

Jefferson Morley, Outlook
The Washington Post
1150 15 St., NW
Washington, DC 20071

4/30/96

Dear Jeff,

As you may not recall, I told you and Frank when you were here that with what time remains for me I'm seeking to perfect the record for history to the degree possible for me. That accounts for the long and unreviewed commentary on The Fourth Tramp you resented so much. I put a copy of your letter to me dated only 25 August aside I am confident for writing you about in the future and I will do that now. I read the La Fontaine book when I was hospitalized for two weeks. And, frankly, I was surprised to see your dust-jacket promo after you learned what you did from what I wrote. That was less than you could have. You could also have learned from the failure of the La Fontaines to write me a word. You should recall that when you asked if you could send it to them I encouraged you and said I'd respond in writing to anything they wrote. (The second graf of your letter said, "I leave it to the La Fontaines to respond in detail." You could-and should-have learned from their silence.)

As you should have learned in your reporting, there are some stories that cannot be handled with abrupt brevity and without regard for background not in the story. Any writing about the assassination is of this nature. It is not of the flat world and those who do not intend literary whoring require at least basic knowledge of what they will be writing about. The La Fontaines do not yet have that and from their own account in their book never intended to acquire it.

You said that I treated them and you as "idiots." While I did not, the case of you as an idiot could be stronger because you should have known to ask the questions you did not ask. I regard them as dishonest, arrogant, subject-matter ignoramuses after they finished their book, and as commercializers and exploiters of that great tragedy. Those, more than one.

They build conjecture on conjecture when there is no basis for any of their conjectures. They do lie and that is also basis for them. Without their lies they'd have had no book. They ~~india~~ indulge in an assortment of other dishonesties. They pointed outly omit the transcript of their concept of the best of journalism, Hard Copy, and quote not a word from it. You should have read it. Elrod refused to say a single word they attribute to him and again without which they'd have had no book.

I do not "dismiss the possibility that Elrod's story could be true." I dismiss that what they give is Elrod's story. I got all those great "discoveries" of Bill Adams in FOIA litigation of the 70s. Elrod insisted to the FBI that he knew nothing about the assassination and he didn't change when they had him on camera and had some 33 beta

reels beside what they used on that show. What it may be interpreted as "matching" has no relevance, not that story and not that alleged Ellsworth match.

I do not remember what I wrote so long ago but I do see what you said, that I "foolishly impute to the LaFontaines the view that the Nov. 18, 1963 gun deal was supplying weapons for the 2d invasion of Cuba something they never said and don't believe." That is not the impression I have from having read their book. But it is foolish to give that any assassination relevance and with more than four hundred pages they did not. They cannot. Period. There is and there could be none. And nobody did any checking to see if that was possible Not that their entire treatment of that second invasion was not puerile. Silly at best. Ridiculous! Very ignorant, too.

You accused me of not offering constructive criticism, of a torrent of abuse that added to the "already terribly difficult task ~~inordinately~~ of convincing the papers' timid leadership that the assassination must be properly ^{ed} investigation."

With childish crap that has nothing at all to do with the assassination?

How much of that does it take for a "timid leadership" not to be convinced it was right all along?

How can there be any constructive criticism of what is not possible?

And how about a pepr's and a reporter's obligation not of deceive and mislead the people?

You say that Frank, Gardner, Hoch and Newman "read" the piece "and did not object to its appearance." That is not what I heard about Gardner. What makes Frank and Newman experts on the subject? And did Hoch recommend it? (The LaFontaines added nothing to his 1974 work on that ^{it} card and as I recall omitted some of that is key.)

Newman's book does not connect ^{wrong} Oswald and the CIA and has much that is very with it, some less than honest, some ignorant and basic and it has an obvious and baseless prejudice.

I digress to tell you a little about experts. In even the field of their expertise.

You may remember I was impressed by Newman's Cinyers presentation and got in touch with him through you. We invited him for Thanksgiving dinner that year. They came and he just sat and gave me the eye until after we ate, I did not mind, was a bit amused and ignored it. After we ate I told him of a few things I had that he might be able to use. One was the actual alleged Oswald number the Commission suppressed. It knew that Lonnie Hudkins had made that S179 or S172 number up. It arranged to hear the Texans in private and with only Warren and Rankin speaking to them. Carr or Wade told them the correct number, 110669, Rankin ignored that thereafter but did include it in a memo. My copy of that memo had been stolen for Lifton by the Baltimore cop who worked for Livingstone and doubled with Lifton. I told Newman how to get it. He

phoned me excitedly from the Archives, having found it exactly where I'd told him I got it in 1966. He had promised me a copy. After six months of effort he sent me not that one, from the Commission's files, but a carbon from the CIA's, which made it look like he was informing me. But he did not use that in his book! It is a CIA-type number, not FBI. I also showed him my proof that Oswald had the CRYPO clearance I said he had in 1967, in my Oswald in New Orleans. I started to make a copy for him and he told me not to, that he'd get his own copy. Mine was from the Navy but I told him it was in the Commission's files and that is where he said he'd get it. It is not in his book nor is there any mention of that high clearance that has TOP SECRET as a prerequisite.

