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7/20/91

DearMrs Re mington,

First, please excuse my typing but it cannot be any better.

I appreciate your kind comments, as I did when you spoke them. When you get to 88 hopefully without the problems I have, you will find that such things mean more then.

By and large I think yu hae a worthwhile project and have done well with what you sent. I have a few suggestions in the text and in the table of contents I think you will have to consider the possibility you will ghve to add more. And I think you might want to change XV to reenactment, tp reenactments.

In appendix X and XI you should also add what they said in Post, particularly Carrico, but both.

Un 5 you refer to common sense and intellectual honesty. You cannot consider them too much and there was little that was more lacking

On 6, "Facts" is a good hearing be cause they were and they had to be avoided if there was to be the preconceived non-conspiracy in the invesigation.

A possible problem for you is keeing up with what has been disclosed. I have not even tried to learn what was disclosed under the 1992 Act but I have a very small sample, There were also other disclosures. I used some of that in Never Again, if you do Not have it. Not yet sold out, Carroll and Graf.

Please excuse the haste. Best wishes,

Sincerely,

Harold Weisberg

July 13, 2001

Dear Mr. Weisberg,

It was a genuine pleasure talking with you on the phone this afternoon. As I tried to indicate then, my enthusiasm for studying and writing about the JFK assassination is largely a reflection of the respect I hold for you and your trail-blazing impact on the untold number of persons who have benefited from your work.

Beyond that respect is a deep admiration for the quiet, generous and welcome encouragement you extended me, an unknown 68-year old rookie in 1997 when I first wrote you for advice as I began my serious study of this fascinating story. Having read (some more than once) and selectively studied (all many times) your books, I am quite convinced that many other writers have borrowed many of your ideas and insights developed therein. And sadly I include my awareness that many of that many have not always credited you with your work appropriated and published as their own. Perhaps you can take handsome comfort in knowing that ironically the practice of appropriating someone's intellectual property may indeed be the despicable counterpart of imitation being the best form of flattery. In any event, both you and the thieves know which property is whose when you see it.

Enclosed is a copy of the Introduction for the manuscript to which I alluded in our conversation. Assuming that your address remains the same as of next Spring, I will send you a copy of the book scheduled to be published at that time. For the meantime, I wish you well and extend my very best wishes and hopes for your future.

Sincerely,

Rodger A. Remington

Rodger A. Remington
1756 Lyon St. NE
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P.S. As I indicated on the phone, I do not expect you to take the time to answer this letter. If, however, you have any suggestions or cautions generated by the Introduction, I will be happy to receive them. R

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This book is written primarily for the reading of future historians. Basically it a collection of suggestions for them to consider as they undertake to write history of the work of the Warren Commission. That commission, so-called because chaired by the Chief Justice of the United States, Earl Warren, functioned under a mandate from the President of the United States as of November 29, 1963 to investigate the week-old murder of his predecessor.

I note, however, that in saying this writing is for the eyes of future historians, I do not intend to exclude any portion of the general reading public. Indeed, I am very attracted to the observation of the late American historian, Louis Gottschalk, who alluded to a dual readership when he wrote in the Preface to his 1950 publication, *Understanding History*:

> This work has been written primarily for the student of history in the colleges and universities. The needs of the independent reader, not directly concerned with writing history himself but wishing to acquire standards of judging historical writing have also been constantly kept in mind. It has been assumed that the reader has profounder love than knowledge of history but sufficient knowledge to manage without a trained guide. (ix-x)

From a different, but parallel perspective, I am also attracted to the generous idea presented and sponsored by an earlier American historian, Carl Becker, who, in his 1931 address to the annual conference of the American Historical Association, offered the then novel concept of Everyman as his own historian. Professor Becker spoke thus to his peers:

> . . . [O]ur definition becomes, 'History is the memory of things said and done.' That is a definition that reduces history to its lowest terms, and yet includes everything that is essential to understanding what it really is.
>
> If the essence of history is the memory of things said and done, then it is obvious that every normal person, Mr. Everyman, knows some history. Of course we do what we can to conceal this invidious truth. Assuming a professional

> manner, we say that so and so knows no history, when we mean no more than that he has failed to pass the examinations set for a higher degree; and simple-minded persons, undergraduates and others, taken in by academic classifications of knowledge, think they know no history because they have never taken a course in history in college, or have never read Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*. No doubt the academic convention has its uses, but it is one of the superficial accretions that must be stripped off if we would understand history reduced to its lowest terms. Mr. Everyman, as well as you and I, remember things said and done, and must do so at every waking moment. Suppose Mr. Everyman to have awakened this morning unable to remember anything said or done. He would be a lost soul indeed. This has happened, this sudden loss of all historical knowledge. But normally it does not happen. Normally the memory of Mr. Everyman, when he awakens in the morning, reaches out into the country of the past and of distant places and instantaneously recreates his little world of endeavor, pulls together as it were things said and done in his yesterdays, and coordinates them with his present perceptions and with things to be said and done in his tomorrows. Without this historical knowledge, this memory of things said and done, his today would be aimless and his tomorrow without significance.[1]

And just to demonstrate that we all at least in one way are indebted to those who have gone before us, it seems likely that Professor Becker was himself familiar with the remarks given by the eminent 19th-century German historian, Theodor Mommsen, who delivered the Rectorial Address at the University of Berlin in 1874. For he included this:

> Every one of you gentlemen, every thinking man generally, is always searching for sources and is, in practice, an historian. There is no other way to understand the events that take place before your eyes. Every business man who handles a complicated transaction, every lawyer who studies a case, is a searcher for sources and a practicing historian.[2]

So, assuming there will continue to exist these two types of historians, Mr. Everyman and the professional, I think it important to suggest here the likelihood that historians in the future will experience the vexations entailed in confronting three perplexing issues that have often troubled historians in the past. They are the issues of truth, method and facts. Certainly related, and perhaps

even co-equal in importance, each presents special problems that must be recognized, and so it matters little here which is first considered. Such being the case, I proceed with the awareness that one or the other assumes primary momentary importance in any analysis and evaluation of the work of the Warren Commission.

Truth

On behalf of the subject of truth, I mention here a fondness for an expression first read many years ago: "Truth though for God may be one, assumes many shapes to men." I have long since forgotten the source which should be credited, but the virtuous lesson of tolerance it conveys should surely be one of its author's most cherished rewards. Presently I submit that anyone wishing to develop a knowledgeable familiarity with current thinking of truth can discover a virtual treasure chest in a 1995 publication titled *The Truth About The Truth*. Edited by Walter Truett Anderson, who also contributes handsomely to the high quality writing therein, it is a thought-provoking gem with a range of thinking that is very broad (and sometimes deeper than my level of quick understanding).

In his Introduction, editor Anderson identifies his purpose:

> The message of this book is . . . that we are in the midst of a great, confusing, stressful and enormously promising historical transition, and it has to do with a change not so much in *what* we believe as in *how we believe.*

And he goes on to establish the thrust of the message to be conveyed:

> Surrounded by so many truths, we can't help but revise our concept of truth itself: our beliefs about belief. More and more people become acquainted with the idea that, as philosopher Richard Rorty puts it, truth is made rather than found.[8] This idea is not exactly new. . . .

A few words of qualification are in order here. When it is suggested that "we can't help but revise our concept of truth itself: our belief about beliefs," it is necessary to realize that the full title of editor Anderson's publication in 1995 is: *The Truth About The Truth: De-confusing and Re-constructing the Postmodern World*; therein one finds 33 selections, 25 of which were written in the 1980s and 1990s.

