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9/15/71

Paul

Dear Miss Gonzalez,

Your unpostmarked letter to me c/o Cannon - the stamps also are not cancelled - dated 9/4, was forwarded from New York day before yesterday and has just reached me. Please understand two things: I will not be a friend to you if I tell you what I do not believe simply because it may be what you seem to want to hear; and I have very little time, for I work too long a day and can't keep up with the requirements of my own writing. This also apologies for the typographical errors I'll not have time to correct.

I can't possibly collaborate on the Kaplan book, but I'd love to be able to! It should make an exciting one, and without obligation to you I will mention it to a friend who is an editor with a large house. However, to the degree I can, I will do what I can to help you with it. Perhaps the first help would be caution. And in this connection I think I'd best address Garrison and Lane directly and without subtleties.

Garrison is as bright, charming and persuasive as you say. He is also irresponsible, mentally ill, and varies from genius to stupid from person to person, item to item. He does and did have a very bad back condition, so he was not ducking you. I have seen him conceive legal moves of brilliant simplicity and unable to comprehend the simplest facts of life. He cannot abide being told ~~him~~ is or might be wrong, finds the company of those not sycophants intolerable, has overconfidence in his hunches which he soon translates into reality in his own thinking, and hasn't the remotest idea how to conduct an investigation. His "investigation" was non-existent, and he was led down one primrose path after another by those whose sole recommendation was their eloquence in fawning over him. If you were to examine Lane's initial comments, after news of the Garrison case broke, was he made his way back from Europe and compare them with his well-reported and incredible statement for a lawyer after first leaving the presence, you'd understand more about Lane, how sharp and unscrupulous he is, how commercially perceptive and flexible. Both men have more than healthy egos, and, if I may pose as an amateur shrink, although between them they got the lion's share of the attention granted those called "critics", they are secretly depressed and obsessed with their inability to come up with anything not already public. Garrison contributed nothing but suspicions, and most of the least irresponsible ones are unoriginal. I can testify to this from personal knowledge should we ever be together. I could hold forth for hours on such things. Mark milked Garrison as though he were a prize cow, going around the country (and killing the subject for all other speakers, seemingly in perpetuity, selling himself as the unofficial spokesman for Garrison, at something like \$1500 per appearance. Each in his own way believes the subject belongs to him, thus each is a plagiarist pretending he is a public servant. Once, when Mark left no alternative, having stolen and misused some of my material and then on a TV show I gave him, he actually defended plagiarism as a right. So, I begin by telling you a small part of what you may be unwilling to believe. Neither one likes me because I do not fawn and tell them how great they are when they are the biggest disasters we faced. Nonetheless, I abandoned my own second book to go to California at the behest of mutual friends to get a Commission lawyer off of Mark's back. And neither my health nor my finances will ever recover from the last disaster from which, in the last minute, I saved Garrison, one of his own fabrication. It ended up with his charging another sick man in his employ with being a top CIA agent, pure fiction. Had I not, with exceeding difficulty (for were I to not see the brilliance of the soon, Jim would proclaim the romantic beauty of the moon I saw), been able to prevent the monumental stupidity he had created, God knows what the result would have been, but his own closest lawyers told me the Supreme Court would have taken it upon itself to disbar him. If you have the facilities and time, you are welcome to come here and ramble through my files with of correspondence with him and his people. Not even any of the good, non-Shaw material in that case was his. I arranged for most of the

better witnesses, backgrounded his staff with memos on all of these and some I didn't recommend, and supplied all the medical evidence, the best thing in that trial, all of which was already in a limited-edition book I have not been able to get published commercially. They did as well as they could with this, but they blew much of it, needlessly. In fact, I had agreed to be their technical consultant on the Texas data, was supposed to sit at the counsel table with them (the New York Times reported me there), but I left N.O. in disgust while the jury was being empanelled and haven't been back since. My unforgivable crime was being right. I told them they'd lose, why they would, and that with the approach they are taking, of which I could not be part, they deserved to.

