

Mr. Fred DeVanney
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4/13/92

Dear Fred,

Glad to hear from you and to know that you are started. I'll probably be responding in odds and ends of moments of time.

As I think you know the thrust of my work is that all the basic institutions of our society failed in those times of great stress and since then. So I'm glad you've decided to study the major media for the first 20 days. And before I forget, Dave Wrone, Professor of History, Stevens Point, WI, 54484, is the coauthor of the only professional bibliography. Greenwood Press still has copies. Costly, too. And he also has the files of a former AP reporter friend who became a friend of the Wrone family, Jim White. He and his wife Jennifer ^{WILCOX} get a fine set of clippings. Dave can tell you how good it is for the period of your interest. I know the Times is on microfilm. Jennifer mounted all the 25 boxes of clippings on paper. It includes also some AP copy and the San Francisco Bay area papers, among others I do not recall.

In trying to decide whether the press failures were deliberate you may want to recall some other catastrophes, like the Bay of Pigs, which both the Times and Post sat on and did not report at government request. There was no such request of which I know in the assassination. But there is much that should be reported and isn't. And while I'm rambling, expecting to be interrupted again, as I was twice since beginning this, a woman named Nancy Stone did a thesis at Boston perhaps of interest to you. She did not send me a copy. Wrone was going to try to get it. When he has it he can tell you.

When you can visit, fine. My schedule has changed more radically and I must be abed by seven. I have sleep apnea, get up too early, and the only chance I have to get 4-5 hours of sleep is to start early. One of the things it means is that part of the time when asleep I do not breathe. This means that I get up ^{me} weaker and more tired than otherwise and it contributes to waking tiredness. I try to take a nap when I can.

LIFE as I recall printed six different ^{versions} issues of the one in which they used the Zapruder film. The best source on this is Paul Hoch, 1525 Acton St., Berkeley, Ca 94702.

I've not seen that Village Voice story 3/31, and I'd appreciate a copy if you can please send me one. If it is what I think it is, please do this in your own interest. If it is what I think it is, I have reason to believe that, at least in major part it is unfair in the meaning it gives to what it reports.

When you are here I have a transcript of the Parkland Hospital doctors' press conference to announce death. at least twice and maybe more times than were quite explicit in saying that the neck wound was from the front. You may want to make a copy when you are here. So the papers knew it and I'm sure reported it and then let it drop dead and none that I recall ever remembered this when the Report was out. That was certainly a viable lead to

be followed at the time of the crime and ever since, particularly when the Report was out. But nobody did that and that is not easily regarded as an accidental error.

Now on the FBI and the press, I have several files that will be of interest to you, on the Post and the former Washington Star in particular. The latter is so good you may want to use it as an illustration even though it is of 1966. The Washington Post stuff is 11/25/63 re the Katzenbach memo I think I gave you. On my desk if I didn't.

When you are here I can tell you a couple of Times stories you will not be able to corroborate but I think will indicate to you what policy was and remained. To this day.

Another issue known immediately is that Hosty told Revill that they knew Oswald was capable and did not expect him to do anything. Not followed up, not even when Curry apologized for the truth, a genuine question then was why the FBI did not tell the local police that Oswald was living there. Or, had the FBI failed? I recall no followup or questioning stories. ...

Compare major media, like Life and the Zap. film, with what private people, like me, did, making things accessible rather than suppressing them, as it did with Naprunder's film.

With both the Times and the Post, in the sense of what LIFE did with the Zap film, I don't know how possible it would be for you to check the bulldog, first of any day's editions, against last copies but I think it would show that support of what officials were saying is apparent in changes made. ...

I have separate files for the Post and then Star and how the FBI used them.

And how it got the Post not to support creation of the presidential commission that Katz recommended. and how fast news of that, not printed, got around.

The press seems to have done nothing to learn about and get access to amateur movies the taking of which was visible in pictures that were known to the press. ...

When we talk about the Times, remind me of Ho Waldron at the time of the crime and of Harrison Salisbury in 1966, Whitewash II. ...

