

PLAYBOY interview

Several other items, each its own kind of monument to the integrity, depth and exhaustiveness of Mark's work, and his dependability, are in the same Playboy interview. On p.48, for example, this, in reference to the documents burned by the doctor in charge of the autopsy:

"Think about this for a moment. Here we have a commander in the United States Navy, who is also a doctor, assigned to perform the autopsy on the assassinated President of the United States, burning his draft notes on the autopsy ..."

Now, Mark, before this, knew the truth but his vanity prevented acknowledgment of it for he pretends all knowledge began with and is vested in him. During the taping of a TV show many months earlier, he had made the same mistake in challenging me, as had Jim Bishop. The exchange, so unflattering to both of these self-touted "experts", was edited from the final showing. But on that occasion, what Mark learned is that the autopsy notes were not burned. Worse, they were suppressed by the government. I have receipts for them through the White House and Secret Service to the Warren Commission. What was burned is the first draft of the autopsy protocol itself.

On the same page Mark was asked, "Did the bullet fragments found in the governor's wrist, rib and thigh match Exhibit 399?" Mark's reply was, "Of course not ..."

No fragments of bullet were recovered from Governor Connally's chest or thigh.

In subsequent apology, the editors of Playboy told me they had devoted an enormous amount of staff time and personnel for three weeks in an effort to eliminate the error in this interview. These are but samples of what remained.

January 27, 1967

Dear Mr. Fisher,

The Lane interview awaited me on my return home tonight and I've read it in haste and written the letter you asked for.

You are, of course, under no obligation to print it. And I do have the documents referred to, and I did dig them up myself, if you want to use them. With respect to the autopsy notes, the truth is more awful.

You have a copy of the original edition of WHITEWASH, which is now out in a Dell reprint. My references are to my printing, the one Playboy has.

I've been working on the two Manchester serializations. He says remarkably little about the assassination in a book that is supposed to be about that assassination, but perhaps this is fortunate, for what he says is almost 100% in error. I have written too much on it and haven't finished, but I'm including references and direct quotes on the important things.

I have not worked any new material in it for several reasons, including my belief it doesn't belong there and length. I am aware that this can diminish your interest.

But I also think that it is terribly shocking that a man who accepts the sponsorship he had and the added responsibilities that entailed, which include the preservation of what is left of the national honor and the prevention of additional scandal, has so abused the personal and national trust endowed in him and has come up with what is a literary scandal the equivalent of the Brink's heist and a national scandal of unimaginable magnitude, diminished somewhat by the rather firm disassociation of the Kennedy name that has, belated, been achieved.

I am now about a month behind schedule on WHITEWASH III. The offset process I will be using is such that there are no galleys to send you. I have two chapters drafted, one on the farce of the transfer of everything the government had to the archive. This has not happened. I have it documented. What was put there is 21 columns of trash, trivia and junk that I shall print. I have a chapter on the return of the pictures and X-rays of the autopsy to the government and have laid the basis for a suit over this particular mess. I shall be doing a chapter on the suppressions, and either as part of that chapter or a separate chapter I'll have the pictures listed that the Commission did not see, that were not collected, the photographers not called, and what they could have showed - and still might.

But on the documents, on which I've made no commitment, I do not see how I can get them to you in advance except by making copies, an expense beyond my capacity to meet. However, I am quite willing to let you see them anytime, beginning now. I hope to have this book done in two months. It is work on this that has held back my promotion of WHITEWASH II.

Although I am much less satisfied with the interview than my letter indicates, my congratulations are quite genuine. I think your investment of this much space and effort is a fine and helpful thing.

Sincerely yours,

Harold Weisberg

January 27, 1967

Mr. Murray Fischer
Playboy Magazine
919 N. Michigan Ave.,
Chicago, Ill.

Dear Mr. Fisher,

Congratulations to Playboy for the space it devoted to criticism of the Warren Report in the interview with Mark Lane.

