

September 2, 1984

Mr. Harold Weisberg
Route 12, Old Receiver Rd.
Frederick, Maryland 21701


Dear Mr. Weisberg:

I am writing to inform you of plans to initiate a scholarly journal on the JFK assassination, to be called The Third Decade. A prospectus for this journal is attached. I would, of course, be delighted to have your involvement in the enterprise in any way you might see fit. I am well aware that, beyond your invaluable publications on the subject, you have maintained over the years an enormous file of FOIA-released documents. It occurs to me that you must have learned an immense amount of new information on the subject, much of which has never, to my knowledge, been published or otherwise made accessible to other researchers. I hope you would see The Third Decade as one opportunity to disseminate some of your learning.

A few years ago, when I was first learning a little bit about the JFK assassination, we had a phone conversation in which you gave me several leads for my study that turned out to be quite fruitful. (In particular, I have made much use of your suggestion that the DPD radio tapes require the closest scrutiny.) You also indicated that I was welcome to visit you in Maryland and make use of your files. I hope this invitation still stands. I do get to D.C. occasionally to work in the Archives, but so far I have not had time to make a side trip to Maryland. Early October of this year looks like a good possibility for a trip in that direction; perhaps I could see you then?

I don't know whether you have seen any of the articles I have published in The Continuing Inquiry. In any event, I'm enclosing a copy of a paper, "Coordinating the Witnesses," that has not yet been published. Your own work on M.L. Baker in Whitewash II influenced one aspect of the analysis. I would be most happy to have any of your comments on this paper or on any of my published articles.

Sincerely yours,



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The Third Decade: a Journal of Research on the JFK Assassination

In the twenty plus years since President Kennedy's assassination, public comment on that event has evolved in a way that involves a rough characterization by decades. In the 10 years from 1963-1973 we had the massive investigation conducted by the Warren Commission and the development of an immense "critical" literature which challenged the Commission's "lone assassin" conclusion about the event. The second decade, 1973-1983, began in a newly aroused state of popular and scholarly consciousness of the devious actions of governmental agents as symbolized in the Watergate affair. Out of Watergate and this new consciousness arose a demand for investigations of the operations of such agencies as the CIA and FBI, investigations which produced almost incidental indications that these agencies may have had hitherto-concealed involvements in the Kennedy assassination. By the middle of that decade Congress was ready to support (without great enthusiasm) a re-investigation by its own Select Committee of the assassination of President Kennedy as well as that of Martin Luther King. After a few years of haggling about the half-hearted "probable conspiracy" conclusions of this committee, it seems that, by the time of the twentieth anniversary observances in November 1983, the public was generally content to consign the whole question to the graveyard of the great unsolved mysteries of human history.

As we begin the third decade since the assassination, those with serious scholarly interest in understanding the event seem to be facing a situation of mixed values with reference to their interests; there is good news and bad. The bad, of course, is that their interest in the subject cannot count on much in the way of moral support from their peers. Nor is there much realistic expectation that mainstream publishers of books and periodicals will be receptive to the publication of their research work. The subject is "passe" or the reputations of previous authors are too "disreputable" for establishment publishers to give manuscripts on the JFK assassination a fair consideration for publication. The real danger is that "assassinology" as a serious scholarly discipline will become the province of "nuts" and "buffs," just as establishment defenders of government investigations have always accused all serious critics of being.

There is a brighter side to this situation, and a side from which this enterprise, The Third Decade, proceeds. It may be that just the right amount of time has passed since the traumatic event that dispassionate and objective analysis of the crime (and the investigations thereof) is becoming a real possibility. The overwhelmingly polemical tone of nearly all preceding analyses of the assassination is obvious to any longtime student. Not only have pro- and anti-Warren Commission analysts accused one another in terms that make epithets like "scavenger" and "prostitute" almost the politest things they have said about one another. Even among the erstwhile "critics," there has been a tendency to suspect and indeed to accuse one another of being "disinformation" agents if the information they are offering happens to disagree with the perspective of oneself. In the third decade of our study of the subject we shall hopefully outgrow this brawling stage of interaction among the assassination critics. As we begin to talk with and not past each other there may be a genuine hope that by our individual research efforts and by our discussion with one another of the results of these efforts, something like a collective accumulation of knowledge on the subject will ensue.