The Mexico City CIA records he used make it clear that it was not Kostikov to whom Oswald spoke in seeking a visa but Yatskov. Not in his book. Kostikov of the alleged wet jobs only is. The Commission's files also hold the CIA memo telling them this but as the Commission ignored it, that was fine for Newman to do, too.

All of those remarkable "discoveries" of their Silicon Valley cavalry were in the public domain, in the FBI's public reading room as the result of my getting them in several lawsuits. They were ignored because they have no meaning other than in the debunking of the tramps myth, which I had been doing beginning in 1967 and did to the FBI the next year, forcing an FBI investigation that confirmed the debunking and was disclosed to me in CA's 75-1996 and 78-0322. I used some of it to prevent the Garrison atrocity he'd planned for late 1968 that Gardner used in the story on the Stone movie.

You say that what you refer to as "constructive criticism could help them and me in advance this story." What you were determined to do regardless of fact or truth. But is that not true in general of any criticism? If it is not ignored? Did you pay any attention to any of it before your glowing endorsement of what should shame a competent cub? Did you ask me about a word in that book? Did they?

Surely they made an "adjustment" to bypass their lie about the overhearing alleged and the sighting also alleged when you sent them the chart Jim Leavelle had sketched for me. But you did not pay any attention to their basing what is so important (in what they made up (and making things up is not, your ^{done by} words, "good reporters like the La Fontaines.")

You said you'd reread what I sent the Post and then would "try to provide" me "more information that did not appear in the story that indicates just how fruitful the La Fontaine's work is." You did ^{not} and it is not in their book, which is more of an atrocity than their article.

You say your objective was convince the paper's leadership that "the assassination must be properly investigated." I'd like to know how that is possible with the incompe-

and dishonest writing of those subject-matter ignoramuses who saw the chance for commercializing a scandal with the Rickey White b.s. and spent six months trying to validate it and who then spent a year and a half trying to locate ^{one} of the tramps, Harold Doyle and who to this day are ⁱⁿ ignorant about ~~the~~ assassination itself?

How you could be party to a cheap trick that says they have no "agenda" and no theories when they begin saying they assume Oswald Guilt, rather much of an agenda, ^{and} do nothing but theorize at their best and not one with ^a legitimate basis for it. They also lie. As in insisting that Hosty made made personal contact ~~with~~ with Oswald, to make an agent ⁱⁿ of him. In saying that deMohrenschildt worked for the CIA without any proof or even basis for a reasonable suspicion and without mention of his sworn testimony that he was never an agent of any kind for any government other than as a geologist for the ICA. Not mentioning that in honest? Can ignorance justify it? *Or not mentioning Hosty's testimony on that?*

Did they have to be ignorant? Should they have been to write such an article of such a book?

Their dishonesty is permeating. Take that Hauser story for one example. They select some incorrect reports but ignore the sworn testimony and the pictures, contemporaneous pictures.

When they use some of their sources it was with handouts, not from having read those sources themselves. If they read the citations and direct quotes I have in Oswald in New Orleans they are deliberately dishonest in what they ignore and I am talking about the directly quoted sworn testimony. *They also misrepresent what I said in it.*

I do not regard them as "idiots." I regard that as praise for them considering what they have done and how they have done it.

It is unpleasant even to think of it but I'll justify your allegation that I was insulting. I'll say that they engaged in literary whoring and I could go farther. With one of the most urgent matters of their and your lifetimes. It has turned the world around. That was possible because of the abdication of all of the major media. Each one of us who contributes to that bears a heavy responsibility. Those of us who write have in a society like ours a very heavy responsibility. If representative society is to work the people must be accurately informed on major issues. I am not saying that there is never an occasion on which conjecturing is not justified. I am saying that conjecturing, even with what the La Fontaines did not have, a reasonable basis for it, and presenting that as fact is its own kind of subversion. To lie to the people about what has the effect of a coup d'etat regardless of intent is a great subversion. It has the effect of validating or justifying a coup d'etat.

What will those same Post editors think they next time they are offered a legitimate assassination story? Won't this experience justify their declining it

and not paying any attention to what it is in it?

