

Mr. Robert Snow, Assistant Director  
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Dear Mr. Snow,

From the time I first heard that Howard Donahue's atrocity and indecency was to be published I've wondered whether, if any one has the interest, I can be of help. What decided me to write is the fiction attributed to me in the Globe supermarket tabloid of last week. I did not say a single word about the Secret Service attributed to me within quotes. I have never said those things and never believed them.

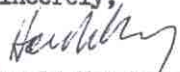
Paul Bannister, who did not identify himself as with the Globe phoned me. As I recall he identified his agency as "Fleet Street West." Bannister told me that he did not write these paragraphs of invented quotations of me. He promised to send me a copy of his story as submitted but it has not gotten here. The Globe is nonresponsive.

I've read the serialization of Donahue's book in England and the pages of the book in which he refers to me. Why I do not know but he is a liar. Among other things, when he was here and was offered what I'd obtain in a <sup>FOIA</sup> lawsuit on the ballistics evidence so important to his book he did not look at a page and his wife added a note to their last letter saying she wanted to when they were here again. They never returned, never looked at all the evidence he knew I had and declined to look at it. I think it is obvious that he could not have had knowledge of that material and still have published his monstrosity.

The book is to be mailed to me. I know of the publisher's statement only what I read in the papers. As I understand his position, it is that Hickey's failure to respond to any phone calls justifies publication of the impossible accusation as fact. It just happens that a long-time friend was in Israel the day the enclosed story from the Jerusalem Post appeared. I have highlighted Donahue's knowledge that Hickey did not answer the phone because of an "emotional breakdown." This suggests that the publisher staged a phony excuse for publishing what should not have been published.

There have been so many unnecessary tragedies in the wake of the great one of the assassination, so many commercializations and exploitations of the tragedies by those with that purpose, I hope that at some point someone is in a position to do something to discourage any more of them.

Anyone who is interested can see and have copies of my Donahue file and correspondence.

Sincerely,  
  
Harold Weisberg

*Dear Harold, Just got home from a pilgrimage to Dr. and Mrs. Lombard. Before unpacking your letters I thought of sending you this article about JFK's assassination. His theory is different from Monday, September 14, 1987 The Jerusalem Post Page Four*

The cable address on his business cards reads: "SLEUTH." Nicholas Beltrante, sixtyish, looking every inch an ex-cop, heads "Beltrante & Associates," Worldwide Professional Investigations," and has been called "the dean of American private eyes" by *The Washington Post*.

Beltrante, a former chief inspector of police in Washington, D.C., spends most of his time overseeing the work of 22 associates. Occasionally, he takes on a case himself—charging \$1,000 a day "plus expenses." He charges \$50 an hour (plus expenses) for the work of each of his associates, who keep \$20 an hour for themselves.

Beltrante personally takes only cases "with very large fees" or of "great interest." He is currently investigating, together with ballistic expert Howard Donahue, the 1963 assassination of President John Kennedy. "Howard came to me four years ago and said: 'I have only \$500. But read my report.'" Beltrante was initially very sceptical. "I took it up very reluctantly. It seemed far-fetched. But the report convinced me."

The 40-page Donahue report "showed" that — on the basis of analysis of remaining metal fragments — the bullet that struck Kennedy in the back of the head and killed him "could not have been fired from Lee Harvey Oswald's rifle. The wrong calibre."

Donahue determined that the bullet in fact came from a "special weapon" held by one of the Secret Service agents who was in the car behind the president's. "What happened was that after the first shot or

'The bullet that killed JFK was fired by a Secret Service agent'

# Occupation: Private eye

shoots the president's car jerked to a halt. The Secret Service car then came to an abrupt stop — and the Secret Service agent accidentally let off a shot, the shot that killed the president. But the administration refused to admit this as it would have discredited the agency whose job it is to protect the president."

Beltrante relates — "we know this for a fact" — that several weeks after the assassination, while driving in Texas, President Johnson stopped his car and told the Secret Service men in the car following: "Keep further back. I don't want to be a victim of a Secret Service agent."

Beltrante says: "We have determined which agent in the Kennedy backup car was responsible. He was retired from the service a year and a half later. He suffered an emotional breakdown." Beltrante attributes the breakdown to the assassination. "He hasn't worked since. He lives like a recluse. He refuses to answer the telephone. We have him under surveillance." He declines to give the name because of "possible libel actions."

He says that the "media, especially in the U.S., misrepresent the profession of private investigator. Their life-style as portrayed on television is far-fetched, exaggerated. It makes the profession look ridiculous."



Nicholas Beltrante

Beltrante, of Italian stock (his name means "brave warrior"), says that the "treatment of private detectives in literature is more realistic." He names Sam Spade in Dashiell Hammett's *The Maltese Falcon* as a good portrayal of the trade. Raymond Chandler? "Good, definitely." But Beltrante isn't up on

contemporary detective fiction. His firm handles 750-1,000 cases a year, mostly "background investigations of people or businesses. I generally don't ask clients, 'Why do you want this done?'"

Beltrante says there are around 100,000 private investigators working in the U.S., and perhaps 150,000 worldwide. "It is a growing profession. But only about 100 of them are good, capable, serious, a handful in each country. We know each other. In Israel there are four or five."

Nonetheless, Beltrante believes the profession generally is steadily gaining recognition and respectability. "The CIA and the Justice Department now occasionally use private investigators on a contract basis." Beltrante himself has been so used by the Federal Trade Commission.

Is there a danger that a client will hire him for illegal purposes? "Look, the law allows us to investigate. I don't normally go into the whys." He himself usually handles "short trading" cases — in which people or companies covertly and usually illegally buy out businesses.

In 1972 Beltrante was hired by the Committee to Elect Senator George McGovern for President to investigate the Watergate burglary. "The burglary was on June 17, my birth-

day. A few days later, I was hired. I was asked to determine who was responsible and why."

Beltrante's investigation ran concurrently with several police and federal investigations. "At that time, politicians didn't trust the federal law enforcement agencies and the police. For example, I was asked by Congresswomen Bella Abzug to see if her office phones were tapped by the authorities — and they were. That's why I was hired."

After a four-month investigation, Beltrante "discovered that Gordon Liddy's men — some of whom it was later found were implicated in Watergate — had rented rooms near the offices of the Committee to Elect McGovern. We also discovered the McGovern committee had been infiltrated [by Liddy men] who wanted to get hold of their records. Yes, we had the names."

Beltrante recalls that *Washington Post* reporters Carl Bernstein and Bob Woodward worked with him during the investigation. "We exchanged information, though I know they didn't give me everything they had, just as I didn't give them everything. They sent me the first signed copy of *All the President's Men*."

Beltrante "firmly believes that *Deep Throat* was no specific person or source; "it was a combination of sources and contacts whom Bernstein and Woodward called Deep Throat."

Beltrante, who hails from Atlantic City, is president-elect of the Council of International Investigators, which has a ceiling of 300 investiga-