

Mr. Philip Shenon
New York Times
119 W. 43 St.,
New York, N.Y.

7627 Old Receiver Road
Frederick, Md. 21701
12/12/88

Dear Mr. Shenon,

I've just received a copy of your "Who Killed Kennedy" article of 11/18 and I write despite feeling that this was a one-shot assignment because you've quite innocently fallen into the trap laid by virtually all the "critics" of the official investigations and by 100% of all involved in the federal government.

Please excuse my typing. I'm 75, have to type sideways because of circulatory ailments and for the immediate future am limited to the use of my poorer eye because of surgery on the better eye.

I am senior of the "critics" in all respects. Mine was the first book on the Warren Commission, I've brought to light most of what is known about the JFK assassination in my six books on it and through many FOIA lawsuits as a result of which I have about a third of a million pages of once-withheld records. I was also a critic of the House assassins committee, the most used Times source, including Wendell Rawls and I helped other Times reporters. Harrison Salisbury read my first two books in manuscript, Tom Wicker tried to help get my first published (ultimately I had to do it myself), the manuscript of the second Salisbury mailed back to me never reached me, but after reading it he launched a Times inquiry that, according to a dear friend, the late Martin (Mo) Waldron, perhaps before your time at the Times, was aborted from within.

Permit me to accredit myself. I am a former investigative reporter, Senate investigator and editor, and I was an analyst in intelligence during and for a short time after World War II. (OSS)

You make the common mistake of confusing whether or not there was a conspiracy with theories about who conspired. There is a vast and quite significant difference, between fact and fiction. I am not aware of any theory that I have not undertaken to rebut and I think I've rebutted them all. They deceive and mislead and they certainly confuse, laymen, officials and reporters.

It may be difficult for you to believe but the crime itself was never investigated and there never was any official interest in investigating it. If you'd like I can send you copies of records that I think leave this beyond/reasonable question.

Conspiracy is a combination to do what the law says is wrong ^{plus} and an act in pursuance of the conspiracy. If the JFK assassination was beyond the capability of any one man then there was a conspiracy. Who conspired is something else entirely and all of what you write is limited to this.

It is beyond question that in even the Warren Commission's theory (and it was only an untenable theory) that nobody has been able to duplicate the shooting attributed to Oswald. The Commission got the best shots it could from the ~~NRA~~, NRA, the rifle was overhauled as best it could be, the conditions were simplified and improved, and still nobody could come close to the shooting attributed to Oswald. He was officially evaluated by the Marine Corp as "a rather poor shot" anyway.

Belin is so sick he lies without being aware that he is lying. He is also pathetic in what I think is the goading of his conscience. He lies as you quote him in saying that every attempt against the official mythology can be refuted. Not only is this false, he tried and couldn't when we debated at Vanderbilt in 1975. A day and a half after we parted he came out for a new investigation, and he has never murmured a word to me or to anyone that has come back to me about my specific criticisms of his record on the Commission. He can't. He even altered sworn testi-

mony to make it consistent with his own and the Commission's preconceptions. He also restricts himself to what he knows of the dated Commission work and what little he knows of the House committee's. He has never, for example, asked to see any of my records, to which anyone at all has access, a greater volume than his Commission had and much that is significant it never had in any form. If he has no interest in disclosed records he never saw it is because he knows he can't coexist with them. If you for a minute think I do not send them in quantity and without any kind of censorship to those with whom I disagree, ask John H. Davis, who is at 20 East 10 as I recall, author of Mafia Kingfish. I got a college senior, he told her what he wanted, and she spent much of her free time for a semester making and sending him copies I didn't see. I don't know what he has and I never do unless asked. (I don't think I won our history and I do think that FOIA makes me surrogate for the people. I recently filed suit against Henry Zapruder so that there could be free access to the film his father made, as the Times did report.)

While I agree with your statement that analysis of this film shows the impossibility of the single-bullet theory indispensable to the Commission's conclusions, it is controversial. I am with the FBI and the Secret Service in considering it impossible. Did Belin tell you this? My first knowledge of it came from his own Commission's records. I now have records of both agencies sneering at the Commission's most basic conclusion. They do both agree that the first bullet hit JFK alone, the second Connally alone and the third was fatal. They both also ignore a known and reported missed shot. It is when the Commission no longer could that it hoked up the single-bullet theory to pretend there had not been any conspiracy. For the FBI and Secret Service to have taken any other position meant a fourth shot and nobody could duplicate what was dumped on Oswald within three shots.

I regret very much that after 25 years there still is no official willingness to confess and apologize for this terrible error which in itself caused much of the alienation I've encountered since then and that the press is unwilling both to confront fact and make an independent effort to report unquestionable fact, again after 25 years. I just say this, as I say also that I regard the assassination of any president as the most subversive of crimes. I know you do not control Times policy, interests or assignments of stories.

You obviously tried to do a fair and honest story. I'm not complaining about that because you did this. But reporters today really can't do much, without special efforts usually impossible for them, to tell the people the truth about that terrible crime that turned the world around or the other subversion, official dishonesty about it.

P.S. I'm not a conspiracy theorist and he was a dear friend.

Sincerely,


Harold Weisberg