

Dear Jim,

12/11/78

In today's mail the copy of his and Turner's book John Christian sent.

Lil checked and found the brief mention of bugging of which I'd been told is pretty much as I was told. I've read that only.

When Lil runs the copier I'll make a copy for you.

And of the inscription, which doesn't alter my opinion a bit.

From what I know of Turner his has transferred his blank bag jobs to writing. Of personal knowledge I can say nothing better.

After I got to know Christian I also had unanswered questions. But I've never sought answers.

When I received his letter, having heard of the passage, I wrote to ask if he can expand it.

I have no recollection of his telling me this story but I feel that he did tell me something like it later in 1967. In fairness I could have forgotten. And it could have been before my trip out there toward the end of that year.

My recollection of the phone call he refers to is clear. Harv Morgan was on the line, so it was probably right after Harv finished his broadcast and from the station's phone.

On one of my trips out there I had an afternoon press conference, right after lunch as I recall. He started making super-radical conspiracy talk and I had to stop him. The conference was well attended. From there I went to the ABC station for an afternoon talk show I always did and had promised to do. It had barely started when Conn rushed in and asked me to leave, by a note, of course, to be interviewed by the station's then TV biggie. I said in a note that I'd be glad to as soon as the radio show was over but would not break my word for a man who had not attended the press conference at which I'd been supposed to meet him. I did.

They'd run out of room in that building. (Pia Lindstrom interviewed me one morning after the early morning TV show in the lobby, of all places. Ingrid Bergman's daughter. So they had a building at the diagonally opposite corner, perhaps 1/4-1/2 block away. John took me over there, to a long and very narrow studio. Camera was already set up and Sam Banks was waiting. He had the rep of being a tough guy and crack investigative reporter.

I'd been on the road for a while and was tired. I used to shed inhibitions easily under those conditions in those days. Banks inspired me because there was no time to think. He apparently had prepared and memorized a series of dirty questions, all angled and prejudicial. To the first one or two I gave careful answers and went out of my way not to underscore his natural evil and dishonesty. When he, like a snake who has started to swallow, couldn't stop, I let him have it. In not more than three minutes he turned into the running camera, mike limp in drooped hand and saying to the cameraman "That's it" walked right at the camera, dropped over from the waist, more at the shoulders, like the Indian into the setting sun.

Word beat us back to the main building. As John had said on the way back, nobody ever does that to a professional nasty. Everybody was talking about the preview of the film and its spot on the evening news. I told them it would not be aired. Including news director Roger Grimsby or Grigsby, later with ABC net and in Moscow. He kept after me for leadin copy. I finally suggested something like this: Sam Banks is a tough investigative reporter. Arnold Weisberg has written books about the assassination of President Kennedy. Today they met. This is what happened:

Roger liked it, typed it up, showed it to me and I again told him he'd never

air it. Got the regular line about nothing they wouldn't air if it was legit.

(Banks' most recent journalistic achievement is a story you may have forgotten, it you saw the extensive attention it got out of California. Dozen or so homosexuals on Reagan's staff, all married, most with children. A non-story and a dirty, cheap sensation but it gave him more of a rep.)

Not long after Roger had his copy ready the film was. The small studio in which they previewed was crowded. The gasps were thus more prominent.

I really did the dirty bastard in without his means and at his own game, with the odds his way - he did ask all the questions.

Roger assured me they'd air it but they didn't. They couldn't.

I was in Frisco for three days after that. Banks never showed up at the station once in those three days. He'd phone in and cadge other assignments. I remember one, getting sent down to cover Shirley Temple's campaign.

I wanted a ~~pristine~~ sound tape. Jonn wanted a print of the film. I was going to go to the president, who'd have done it for me. (Lee Rashall had been with UP in Washington. Much older man who remembered me because I beat his pants off when I was a brash kind and on a magazine with one of my cartel stories.) Jonn just had to have the film. So I never got the tape and the next time I was in Frisco the film could not be found.

Questions: had Jonn tried to set me up?

I don't know. But I do know that I had nothing more to do with him. Except, as I recall for a lunch with another person on my next trip.

Harv Morgan was a fine person. Former reporter with top-rated west-coast talk show. The audience reaction was as Jonn says. Every time Harv got a cold or laryngitis he'd phone me at Hitown and I'd do most of the talking for four hours by phone, beginning at midnight eastern time. Harv'd save his voice for the commercials. He went back to reporting when CBS killed all its talk shows. (They were all making money, too.)