A question you may want to consider, should it be possible for rich publications to be able to buy exclusive rights and then suppress evidence, as LIFE did with Zap's film? ...

assuming you'll see both the Post and Times, what and how many stories did they carry that did not come from official sources. True also of news magazines. ...

You formulate, I think incorrectly, in saying that evidence of conspiracy was not uncovered until long after the assassination. The question should be suspicion of or reason to believe there may have been a conspiracy. However, there were immediate and obvious questions about the shooting: was it all from that window; why was it not as the motorcade approached on Houston St.; was it possible through those trees; how could all that shooting, including the immediately-known missed shot, have been done with that rifle in so short a time? The press knew this in general and LIFE had the Zap. film. ...

As I go into in Whitewash II there were immediate questions about the man in the doorway in the first picture used, Altgens'. Oswald was also photographed once arrested. Did

the press compare the shirts? Why not when it is this obvious? When it was said that that man was "ovelady, and I'm not sure this was public but I think it was, why did not the press ask to see the shirt he was wearing that day so it could be compared with the Altgens picture? I have some interesting pictures for you on this. This and I'm sure more that does not now come to mind reflects the fact that a diligent press had innumerable leads for checking what it had been told. I can't recall that it even asked for the autopsy results to be disclosed.

Your statement of what you now think your thesis statement will be is good.

We should, I think, also talk about DeLoach and what he did and how it is reflected in what was disclosed and how those records are hidden. I have some copies filed under DeLoach with separate files on the media and its personnel and I have some in my "ing working file under writers, but mostly later than the JFK offing. They do, however, reflect how the FBI worked to control the press. And used it for its own purposes, like O'Leary, then of the Star, later Epstein of the Star, this one to defend against the kind of things you will be assessing and reporting. ...

Wrono has my clippings, including the early Post but not the Times.

AP and NBC News published books on their early coverage. I think I still have them. They may well hold leads on what should have been followed up.

Have you considered carrying a small notebook in which you can note questions as they come to mind?

Did Oswald know that Abt had declined to represent him and that a Chicago lawyer named McDermid had telegraphed that he would? Telegram not in Oswald's possession and no note about Abt's refusal. But the police did disclose that the ACLU had asked to see him and did. Would history have been different if Oswald had had counsel?

Best
Lee Wolf

April 8, 1992

Dear Harold:

Attached is a prospectus which describes a project I am working on here at the University of Virginia, for a graduate seminar called the "History of The Press in America." (I am also nursing the possibility of eventually expanding this paper into a Master's Thesis project).

Essentially, the project involves first researching press coverage of JFK's assassination by the mainstream American press, specifically during the ten-day period immediately following his assassination; and then, in analyzing this material, with the goal of determining whether or not, during that most critical, initial period, the press may have—whether "innocently," or perhaps even "willfully" in some cases—failed to responsibly report to the American people about critical, seminal evidence of conspiracy in the assassination of their president.

I would therefore very much appreciate your: questions; comments; criticisms; accolades; suggestions; additional source leads; new or improved lines of reasoning, or ways of more effectively arguing this issue out; or anything else you can think of which may lend to my effort. (If anything you provide warrants a quotation, or other citation in the paper, I will certainly do so).

I know that writing back is sometimes a pain, so certainly your responding by phone is as welcome as your written response, including collect calls—although when I'm out, I'd really appreciate your leaving a message on my answering machine (which, unfortunately, can't be done when calling collect).

Thanks so much for your help. Harold,

With best regards,

Fred DeVinney
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I hope all is well with you and Mrs. Weisberg. I've tried to call a few times over the last several months, but your line was either busy, or you were out.

I hope to be able to come visit you when my school term ends in mid-May. In the meantime, best of luck.

Project Prospectus

My paper will examine both newspaper and news magazine coverage of the assassination of President John F. Kennedy during the ten day period immediately following his assassination—that is, from November 22, until November 31, 1963—with an exclusive focus on the criminal investigation, or “whodunit?” aspects of that coverage. (Television and radio reporting are beyond the scope of this paper, but they obviously offer fertile ground for a future study).