Accordingly, for any discussion of the issue of truth in the time context of the work of the Warren Commission--1963-1964--it seems prudent to limit the meaning of the term to that identified by Anderson as the concept being revised by the Postmodernists' writings postdating the work of the Commission. So the use of the term, truth, in the present writing focuses on what should be considered the "Modern"--1960s--as opposed to any evolving "Postmodern" meaning developed mainly in the 1980s and 1990s identified in *The Truth About The Truth*. Thus, this writing proposes that the future historians' analysis and evaluation of the work of the Warren Commission, as they involve the issue of truth, should utilize the 1960s meaning of truth: beliefs about belief.

Method

The second issue always facing historians is that of method. This addresses the problem of how history is written. Over the years there have been written several excellent manuals or primers intended to demonstrate the writing of history as entailing a method that includes cautions such as careful attention to matters of authentic and credible evidence, internal and external criticism, the phenomenon and use of facts, the use and abuse of footnotes, and a seemingly endless recitation of rules and propriety in the writing of history.

I submit that if one were inclined to evaluate the work of the Warren Commission in the 1960s from the then contemporary perspective of formal rules of historical method, one could do that well by using as the standard that work which is the citation for the remarks of the above-quoted eminent German historian, Theodor Mommsen. This is Jacques Barzun and Henry F. Graff's 1957 publication. *The Modern Researcher: The classic manual on all aspects of research and writing.* Certainly there is much good advice included in its 430 pages. I am confident that if their manual were read and studied carefully, along with reading several other required writings on the same subject, any graduate student in any graduate history program in America could easily pass the required course in Historical Method.

I will argue, however, that an equally effective standard for the analysis and evaluation of historical writing, adequate for both type historians of the future--Mr. Everyman and the professional--is available for the taking without the rigors of the academic training. This method is a style perhaps best expressed as a commitment to the twin concepts of common sense and intellectual honesty. These are terms which may not lend themselves to tight definition, but which are in a large category as things we recognize when we see or hear them. An example of their use in evaluating historical writing is a negative one that addresses both dimensions of the method: common sense and intellectual honesty tell us that one does not begin with a conclusion and then find and force facts to confirm the predetermined conclusion.

These concepts--common sense and intellectual honesty--are values that need never be feared and as well can be easily defended. They will not necessarily prevent error. For history--his story--is after all a story about mankind--a creature prone to error. But the species

also constitutes creatures endowed with an intellect. Thus if a historian will but utilize that gift in an honest way without tailoring facts to fit his stories, and use the common sense that demands he not confuse subjective belief with objective knowledge, he likely will write high quality stories on the subjects of his choice.

Facts

The third issue for the future historians of the John F. Kennedy assassination is that of facts. The first notion I urge historians to accept and use in speaking of a fact is to remember that it is a ***statement***. I will argue that the best discourse I ever read on historical facts is that written by the American social historian, Crane Brinton. Brinton's writing spans the period between the 1930s and 1960s. Likely the best known of his work was titled *The Anatomy of Revolution*, first published in 1938. In 1965 it was reprinted in a revised and expanded edition, which is easily commended to future historians for their consideration and use.

Interestingly, Professor Brinton's choice of meaning for facts was taken from an authority in a field somewhat removed from that normally regarded as history.

Writing in that 1965 updated version of *The Anatomy of Revolution*, Brinton declares:

> . . . [T]he scientist by no means confines himself to 'the facts and nothing but the facts.' Dangerous epistemological depths yawn at this point, but we shall try and go ahead in spite of them. The popularization of Baconian ideas on induction is probably the chief source of the erroneous notion that the scientist does nothing to the facts he laboriously and virtuously digs up, except to let them fall neatly into a place they make for themselves. Facts themselves are not just 'out there' and we should be willing to accept L. J. Henderson's definition of 'fact' as an empirically *verifiable* statement about phenomena in terms of a conceptual scheme. [Emphasis is Brinton's] Actually

> the scientist cannot work without a conceptual scheme, and though the relation between facts and conceptual schemes is not by any means clear, it is at least clear that a conceptual scheme involves something besides facts, involves, indeed, a working mind.