I've rambled. On Christian- while I have doubts I see no reason for his making up a story about me, the only mention of me in his book. I'm inclined to believe that something like it did happen. He did know those types in those days and I met a couple through him. It would be more attractive, is made up, with others he could have used. He knew Belli in those days, many people of prominence, what I'm not. Hearst people, Jess Unruh when he was high and powerful. No, I think Jonn could have made up a bigger sensation.

First time I've heard from him in 10 years. If he has an ulterior purpose it isn't viable.

Best,

To  
Lillian & Hal Weisberg

Irony, I don't know if  
I should thank or cuss you - as  
this all began when I first heard the  
term "white wash" from a man named Weisberg.  
Whatever the merit of our efforts, history  
will record that you two made the most  
sacrifices and contributions to this cause.  
You are extraordinary folks, indeed.

Wormsby  
Personal Records  
December 1, 1978  
in  
Beverly Hills

he told Christian. "I can't put my finger on it, but this country is going in the wrong direction."

Christian had reason to recall Smith's disquiet when he became a special consultant to an association of service-station operators who had filed an antitrust suit against a giant trading-stamp company, charging fraud, price manipulation and conspiracy. Although close to \$100 million in damages was sought, the case was eventually compromised and settled out of court for less than one percent of that amount. Christian viewed the token settlement as the consequence of a power play begun several years before. Robert Kennedy's Justice Department had filed an antitrust action against the company—Justice attorneys drew on Christian's store of knowledge in the field of corporate buccaneering—but after the President's assassination, Lyndon Johnson's new team at Justice quietly dropped the prosecution. This severely compromised the service-station operators, who were forced to enter their civil suit playing a much weaker hand. If large corporate interests could benefit so decisively from an abrupt change in administration, Christian wondered, could not some cartel among them somehow have arranged for the President's death?

The notion was hardly dispelled by a set of events that began on a quiet Sunday afternoon in April 1967. An erstwhile broadcast colleague named Harry Morgan, who was doing a radio talk show on San Francisco's KCBS station, phoned Christian and asked him to come down to the studio and sit in on an interview with Harold Weisberg, author of a series of self-published books called *Whitewash* that were critical of the Warren Report. Weisberg lived in rural Maryland, so the interview was held via long-distance phone. The show was scheduled for one hour but ran on for four, with listeners calling in such numbers that the switchboard was jammed.

After reading the books, Christian called Weisberg in Maryland to discuss references to FBI bumping and cover-up in its investigation of the assassination. Several days later Christian was contacted by an FBI agent who had worked tangentially on the trading-stamp-

\* Smith's autobiography, *Personal File*, is required reading in many journalism classes. Smith died in 1970.

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company case. "Meet me at Roland's," the agent said, referring to a saloon where the two had occasionally met for drinks.

"Who do you know in Maryland that might be of extreme interest to certain people within the FBI?" the agent whispered.

"Harold Weisberg," Christian answered. "He's the only one I know in Maryland."

The agent confided that he had heard an "inside rumor" that a phone tap had intercepted Christian's conversation with Weisberg a few days before, and hinted that an order had been issued for Christian's line to be monitored from then on.

At first Christian was stunned, then he roared. "To hell with the taps," he fumed. "If the FBI is that concerned about the critics, there must be something to the criticism!"

It was against this backdrop that Christian met Turner. Tall and sandy-haired, forty-one-year-old Turner came across as a nice enough guy but hardly the type of push-and-shove journalist that Christian was accustomed to. But Christian noted that he had a capacity for collecting and storing data. His investigative approach was disarmingly low-key, but it seemed to work.

Turner was a Navy veteran of World War II and a Canisius College graduate whose ice-hockey career had been interrupted by appointment as an FBI special agent in 1951. He participated in a number of well-known FBI cases, including the 1959 kidnap-murder of Colorado brewery magnate Amolph Coors, Jr., and as an inspector's aide he reviewed the Los Angeles division's program against organized crime. He was also specially trained in wire-tapping, bugging and burglary—a "black hat job" on the Japanese consulate in Seattle was one assignment—and did counterespionage work. He received three personal letters of commendation from J. Edgar Hoover.

But by 1961 Turner's doubts about the chief Director's policies had grown to the point where he poked his head from inside the cage by seeking a congressional investigation of the FBI. He urged them to look into the Bureau's questionable tactics, softness on organized crime and the stultifying personality cult surrounding Hoover. At the time, Hoover was at the peak of his power, and he was able to discharge Turner as a "disruptive influence" with hardly a murmur of dissent from members of Congress.