This is, at least, the guiding motive behind The Third Decade. Manuscripts are solicited from any and all assassination scholars, whether they happen to have academic credentials or not, whether their perspectives on the event happen to agree with those of the editors. Manuscripts are evaluated on three criteria only: (a) whether they are relevant to the intentions of the journal: that is, whether they focus on some aspect of the JFK assassination and/or the investigations thereof; (b) whether they contain adequate documentation for the assertions of fact that they contain; and (c) whether they involve original contributions in the form of newly-discovered facts and/or novel interpretations of already-known facts. After the selected manuscripts are published, it is expected that readers who wish to comment on them critically or by way of expansion on points made in the articles will make their comments either in separate articles or in the format of letters to the editor; whether these are published will depend on their meeting the same criteria outlined above. Authors will be given the opportunity to make published replies to these comments. In addition the editors may seek to publish, in whole or excerpted, material that already exists in unpublished form or in publications to which the reader would not normally have access.

The Third Decade will be published/^{bi-}monthly. Most large city public libraries and college and university libraries will be solicited as subscribers. The first issue of The Third Decade will be published in November, 1984.

The founding editor of The Third Decade is Jerry D. Rose, Professor of Sociology, State University College, Fredonia, N.Y. In addition to teaching a course on the JFK assassination at his college, Professor Rose has corresponded widely with assassination researchers and has published seven articles in The Continuing Inquiry as well as a subject index to that newsletter. A number of other assassination researchers will serve as associate editors for The Third Decade.

Coordinating the Witnesses

by

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One of the more enlightening pieces of research to appear in the TCI was Patricia Lambert's study of Secret Service Report 491.¹ Lambert shows that, in the week of December 2-5, 1963, agents of the Dallas field office of the Service were able to secure from four black employees at the TSBD---Harold Norman, James Jarman, Bonnie Williams and Charles Givens---a number of "improvements" on their original statements, all in the direction of helping to build the government's "case" against Oswald as the sixth floor assassin. Commenting on the implications of her research, Lambert observes that "the fact that all these stories originated in Secret Service Report 491 casts doubt on the integrity of the investigation conducted by that agency's Dallas field office. For if these stories are fabrications, the witnesses who supplied them had guidance from someone.² Someone in a position to screen out and coordinate information at its source".

To continue the line of inquiry initiated by Lambert, I want to show that two other key witnesses to assassination-related events also changed their stories, apparently during the same week of December 2-5 and under the "guidance" of the self-same agents of the Dallas office of the Secret Service. In both instances the change was in the direction of solving problems of lack of "coordination" between the testimonies of various witnesses.

I start with the more familiar of these changes of testimony, the statements of Patrolman Marion L. Baker. Baker was, of course, that motorcyclist in the motorcade who rushed into the TSBD after the shots with the intention of going to the roof, only to catch a "glimpse" of Oswald in or about to enter the second floor lunch room. The ensuing encounter in which Baker accosted Oswald and the TSBD superintendent, Roy Truly, vouched for him as an employee is one of the dramatic episodes in popular assassination lore.

Useful as this encounter may have been both to assassination movie-makers and to investigators eager to "prove" Oswald was in the TSBD after the shooting, it may never have occurred. In an affidavit dated November 22, Baker said he encountered the man whom he saw under arrest at headquarters later that day "walking away from the stairway" on the third or fourth floor of the building.³ Detective Marvin Johnson verifies that Baker said on that day that he saw Oswald on "about the fourth floor"⁴ and, as late as December 23, Homicide Captain Will Fritz's summary of assassination "evidence" in the DPD's possession, refers to an Oswald/Baker encounter "on 3rd or 4th floor on the stairway."⁵ Roy Truly, on the other hand, reported on November 23 the version of the encounter⁶ that was ultimately to prevail: that it occurred in the second floor lunch room.