Brinton then addresses what for some is a difficult reality:

> Let no one be frightened by the term 'conceptual scheme.' The meaning is really very simple: thunder and lightning impinge on our senses of hearing and sight--probably the mere differentiating of this sound and this flash from other sounds and flashes means that we are employing a conceptual scheme. Certainly when we think of Jupiter with his bolts, Thor with his hammer, or the electrical discharge of modern physics, we have clearly arranged our sense-perceptions in accordance with definite conceptual schemes. We possess, indeed, the basic elements of three different theories of thunder and lightning, three differently stated uniformities in these phenomena. But the crucial reason why we should prefer our electrical discharge to Jupiter or Thor *as a conceptual scheme* is that it is more useful, and that we can by using it get on better also with other conceptual schemes that we use for similar purposes. But in the sense which the word *true* has for the theologian, and most moralists and philosophers, our electrical discharge is not a bit *truer* than the old notions about Jupiter and Thor.[3] [Emphases are Brinton's]

In the context of Professor Brinton's indebtedness to the natural scientist, L. J. Henderson, for the meaning of "facts", there is need here for a few words of explanation. Lawrence Joseph Henderson was an American natural scientist, a biochemist who published in 1913 a major work titled *The Fitness of the Environment.* And Professor Brinton was an American historian, a social historian. I am aware of the academic argument that says history is not really a science, thereby disputing the claim of many 19th Century German historians who developed what came to be termed the "Scientific Method" of history. Not surprisingly, given the relative inexperience of American historians in comparison with their European counterparts, German influence upon American history writing in the first half of the 20th Century was strong. In that setting, it was quite common to include History in an academic classification called "Social Sciences."

Thus I think it not really extraordinary that Crane Brinton in the 1930s-1960s could and did utilize a working definition of "facts" constructed by a natural scientist. Neatness of categories aside, the notion of historical fact as parallel with a meaning used by a biochemist seems appropriate in the present writing, which, it will be remembered, is concerned with future accounts of events from the 1960s.

To pursue this matter of context, I particularly urge future historians to be sensitive to a device which has been utilized much too often in evaluation of the writing of both defenders and critics of the work of the Warren Commission. This is the device: Summary dismissal of the claims of an opponent by simple declaration--without the proof of clear example--that the data/evidence/inference/whatever at issue was "taken out of context." And precisely because there are no hard rules concerning how much quotation is necessary to establish context for the data/evidence/inference/whatever, keeping always in mind the requirements of common sense and intellectual honesty should be the guide sought and followed.

This writing naturally presumes that the future will continue to witness work by many writing historians--Mr. Everyman and the professionals. It also presumes that one of the most important and fascinating tasks for them will indeed be writing history of the John F. Kennedy assassination. But note carefully: I purposely do not indicate as an important task for future historians the writing of ***the*** history of the John F. Kennedy assassination. Why? This much seems certain: If the experience of the past is any guide for the future, value judgments of historians should never be regarded as anything more than tentative conclusions always subject to revision upon discovery of better data upon which to base other conclusions.

NOTES

[1] Carl L. Becker, *Everyman His Own Historian: Essays on History and Politics*, Chicago: Quadrangle Books, Quadrangle Paperback Edition, 1966, c1935, 233-234.

[2] Quoted in Jacques Barzun & Henry F. Graff, *THE MODERN RESEARCHER: The classic manual on all aspects of research and writing*, Revised Edition 1970, New York/Chicago/San Francisco/Atlanta c1957 by Jacques Barzun, c1970 by Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc. [v].

[3] Crane Brinton, *The Anatomy of Revolution*, Revised and Expanded Edition, New York: Vintage Books, a Division of Random House, c1965 by. Prentice-Hall, Inc., 9-10.