

Dear George,

4/24/91

When you phoned from Dallas Monday you said there are some things yet to discuss about the book. In thinking about this it occurs to me that something I said did not register on you, so I make it explicit:

I believe that the one who writes a book must have absolute independence with regard to content and expression. Have no fears on this score. If I did not trust you to be fair and accurate and to want a book that while being entertaining would also be important, particularly as a single significant historical document, I would not have broached this to you and to you alone.

If this is not explicit enough, let me know.

I think that fairness to Garrison requires mention of some of the fine, decent and ~~primipad~~ things he has done. I mentioned the case of the Bourbon Street stripper. Layton Martens, a real stinker and a friend of Ferris, is another case. You probably know nothing about this but I was there when he was arrested for stabbing a man. Garrison had been after him but he declined to prosecute for what he considered substantial reasons. I should have clippings on this and I was there when it happened, *stabbing + dismissal.*

The only real freedom those under Garrison had was to quit, so I think that with regard to some of them, Sciambra and Alcock come to mind, some thought must be given to what fairness is and means.

Alcock reminds me. When you have time please give me his address so I can write him. I think he may be willing to be helpful. He is practising law in Houma. It may well be that like Sciambra he declined to permit ~~Stone~~ to use his name.

Although I ~~van~~ did permit use of his name I know that he did his best to restrict or eliminate some of the nuttiness. He was a pro and while all of this was going on and he worked more than a full day every day he was also going to college to get his degree in criminology, and did. When I landed in N.O. for the first time he had me speak to one of his classes before I checked into the motel. His interests were genuine and principled.

To the best of my knowledge Garrison had no control over the police department personnel assigned to him as detectives/ investigators. I am certain he had some he'd have preferred not to have. Like a captain, Soule, working as an ordinary detective. I suspect there had to be some questions about him and if I remember correctly, having nothing to do with Garrison, ~~g~~ he was already in some kind of trouble. And remember, Ivon and some of the investigators under him did a first-rate job of getting for me what I needed for what Sciambra correctly referred to as damage control with regard to Boxley. In retrospect, although at the time I believed I had blundered into that mess, I believe that both Ivon and Sciambra took the initiative after they ~~gnd~~ failed in the hope that I could do what they (all) had not been able to do. From the Sciambra memo "all" includes Alcock at least.

By the time your story or stories appear you'll have a much better idea about what else you need to know. Where I know or have what relates this will emerge in the structure/ questioning we <sup>decided</sup> to do. (On this, although I do not insist, when you have no further need of the tapes I'd like them to go to the Hood librarian, Charles Kuhn, because they will, I think, probably include what will not be used.)

We did not discuss Pershing Gervais and if you want to ignore him, fine with me, But I think that what he can say if he wants to could be interesting and funny. He had been close to Garrison, was before Ivon his chief investigator, and (probably because of great federal pressure on him) set Garrison up for the federal prosecution. Pershing had been under the federal witness protection program, got disgusted, left it, returned to Louisiana, and was not bothered a bit by Garrison. Pershing is an interesting story, from what he told me. I remember a few more details but in brief he stole the payoffs one Friday night before they could be distributed to the cops at that precinct for whom they were intended, took a gal on a spree in New York, and got away with it. I have clippings on the Garrison tax case and I did have the transcripts of the phone interceptions by Monk Zelden stole them. He asked to borrow them and then refused to return them. (While Pershing was working for the feds he arranged for me to use ~~one~~ one of the bugged phones but it was only for a broadcast to a Florida radio station.) He was pretty open, almost bragged about his dishonesty, but more than once I bent elbows with him and judges and other "respectable" New Orleansians.

Other things you may or may not want to use will come to mind but the decision is and should be yours. Is this explicit enough? If not, ask.

Where I refer to clippings and other things on which you may want to draw, we have an electric portable you can use if you want to do any typing here. I have in mind, if they interest you, the Martens and tax-case things that you might use more easily here. You can also take anything you want and return it when you have no further need for it.

I encourage you to speak to Osnos as soon as you can. Ordinarily the agent and prospective publishers require a short outline, about two pages. There are other possibilities but I think an agent, particular<sup>ly</sup> one who is a friend, is by far the best procedure. As I'm sure Osnos can, I have a friend who can introduce the book to Simon & Schuster on a high level. S & S owns Pocket Books and Warner is a competitor, so it might find this an additional advantage.

I look forward to your having the time and to learning what you learned in Dallas that you did not use in the Post.

With considerable optimism,

Harold

After thought: when you were here I mentioned Chip Selby's documentary on the JFK assassination, "Reasonable Doubt." When you are here again I can give you two cassettes of, if you do not want to keep it, one. I think you and Bradlee might be interested in what he produced, all by himself, as his master's thesis at Maryland. The Post barely mentioned it <sup>when</sup> A & E aired it. I think it possible that your story can justify a feature in Style on it.

You may not be aware of it, but I am the only remaining one of the three authors of books critical of the official solutions to the political assassinations which did not theorize whodunits. Chip is the only producer of anything on TV that didn't.

He was so in debt before he finished it, about \$40,000, he was reduced to living in his car when he travelled to interview. He put about 150,000 miles on it. His professors had so little confidence in what could be done with the subject matter that invariably he got the oldest and poorest equipment to use. This required duplicating travels for retaping interviews. His only help was from his brother and his then girl friend. (They got married after she graduated.)

When he asked Mike Buchanan to be the voice, Buchanan said he'd have to read the script first. After reading it he declined to accept pay, did it free.

~~and he offered him \$10,000 for it.~~ He then worked part-time for the Discovery channel. It offered him the niggardly \$10,000 for it. When A & E offered him \$15,000, which left him about \$25,000 in debt, and he again offered it to Discovery for that price, instead it fired him.

Although A & E had not advertised it in advance, it set or came close to setting audience records when first aired. It has been aired often since then.

And it won first prize for historical documentaries in that year's competition.

He is now in the Los Angeles area working on a documentary about Indians. She is teaching school there. His mother lives in or near Baltimore, the brother in Bowie.

There were times until he could borrow again, that he lived with plastic money, having to pay those exorbitant interest rates.

In addition to which he and his wife Sandy are fine young people.

Compare this with what Oliver Stone is doing with 40 million or more.

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