracy statute in Louisiana requires no evidence as to a reason. In contrast the full explanation -- I felt -- was simply too sophisticated for acceptance by my countrymen who, brought up on a daily diet of the Pledge of Allegiance and the Star Spangled Banner were not ready to accept that history had brought America to the point of a coup d'etat. To make a long story short, I failed -- in my judgment -- to take into account that, the law notwithstanding, the jurors as practical men would impose upon the facts their own requirement of a reason. The result, of course, was that strong as most of the State witnesses were -- and they were, for the most part, contrary to the reportage of the national media -- the jurors appear to have informally required for themselves a reason for the defendant's actions -- and, in terms of their own life styles, none was presentable. In short, we came back to the point I made in my book that the shadowy ramifications of a national coup d'etat are simply not presentable in a state court. To this can be added the additional burden that in the America of today even the intellectuals, for the most part, are quite unaware of the arrival of the warfare state. In the U.S. Senate, for example -- after the countless atrocities we have committed in Viet Nam and after the murders here at home, so eloquent in their meaning that they cry out for recognition, we have only about twenty Senators out of the one hundred who show signs of awareness of the disaster which has overtaken America.

So much for the past and why I have "played my cards close to my vest", so to speak. I wrote the book -- mostly done at night, in anticipation that it would ultimately be my only opportunity to communicate to those whose minds were open to understanding. Here, also, as you sensed so accurately, I withheld information in various sectors. I did this despite the conscious loss of effect in some areas because I still am, first of all, a prosecutor and I still intend to obtain some convictions of men associated with the assassination, even though -- as I was now able to reveal in my book -- the New Orleans activity was limited and preparatory to the assassination (and my jurisdiction does not extend beyond New Orleans to Dallas or -- most unfortunately -- to Washington). It was not a matter of caution because once it became apparent that John Kennedy had been killed in a coup d'etat, part of which was orchestrated here, I have never given any thought to caution. For that matter, I did not expect to live this long, but apparently I stumbled out into the light before they were ready for me.

In any event, prosecutions remain here to be completed and I have taken pains to avoid giving any of the potential defendants cause to complain about unfairness in even the most remote form. Set for January 19th (if federal court does not delay us) is the Clay Shaw trial for perjury. You will recall that Shaw testified under oath that he did not know Lee Harvey Oswald nor David Ferrie. We have witnesses who contravene this.

Then we have the Kerry Thornley trial for perjury before the Grand Jury. Thornley, as you will recall, was a major witness -- indeed, the major witness as to Oswald's "deranged" and "Communist" tendencies. Thornley testified that he had not seen Oswald since Toro Marine days, however, we located witnesses who had seen him in New Orleans with Oswald. Shortly after the assassination, Thornley moved to Arlington, Virginia -- a suburb of Washington, D.C., where he stayed until he testified before the Warren Commission in the summer of 1964.

Then we have coming up the trials of the men who obtained our files and our trial brief for the federal government (which is to say, for the defendants -- it is all the same).

Thus, as you can see, although we have hold only of the big toe, so to speak, we are not letting go. This is why I have been so circumspect in my account in my book -- so as not to give them an excuse to evade prosecution. The same logic was applied throughout to individuals in the Pentagon-warfare-complex structure who might have delayed publication by means of an injunction or whose power might have frightened off a potential publisher. These are the primary reasons for my indirection and generalities in many areas. There are also other specifics which well may have frozen a publisher into inaction. So I told the story, from the insights I had gained, well enough to get it published but not so well that it would be too hot for them to handle. In any event, I can assure you that I will not be backing-up one inch and they will not be able to delay the trials forever.

Of course, you are right in your critique of my generalization that all coups d'etat need a scapegoat. I should have qualified that by saying that in a country of libertarian tradition, where the people still believe the government is theirs, it is wise to use a scapegoat so as not to awaken them.

I thank you not only for your kind remarks, but for your excellent works, your insight and your tenacity. I am so glad you exist.

Warmest regards,

(signed) Jim Garrison

There follows a handwritten postscript:

"Heritage" is moving well over here and is already in its 3rd edition, although the printer failed to change the plate in this regard so that the 3rd edition still reads "second impression". The book is not available in some cities and we are presently engaged in finding out how the government accomplished this.

I am curious that no European countries have shown any interest in publishing it. Certainly its authenticity has been validated by the hostility it received from the government artillery in the national media (N.Y. Times, L.A. Times etc.) Interestingly enough, once it got past the initial artillery barrage, the reviews began to appear in independent newspapers and they have all been favorable. Again, thank you for your favorable comments.

Best regards,

(signed) Jim Garrison

Note: Because of the length of this unusual document, it is necessary to postpone the continuation of the "Panel Review" and "The Truth about Chappaquiddick" to the next issue. - I also intend to comment on certain aspects of Mr. Garrison's letter in that or subsequent issues. J.J.