By December 2 it must have occurred to investigators that they had a problem of "uncoordinated" testimony between two supposed "witnesses" to the same event. Something had to change. In retrospect, investigators may have wished that they had "coordinated" Truly and Baker by having Truly adopt Baker's story, since Baker's version would have reduced considerably the timing problem of Oswald getting to the second floor in time to meet Baker, as well as the never-settled question of how Baker could have caught a "glimpse" of Oswald in or near the lunch room as Baker dashed up the stairs. Because Baker's

employment with the DPD made him more vulnerable or for whatever reason, Baker in fact became the apparent target of the "coordination." In another section of Secret Service Report 491 not mentioned by Lambert, we find Baker giving these agents a version of the encounter that corroborated that of Truly; and Baker of course duly so testified to the Warren Commission. The hand of "coordinator" at work?

A much less known instance of Secret Service (with important assists from the FBI) "coordination" of witness testimony concerns the testimony of Jack Ruby's roommate, George Senator. For once, we are indebted to the sleep-walking "investigators" of the House Select Committee on Assassinations for pointing out the critical discrepancies between Senator's earlier and later statements. (without, however, the HSCA displaying the slightest suspicion that investigative agents may have had a hand in these discrepancies.)

It seems that Senator's assigned role in the coordinated scenario that investigators were to fabricate for the weekend of November 22-24 was to corroborate the view of Ruby as a "lone nut" who was so distraught by the assassination that he finally went off his rocker on the morning of November 24. Also, as someone who supposedly saw Ruby immediately before he left his apartment for downtown Dallas on Sunday morning, Senator could presumably explain why Ruby had taken this trip if not by "pre-meditation" to commit his murderous act. We must examine now the problem of "coordination" of the statements of Jack Ruby and George Senator.

The original statements of Ruby and Senator were reasonably well coordinated. In Ruby's first interview with FBI agent C. Ray Hall on November 25, he gave a rather low-keyed version of his emotional state on the weekend of November 22-24.⁹ Specifically he did not mention accounts that were only later to emerge of his activities at two key times: after he left headquarters around midnight Friday after witnessing Oswald's nocturnal "press conference"; and on Sunday morning between his arising and his leaving on his fateful trip to downtown Dallas. He told Hall that on Friday night he "returned home, where he watched television broadcasts about President Kennedy and read the newspaper articles about it."¹⁰ As for Sunday morning, he mentions two reasons for going downtown: to take a dog, Sheba, back to the Carousel Club; and to send a telegram to his employee in Fort Worth, Karen Carlin, "as she had requested," with no mention of the form or the timing of that "request". When Hall re-interviewed Ruby on December 21¹¹ he was told a much-embellished version of Ruby's activities at these times. Concerning Friday night/Saturday morning, he now regaled Hall with the full tale of his wild night; not only the encounter with Oswald at headquarters, but his frantic efforts to take sandwiches to, alternately, the DPD Homicide department and personnel at a Dallas radio station, his "twist board" demonstration at a newspaper office and, finally and most spectacularly, a mad-cap wee-hours escapade of waking Senator and his Carousel handyman, Larry Crafard, to accompany him to take a picture of an "Impeach Earl Warren" sign on a Dallas Street and to the post office to check the ownership of the box listed on the sign. He also improved on his version of his motive for going downtown, mentioning a phone call from Carlin at around 10 A.M. Sunday requesting that he wire her money. Obviously some quite fundamental changes in Ruby's testimony occurred between November 25 and December 21, and it is quite important to study the early statements of the "corroborating" witnesses.

George Senator's statements to the Dallas police and the FBI on November 24 were low-keyed in the mode of the original Ruby one.¹² He did contradict Ruby on one point: he said that, at about 3 A.M. Saturday, Ruby awakened him and that he and Ruby went to the Southland Hotel coffee shop where they

commiserated about the assassination before returning home; not a whisper of anything resembling the Ruby/Senator/Crafard photography/post office mission. Concerning Sunday morning, Senator made no mention of any phone call from Carlin, saying that Ruby was going downtown to return Sheba. To the FBI Senator was extremely explicit on this point: "the only thing, therefore, Senator knew Ruby was going to do when he left the apartment was to take the dog back down to the club."¹³ It is conceivable that Ruby's original statement of a second motive for going downtown--to wire money to Karen Carlin---was not known to Senator if Carlin had "requested" the money at an earlier time: such as a self-admitted Saturday night phone call from downtown Dallas.