You knew that I take all the time people want and give any writing in the field anything and everything I have. For the Post's 30th anniversary series Anne Eisele spent a day here copying anything she wanted. I asked nothing for that. (But I sure as hell have trouble getting even a copy of a story the Post printed!) Did it not ^{occur} occur to you after what I sent the Post that before endorsing their enlargement of it that you should, in the interest of your own reputation, ask a single question about it?

You refer to their sick stuff as about the assassination. What is there in it that is about the assassination itself that is not corrupted? Like their bit on the Mauser when the evidence is that there is no question about the ~~the~~ identification of the rifle found on the sixth floor? It was in the testimony they ignore guarded by those who found it until the pictures were taken of it in place and it was then identified.

The Post has a policy on the assassination and it is not going to change. It not only declined to publish a review on the first book on the Warren Commission, it ~~declined~~ ^{kill it} its own reviewers' favorable review of it. It has not reviewed a ~~xxx~~ single one of my my books since then and I do not have to compare that with what they have reviewed. In terms of news, too, not just of books. And to this day I have yet to get a letter or a call from any of those of whom I have written so critically ~~is~~ saying that I was unfair or inaccurate in anything I wrote about them.

You should see my mail because I refuse to theorize and do no conjecturing.

The people have a bellyfull of the slop you helped along and I'm sure the sale of the promoted books of that ~~garb~~ garbage reflect it.

Look at the Post's review of that sick stuff of Mailer's! And the sales despite the extraordinary efforts to sell it.

I'm sorry you did what you did to your reputation and about how you did it.

Sincerely,

Harold
Harold Weisberg

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25 August

Dear Harold,

Thanks for your letter of 8/19. I think your point that the official investigation offers no leads is well-taken.

I have also received your letter to Jackie Allen and your critique of the "Fourth Trump." I leave to the LaFontaines to respond in detail; I need to reread it because you characteristically have marshalled a large amount of evidence and passion.

I must protest your tone though. You persist in treating the LaFontaines (and me) as idiots. Naturally, I think you are wrong but, more importantly I think it does no service to serious research trying to uncover the truth about the assassination. It is simply stupid to attack us for not reading the FBI memo on Elrod. We had in detail, repeatedly. We didn't omit or conceal Elrod's alcoholism; we noted it and said his testimony had to be treated with caution. You dismiss the possibility that Elrod's story could be true without really dealing with how it matched Ellsworth's description of

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- certainly do not LaFontaines.

the case; you don't deal with the fact that Masen, ~~was~~ ^{would be} the recipient of the guns transported on Nov. 18, 1963, just so happened to have provided the ammunition used in the shooting. You foolishly impute to the Lafontaine's the view that the Nov. 18, 1963 gun deal was supplying weapons for the 2nd invasion of Cuba, something that they never said and don't believe.

At the risk of being impertinent Mr. Weisberg, grow up! We're all in this together. You have no monopoly on insight into the assassination. You have done heroic work on the assassination and every one of us is in your debt. We acknowledge that and hope to accomplish what you hope to accomplish: finding the truth. You can help us in this effort by providing constructive criticism, not a torrent of abuse which hurts me in the already terribly difficult task of convincing this paper's timid leadership that the assassination must be properly investigated. Your superior tone and sweeping dismissal are personally hurtful.

to me, a great admirer of yours, and professionally damaging to a rare Washington journalist who, with his own limited resources and fallible judgement, hopes to continue your work. It also calls into question your own judgement because people whose work on this subject you respect (Jeff Frank, George Lardner, Paul Hoch and John Newman) all read the 4th Tramp before publication and did not object to its appearance in the Washington Post. Are they all fools and idiots who have acquiesced in the publication of nonsense? I don't think so and I don't think you do either.

That doesn't mean the story is perfect or that all its speculations are warranted; the LaFontaines are more than capable of defending their work. Your wealth of knowledge and constructive criticism could help them and me advance this story, though, and that is what I earnestly wish for. There is a difference between a prevaricator like Posner and good reporters like the LaFontaines. The LaFontaines and I certainly do not deserve

the same kind of invective that you properly give Posner. Please.

I will re-read your critique carefully and try to learn from it not take it personally. I will also try to provide you more information that did not appear in the story that indicates just how fruitful the ~~the~~ LaFontaine's work is. I hope to gain your support for their work. ~~the~~ I believe that their reporting of previously unknown events in Dallas (the nexus of CIA-paid anti-castro Cubans and the Masen-Nante gun-runners) is converging with John Newmans reporting on the recently declassified CIA files to open up an entirely new perspective on the Kennedy assassination.

Help us. Do not insult us.

Yours sincerely,



cc: Ray and Mary LaFontaine
Paul Hoch