

Ms. Ethel A. Galzerano
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8/2/78

Dear Ms. Galzerano,

The study you describe in your 7/29 appears to be worthwhile, I think overdue. I'll help all I can but my own time pressures are enormous. I'm into too much and it all means much to me. Most of my time in recent years has been taken up in rather successful Freedom of Information efforts. I'm deep in them now, with court deadlines that are inflexible - and endless.

I am reluctant to sit and talk into a cassette because this might dominate too much and I might not be aware of your own detailed interests, clear as you have made the general outline. If we are ever near each other perhaps an interview would serve you better. Or, perhaps we can do this by phone, which you can tape. I'll be loaded with detail.

For now a hasty response off the top of the head, after a quick reading of your letter and before someone is due. If there is time I'll reread and add, if not perhaps later I can.

On my own work, I published all except Oswald in New Orleans myself. It may be of interest for you to know that while Dell reprinted, it turned Whitewash down three times before I made a success of it as the first "underground" book. Then it came to me. The contract gave Dell first refusal on the next book. It refused Whitewash II while Whitewash was on its way to be Dell's only best-selling non-fiction work of the period. I had hardly printed Whitewash II when Dell began to press me for it. When the advance justified it we made a deal I now regret. I'd be interested in any figures Dell may give you on prints and sales.

So you can better understand this, the first of the Whitewash series was the first book on the Warren Commission. It was completed 2/15/65.

With the attention I was able to attract to it I was able to get several large wholesalers to distribute it and the next two books. Their crookedness varied only in degree. Some never paid for books at all after getting many. So paid for the first and then not for later orders. So I've stopped dealing with them except on the rare occasions on which they need a single book for a good customer and for Whirlwind, with which I've made an unprofitable arrangement merely not to have to take the time to handle the orders myself. Most of my present and limited sales are from consumers who write and independent book stores a fairly large percentage of which are regular small customers.

Fluctuations in public interest, from my experience, relates to other events, not to the crime itself. The one cause of increased interest I recall was Watergate. All the many irresponsible developments turned people off, Garrison perhaps more than any other. Currently it is the House Select Committee on Assassinations, House assassins to me. I see in this a natural reaction, a reflection of the good sense of the average person. I can recall no occasion on which an assassination-related news increased interest or sales.

The sales of my books will not be a dependable guide and does not reflect public interest because beginning with the last of the Whitewash series I opted other work over promotional efforts, which with it were limited to a single mailing and what talk shows I could do by phone. I sent Post Mortem to the printer on my way to the hospital. Promotion of it was limited to the one mailing after I was home. I've been limited in what I could do since then and have had to eliminate any promotional activities, for which I have no subsidy in any event and no way of paying for them.

While I enjoy college appearances I am able to do nothing to attract them and my lecture bureau has been ineffectual. I did not know it when I signed with them but they had gathered together all the nuts who dominate the field and had me in competition with them. (I do think that the irresponsible might well become part of your study. I have some files on them you are welcome to examine and use. In time they will all be transferred to the University of Wisconsin - Stevens Point, with all of my records. I think that Professor David Wrono, History, might be helpful to you from his own experiences in an essentially ultra-conservative area and with the professional societies.)

My own audiences have ranged from small professional groups to more than 2,000 students at the University of Minnesota (Minneapolis) who gave us lunch to be there and who lingered almost to the time of my supper flight out of town. With the conspicuous exception of Madison, Wisc., my best and largest audiences have not been "liberal."

Until after I was hospitalized in 1975 I had no lecture bureau. To then most of my appearances were arranged by students who were strangers to me. Some were the result of being heard of talk shows.

I believe that radio talk shows should be an important part of your study because I believe they are the major factor, beginning in the early part of 1966, in taking the subject out of the closet. Without them I would have done nothing with my books. In turn, this would have diminished my ability to do other work because I began broke and had no other income or subsidy other than an occasional contribution, unsolicited. With a single exception they have been more effective, in my experience, than TV. To illustrate how unproductive TV can be, I had the prime spot on Good Morning America (King assassination) in June 1977. I received not a single letter.