By November 25, then, the FBI had obtained a reasonable "coordination" of the testimonies of Ruby and Senator. The problem, however, may have been that this coordination was around a version of Ruby's Friday night/Saturday morning and Sunday morning activities that left hanging a couple of troublesome questions. The first of these may well have been: if Ruby were so upset about the assassination that he would presumably wreak vengeance on the assassin, why did he not do so at that Friday night "press conference" when he was present and probably carrying his pistol and could probably have worked himself into position for a shot at Oswald? Something must have "happened"---like an exhausting round of night-time activities---to send Ruby off the deep end psychologically between Friday night and Sunday morning. The second concerns the "perfect timing" of Ruby on Sunday morning. Granted his "reason" for going downtown to wire money to Karen Carlin as "she had requested," how did it happen that he went at just the very time that would put him within a half-block of the police basement as Oswald was about to enter there to be placed in a police car? Enter here the work of the FBI and the Secret Service on three of the (apparently) most frightened and persuadable of Ruby associates: the fugitive Larry Crafard, the ever-hysterical Karen Carlin, and an almost-equally frightened George Senator.¹⁴

On November 26 Karen Carlin was interviewed and, according to the FBI report, told of a Sunday morning phone call to Ruby's apartment to "request" the money.¹⁵ On November 28, FBI agents finally found Larry Crafard (who left Dallas within a few hours of his supposed night-time escapade with Ruby) in a rural area in Michigan and Crafard offered the first recorded version of the Ruby/Senator/Crafard Saturday morning follies.¹⁶ It appears that the FBI now had an "improved" version of the Ruby activities on Saturday morning and Sunday morning with the "new information" furnished by Crafard and by Carlin. The problem was that a third party to both these episodes, George Senator, had failed to mention anything so dramatic as the photography/post office episode on Saturday morning, the Carlin phone call on Sunday morning.

George Senator thus was seemingly in exactly the situation of Marion L. Baker by the week of December 2-5; his testimony required revision to have it "coordinate" with those of other witnesses. It may be no great coincidence that one of the very three Secret Service agents---Elmer Moore---who obtained revisions of testimony of Baker as well as the four black TSBD employees, interviewed George Senator on December 3.¹⁷ To Moore Senator now told the whole tale of himself and Crafard accompanying Ruby to photograph the sign and to the post office; the original coffee-and-talk at the Southland had escalated into a Mad Hatter scene. As for Sunday morning, sure enough Senator now remembered the phone call from Carlin which was now described as the provocation for the downtown trip; poor Sheba's role in history was suddenly downgraded.¹⁸ By the time C. Ray Hall conducted his second interview with Ruby on December 21 he presumably had the "benefit" of the FBI interviews with

Carlin and Crafard and the Secret Service one with George Senator and he could arrange the necessary "coordination" with Ruby's own testimony.¹⁹

The Secret Service and the FBI certainly had their share of assassination investigatory rivalry, as Harold Weisberg and others have so often pointed out. In the instance I am citing of Crafard/Carlin/Senator/Ruby coordination it would seem that we may have a counter-example of what the bureaucrats like to call "inter-agency cooperation." The FBI apparently did its part with Ruby, Crafard and Carlin; the Secret Service pitched in with its work on George Senator. What finer "coordination" could you ask for?

