

Mr. James Mason
Carroll & Graf
260 Fifth Ave.,
New York, N.Y. 10001

2/5/89

Dear Mr. Mason,

When you phoned from Washington you said I am uncomfortable reading Jim Marrs' book. I'm not. Most of what I read on the subject is of the same nature and I'm used to it as I am to the dross that appears on TV and in the books I help. I fear you are, however, uncomfortable about what I wrote.

Well, I suppose that in a sense I was what you might call uncomfortable about being offered \$500 for what you asked of me. But not about anything else.

I did, as I said I would, scan some of the manuscript and I made some notes that I've discarded. I made no copies of any of the pages.

I started to tell you about something that I think will, with any attention, lead to severe criticism of the book. It is also grossly inaccurate and displays a monumental ignorance of fact that is beyond question. Toward the end of the conclusions Marr says that Lyndon Johnson's first act as President was to order the removal of JFK's body from Parkland Hospital. Johnson was not even consulted on the removal of the body. It was done by the Secret Service, on its own. And when that happened Johnson was not yet President. The body was on the plane and Johnson was awaiting the arrival of Judge Sarah Hughes to swear him in and Johnson was not yet President.

At almost the same place he refers to Hoover's alleged "close contact" with his friend Johnson. There was virtually no direct contact between them when LBJ was President. The contact was indirect, usually between Cartha DeLoach at the FBI and Marvin Watson at the White House.

Of the other things I noted I'll add this one because it may interfere with sales. Whether genuinely or as a device, Marrs begins by telling his readers not to believe any book on the subject. There are books that are factually correct. Only they are not books of conspiracy theorizing, and those who loves their theories and those they read about, may be turned off. One of the best potential markets is among conspiracy theorists and those addicted to them. Do you want to antagonize a potential market?

The ms. also needs a closer reading. Dr. Humes was not "the autopsy." He was the chief autopsy prosector. I also noticed "dairy" for "diary."

I suppose I ^{ought} also tell you that President Johnson did not order the evidence locked up for another 50 years. He issued no such order and the fact that I have a third of a million pages of it should suggest that it wasn't and isn't locked up. And this did not just "leak" out as he says. It was in response to FOIA litigation.

I'd intended writing you based on the notes I made and then doing no more other than suggesting that if you find something serious that troubles you to just phone me but unless you are troubled by what may appear to be libelous, I'd rather you didn't.

It may amuse you to know that when LBJ had an assassinated-related favor to ask of J. Edgar Hoover he used Abe Fortas as an ~~ambassador~~ emissary. And the then Justice did not even try to see Hoover about it.

I return the ms. herewith.

Sincerely,


Harold Weisberg

5/6/89

Dear Dick,

If you intended to be helpful to me in suggesting that Mason get in touch, thanks.

I did do enough skimming to get a feel for the book, made notes I've thrown away, and had planned to write him further as soon as I could. I've no personal interest in that kind of crap. I did take the time to give him in writing what he did not want to take time to listen to when he phoned, he said from a Washington phone booth, yesterday. The book may be ignored or some LBJ people will, as they should, take offense over the fabrication I tell him about. Far from the only invention presented as fact, in what I saw so I'm sure many in the book.

Most of these writing book on the subject do not bother to learn what there is in the records now available. They cook up theories, fall in love with them and themselves and their brilliance, take anything anybody says as fact or evidence and not infrequently improvise on the improvisations of others. Instant fact, naturally. The more such nonsense is repeated, the more credibility it gets among those conspiracy theorists, and the more it gets improved upon until someone like Mason's author sees a pot of gold and a publisher has a crock of shit.

I doubt Mason will get hurt with libel suits but as you may recall, spurious suits are not impossible. But some of these days some former federal agent or official is going to loose his cool and see his own pot of gold. People like Mason's author use some names rather loosely and do take liberties with fact.

Unfortunately, no publisher is in a position to determine what is and is not so in such books. I think it is irresponsible to publish one without learning whether he is engaging in further disinformation. Mason had his cover done before he seems to have thought of it. And he has a book that cannot be made accurate and faithful to fact. So I'm glad he did not seek me out when he first got it and ask me to comment on all of it.

I did spend what for me and now is some time I needed for what is important to me and I've sent him no bill. Now I have to catch up on those other things.

Thanks and best to you all,

Heald