There is another reason why I believe book sales are not an accurate gauge. After the first books a large part of the buying public came to believe the books they bought held all ~~there~~ there was to know. Also, I think that most sophisticated people were turned off by the nuts and self-seekers. In addition, few of the books are any good. One of the best had no promotion at all, Howard Roffman's Presumed Guilty. I know that his publisher often ignored mail orders. If book sales in recent years reflect anything I believe it is the good judgement of the buying public on this subject.

From my experience neither political preconception nor geographical area is related to subject interest.

In "Do you find people explaining political events in the context of the Kennedy assassination?" I think you are quite perceptive and perhaps underestimate the significance of this. In essence, I find this to be a widespread belief and I agree with it and more, the impact of the unsatisfactory explanation of the crime and the fact of a "whitewash" and "cover-up."

Please excuse my typos. I have no more time now. You are on what I believe is an important project. I'll help to the degree I can. Good luck.

Sincerely,

cc: Wrono

Harold Weisberg



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Mr. Harold Weisberg
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Dear Mr. Weisberg,

I am currently involved in a research project which examines the long-term impact of the assassination of President Kennedy on American public opinion. Part of my research involves the collection of data relating to the public's reading habits about Kennedy and his assassination.

One of the measures I am using to gauge the intensity and oscillation of public interest is a survey of book sales about Kennedy and the assassination. I am also soliciting information from public speakers on the reception and audience constituency they have experienced when touring the country, and speaking about the assassination.

I have already written to several publishers regarding my quest for sales information, but I have found that some of the most frequently cited texts have been self-published—such as your own. If it is at all possible, I would greatly appreciate receiving some information about the relative success you have had selling your JFK-assassination books. Also, it would assist me to know if there were any bursts or peaks in requests for books from you, and when they occurred. If you cannot trace your sales over time, some general notion of how many books you have sold of a particular edition would assist me greatly.

I have already written Dell Paperbacks, and Canyon Books, who published Whitewash, Whitewash II, and Oswald in New Orleans. Hopefully, you can fill me in on what kind of public diffusion was gained for Photographic Whitewash, Whitewash IV, and Post Mortem.

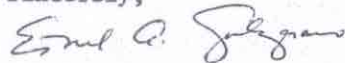
Although I don't have you on the list of public speakers that I have collected, I've assumed that on a number of occasions you have spoken to groups, clubs or campuses and the like. I realize that these requests must sound terribly intrusive and time consuming, but I have another series of questions to ask of you. (If you would like to record your answers on a cassette, I would gladly pay for it.) I was interested in knowing where you have spoken; what the general size of the audiences have been; did you notice whether or not the audiences were made up largely of young people—ages 17-25; did the audiences seem well informed about the assassination? About how often have you spoken on the assassination in the past 15 years?

Does interest in the assassination of President Kennedy seem to be confined to a couple of clearly identifiable geographical areas? Do you think interest in the assassination of President Kennedy has waned? Or, temporarily gone underground? Do you find people explaining political events in the context of the Kennedy assassination?

I realize that the above questions seem loosely constructed, but at the present time, I'm just trying to get a handle on the topic. While an almost innumerable number of books have been written on the Kennedy assassination and possible conspiracy explanations, few studies have focused on the psychological impact the assassination had on the American people. Unfortunately, most of those studies were done in the tumultuous aftermath of the assassination- predicting of course, that over time, the people would emotionally recover from the loss of the president. I am trying to make some determination about the extent to which the body politic has recovered and readjusted.

I would be most appreciate of any information you could forward me regarding the public response to the Kennedy assassination and the conspiracy theories that have cropped up. As I indicated above, I would pay for whatever costs you may incur. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Ethel A. Galzerano