FOOTNOTES

1. Patricia Lambert, "Secret Service Report 491," The Continuing Inquiry, October 22, 1977, pp. 8-18 and November 22, 1977, pp. 8-15.
2. TCI, October 22, 1977, p. 8
3. 24H199.
4. 24H307.
5. Texas Attorney General, Files of Evidence, vol. 1.
6. 24H227.
7. 3H254-258. As late as September 23, 1964, Baker must have had some memory trace of his earliest statements on the location of the encounter. On that date he gave FBI agent Richard Burnett a handwritten statement (in Burnett's handwriting) in which, as originally written, Baker said he encountered Oswald in a "second or third floor lunchroom." (26H679) Official "guidance" was apparently still going on because Baker "corrected" his statement by crossing out and initialing the words "or third." (This was the same statement in which Baker also crossed out the words "drinking a Coke" to describe what Oswald was doing when he encountered him. This Coke drinking of Oswald's further complicated the already-tight time schedule for him to get to that lunchroom in time to meet Baker as he dashed up the stairs.)
8. HSCA IX 985-987.
9. 20H41-46.
10. 20H42.
11. 24H47-62.
12. 24H225; 21H428-432.
13. 19H431.
14. The close student of the assassination will require little documentation to this characterization of the three individuals. Crafard left Dallas on Saturday morning in what can only realistically be called a panic flight. Every interviewer of Carlin commented on her extreme nervousness and it was she who went into hysterics during the strange "jail break" that occurred while she was testifying at the Ruby trial. Senator refused to go back to the apartment that he had shared with Ruby and shortly left Dallas, never to return.
15. 19H306,307.
16. 19H353-360.
17. 21H433-436, CD87.491.
18. The FBI was shortly to produce documentary corroboration of this phone call; and it is interesting to note a parallel with what Lambert noted about the Secret Service induced change in Charles Givens' testimony: that his new-found memory of seeing Oswald with a clipboard minutes before the assassination coincided uncannily with "corroboration" of Givens in the

form of a clipboard found on the sixth floor in the "plain open" on December 2. The Ruby/Senator/Carlin version of a Ft. Worth-Dallas phone call corresponds with an FBI agent's examination of Ft. Worth phone company records on December 10, which he says indicates a call from the Carlin residence to Jack Ruby at 10:19 A.M. on November 24, a call lasting 2 minutes and 20 seconds. (25H233) The suspicious thing about the integrity of this evidence is that another FBI agent examining (presumably) the same record on September 11, 1964 reported that the call from the Carlin to the Ruby residence was 3 minutes in length, and that the person called and the time of the call was "not shown" on the record. (25H271) Do Southwestern Bell Telephone records change in a few months' time; or did the agent who reported in December 1963 perhaps fabricate the results of his examination to "coordinate" with the "information" obtained from Carlin and Senator?

19. One more addition to Ruby's Friday Night Follies show was not to be put on the boards until the time of Ruby's Warren Commission testimony in June of 1964. (5H191-193) At that time Ruby told a story, later to be corroborated by the testimony of Kay Coleman and Harry Olsen, (14H631-634, 14H647, 648) of a lengthy (2-3 hour) meeting with this stripper and her policeman boyfriend in downtown Dallas early Saturday morning. The first reference I have found to this episode is in an FBI interview with Harry Olsen on December 16 in which Olsen refers to a casual 10-minute meeting with Ruby on that night in which "Ruby said nothing to indicate he had ever seen or known Oswald and did not appear to be any more upset over the tragedy than the average individual." (25H279). Ruby made no reference at all to this episode in either his November 25 or December 21 statements. When he testified to the Warren Commission, he incorrectly referred to Harry Carlson as the policeman in question and explained he hadn't mentioned the episode earlier because it was "supposed to be a secret that he was going with this young lady." (5H191) As Ruby now described the episode, the trio sat in Olsen's car near the Carousel Club and both Olsen and Coleman were in a "pretty dramatic mood," and "kept me from leaving." Coleman, a native of England, said that, in her country, such a villainous assassin would be lynched. Ruby was apparently fair game for such incitement, as he mentioned to them his disgust at having just seen Oswald at the police station. Although Ruby made a big show of protesting at his Warren Commission testimony when his own defense counsel suggested that the episode "started" Ruby toward the decision to shoot Oswald (and also the testimony precipitated Ruby's strange plea to Warren to take him to his "headquarters" in Washington where he could talk more freely), I suspect that the argument was contrived by Ruby and his lawyers to help explain the discrepancy between his missed opportunity to shoot Oswald on Friday evening and his thoroughly distraught condition on Sunday morning. Anyway, as I said, Olsen and Coleman both corroborated fully Ruby's version of the episode when they testified to the Warren Commission in August. There is no record of an FBI or Secret Service re-interview with Olsen after December 16 in which he, like Baker, Senator and the others was possibly "guided" by investigators to change his story, but it would not surprise me at all to find that this occurred. It is also possible, sadly, that the FBI's "leak" source on the Warren Commission, Gerald Ford, leaked to the FBI the results of Ruby's testimony in June so that the Bureau could "guide" Olsen and Coleman to provide the same "information" when they testified on August 6.