However, I also believe that in the current prosecution he is the victim of federal dishonesty. I can conceive of him doing what is acceptable in N.O., with its special, really sui generis folkways and mores, but not acceptable elsewhere, but I do not believe him a petty crook, I am persuaded that while he frittered away vast sums, he had no such income as attributed to him, and if he did, he is a crook, for he did not and has not repaid money I spent for him and he knew I was and am broke. I have not been in touch with him on this but have been and am with one of his people I trust and who trusts me.

Mark is no better than a whore who happens also to believe in some good things and is canny enough to commercialize them.

So, you know my feelings about both and you can discount what you will. If you act on anything contrary to these opinions, you will learn soon enough. If either read you the bible you handed them and you watched them read it, unless you know the passage by rote you'd better check it personally before you quote it.

Now on Kaplan, and I was aware of their interest in him, I never heard any rational reason to connect him with Oswald or the JFK case. That he was CIA makes him like thousands of others. He was in jail before Oswald went to Mexico. What role could he serve? I am aware there are many things I do not know, but until I get past this point, my interest in Kaplan has to be outside the context of any assassination. (The same, but the way, is true of my interest in Shaw, and I do have an interest in him as part of the overall story, but not in any sense in the role in which Garrison casts him.)

This does not mean that with the fairy-tale edited out, the Kaplan story is not a fascinating one, and considered this way, do you really need a collaborator? The files on the Kaplan fund, as they are published, are readily available. I've loaned mine to another researcher. I would think that for no reason you are giving a part of your own long work away. If there is no real reason to make any connection with the JFK assassination, why? And, if you have any good reason for such a connection, I'd like to hear it.

Nizer is a snake. Be careful of anything he tells you. This does not mean he did not tell you the truth, but from my experience with him, and it was sufficient to end his debating career on the Warren Report, one flick of his forked tongue and instant evidence! As the family lawyer, it may have served his interest to be truthful, as also untruthfulness might have.

Belli is partly of the same character, from what those who know him tell me. I know that he also, although entirely uninformed, was a talkative defedner of the Warren Report.

Of course, I do not know what you have on Kaplan and that murder. Some elements of the Mexican police might now be willing to say what they know, in their own interest but I presume if they knew they would be protected. They should know much. But they, or at least many of them, also work closely with US agencies, so an approach might be a ticklish thing, unless you knew to whom you were speaking.

You mention your association with Ramparts, so what I say, believe and can readily prove may also be unwelcome. They have done much fine work, have many significant journalistic accomplishments to their credit, but were miserable failures on the assassinations. I believe Turner one of the more eminently undependable sources.

Returning to Garrison and your question, did he have his day in court: yes. He had no case of the kind he alleged and he flubbed a number of legitimate cases. He rushed in on a hunch, floundered on it, got diverted into an incredibly insane continuation of zany theories, wasted himself and his resources on these, and those he could have jailed on legitimate charges were never brought to trial, not even charged. You ask why he didn't present the evidence he had. Because he had none. That was all hot air. His perjury charge has little chance, and again the same is true, he rushed in and in such haste he was entirely unaware of what I regard as a legitimate perjury charge that in no sense was already before a jury, as the one he filed really was with the Clinton witnesses (who are credible).

I have not spoken to him since he took insult at my leaving New Orleans, and we had little to do with each other beginning about 2/68, when his incompetence as an investigator became too apparent and I began to have doubts about his personal integrity, as I understand personal integrity, the old-fashioned, not Ayn Rand, concept. I worked independently and tried to help his staff as best they could be helped....Even the phrase you attribute to him, about an American President being shot down on the streets of an American city, is not original with him. Yet he is, in his own right, a magnificent writer, a much better writer than that hodgepodge Heritage of Stone is.

Many people believe and say the correct things about the JFK and other assassinations. But that does not make them dependable sources, does not mean they have done their own meaningful work, does not mean they can be credited on what they say, any more than a parrot. There is greater hazard when there is an enormous ego to embellish and persuasively, to the uninformed, convey the belief that the embellishment is the reality.

I hope you do a Kaplan book. If there is help for which I can find time, I'll be glad to offer it. I emphasize, however, there has to be something more than Garrison's hunch to tie him with the assassination or Oswald. If you knew some of the many other hunches, all of which he pretended were solid fact and all abandoned, you'd understand this better. And why, without the dubious, is there not a good Kaplan book.

Best regards and good luck,

Harold Weisberg