First, I will examine *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*—that is, the two main “flagship” newspapers which, by virtue of their reputation and power, set the agenda for the rest of the newspaper industry in terms of legitimizing or delegitimizing certain news stories, issues or questions. For purposes of comparison and analysis, I will then examine certain other news stories, including stories drawn from both “average” newspapers, as well as from the AP and UPI newswires. (These will consist primarily of news stories which I initially found referenced in various other documents or texts which were also researched for this project).

I will then examine the first one or two issues (immediately after the assassination) of the following news magazines: *Time*, *Life*, *Newsweek*, and *U.S. News & World Report*—that is, the “flagship” news magazines in the U.S., which also serve, along with the *Times* and the *Post*, to set the “legitimate” agenda for the rest of the U.S. print media. For comparative purposes, I will then examine the initial ten-day’s coverage—that is, also the first one or two issues immediately following the assassination—in such “alternative” news magazines as: *The National Review*, *The New Republic* and *The Nation*, along with three media trade magazines, *The Reporter*, *Editor & Publisher*, and *The Columbia Journalism Review*.

A number of other texts and sources which deal directly with the assassination, and/or with press reporting on the assassination (ex: the March 31, 1992 edition of *The Village Voice*), will also be used; and my citations may also include official government statements or documents (ex: Dallas Police Department press

conference statements).

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The specific purpose of this "primary-source" research is to attempt to identify whether or not there were credible news stories, and/or other evidence, issues or broader questions which pointed towards the possibility of a conspiracy right from the very beginning. If so—and at this point I have reason to suspect that this may be the case—I will then address the question of whether or not the previously-identified, mainstream media gave proper credence to such stories, and/or whether or not they aptly identified critical, salient issues, or raised valid, broader questions, for consideration by the American public. If they did not, I will then attempt to identify the reason(s) why this might have been so by exploring such questions as:

- Was the "evidence" too skimpy, or the sources too marginal, for such stories to have warranted accurate coverage as legitimate public information?
- To what extent might the press' professional commitment to the concept of objectivity, and/or their all-but-exclusive reliance upon official government sources for specific information about the crime, have blinded them to any such evidence?
- And, as a recent *Village Voice* article persuasively argues, does the evidence possibly even suggest that there was actual complicity between the mainstream press and the government—especially the CIA and the FBI—to willfully ignore or obfuscate substantial and primary evidence of conspiracy?

The question of a possible conspiracy in the JFK assassination has lingered in our collective American consciousness for almost 30 years. Until now, I had believed—as do most people who have studied the assassination—that any conspiratorial evidence was uncovered only long after the assassination; or, at the very least, only sometime after the release of the Warren Commission Report in September of 1964. That is, I believed that any such evidence was neither immediately, nor readily apparent—but that it was tediously ferreted out much later by independent assassination researchers. However, my preliminary research for this paper indicates that there

may well have been substantial evidence for conspiracy right from the beginning; but that the mainstream American press somehow, whether unintentionally or intentionally—perhaps even out of some warped sense of commitment to the new powers-that-be, or to the set of “enduring values” that are so highly honored by the press—failed to convey this absolutely vital information to their supposed constituency, the American people.

Therefore, my thesis statement will likely read something like this: the mainstream American press, led by *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post* and the four major, mainstream American news magazines, failed miserably from the very first day of JFK's assassination, to investigate, report, or make accurate and insightful editorial comment about the substantial, primary evidence of conspiracy in the murder—which evidence was clearly apparent, right from the very beginning. As a result of their failure, the “crime of the century” remains substantially uninvestigated, even until today.

Whether they did so wittingly or unwittingly, their failure represents a betrayal of monumental proportions to their “prime directive,” which is to protect the democracy and freedom of all Americans. Furthermore, it raises the critical question as to whether or not our “watchdog” press could be trusted ever since to “guard” the interests of the American people—especially in times of great national crisis, such as Vietnam, further political assassinations, Watergate, Iran-Contra, and the Persian Gulf War.

Not to mention their coverage of assassination researchers, and their research findings, over the past 28 years!