May I suggest that your interviewer missed what I believe is Lane's importance and his major contribution, especially when he has been slandered with the epithet "literary scavenger", which is never aimed at those who have profited from defense of the Report of the Commission.

When our society began to fall apart with the murder of Oswald, when Oswald had been systematically denied of all his rights, there was but a single lawyer in the United States who was publicly true to the great tradition of U.S. law and lawyers, one lawyer who sought the recapture of the national honor that had been lost in this shameful affair, only one who sought to defend the rights of the dead Oswald, and he is Mark Lane.

There are a number of omissions and errors in the interview that I call to your attention.

"The first two books attacking the Commission" were not those by Buchanan and Joesten, which were written before the Report was issued. The first book on the work of the Commission and the first restricted to an analysis of its own evidence (and still the only one of this description) is my first book on this subject, WHITEWASH: THE REPORT ON THE WARREN REPORT. It was completed in mid-February 1965 and was first published not on May 9, 1966 as you report but on August 18, 1965. The first book on the Commission's files is my WHITEWASH II: THE FBI-SECRET SERVICE COVERUP. As you can see, all these files are not secret, although too many are still suppressed.

"The question of those missing frames (of the Zapruder film) was brought before one of the Commission's lawyers last year by David Lifton...This Commission attorney commented: ' I have no recollection that anybody considered what happened to the sign or that anybody was aware of the fact that the frames were omitted...' Mr. Lifton is an associate of Wesley J. Liebeler, former assistant counsel of the Commission, the counsel who handled the testimony of the photographic witnesses.

The destruction of frames of the Zapruder film and their absence in Exhibit 885 as printed by the Commission was first published in WHITEWASH which on page 206 reproduces page 19 of Volume 18 of the Commission's hearings, showing the absence of frames 207-11 and the splicing of the top of 208 with the bottom of 212. Mr. Liebeler had personal knowledge of the moving of these signs and the destruction of other landmarks essential to photographic intelligence. It is he who interrogated Emmet J. Hudson, groundskeeper of Dealey Plaza. Hudson testified to him (WHITEWASH, page 45): "...Now they have moved some of those signs. They have moved that R.L. Thornton Freeway sign, and put up a Stemmons sign". The Stemmons sign is the one in question and the fact of its replacement was known to Lieberer, who then said, "They have? They have moved it?" Hudson reaffirmed his sworn testimony, after which Liebeler said, "That might explain it, because this picture here, No. 18, was taken after the assassination and this ^{one} was taken at the time -No. 1". Liebeler also examined Abraham Zapruder, who took the movies of the assassination. In showing Zapruder an album of stills made from the slides of his movie (WHITEWASH II, page 138), Liebeler began to ask Zapruder about frame 210.

"Now, what about picture No. 210 - however, there is no 210 here".

Liebeler also knew about this not later than July of 1966, when he ordered a copy of WHITEWASH from me (and has yet to pay for it). In my reply to his letter I specifically directed his attention to the photographic evidence. He has been totally silent.

About the Moorman film (meaning the second - one was published): "No one will say where it is. It is not available in the National Archives. Presumably the government still has it..." The truth is much worse; they were ordered returned to

^{WRITTEN}
Mrs. Moorman at the direction of General Counsel J. Bee Rankin, dated April 3, 1964. (It is among the several hundred once-secret documents from the Commission's file I will publish in WHITEWASH III: THE ARCHIVE.)

On the burning of the autopsy notes: this did not happen, although a careless reading of Dr. Humes certification (first published in WHITEWASH on page 187) would so indicate. What Dr. Humes swore he burned was the first draft of the autopsy report itself. I have the receipts covering the receipt and transfer of these notes from Dr. Humes through the various channels of command at the Navy Hospital to the White House Physician and from him to the Secret Service (and will be publishing them, too, in WHITEWASH III). These notes went with the pictures and X-rays. They were in ^{Dr. Humes} his hands when he testified before the Commission (WHITEWASH 183). They are not in the Archives as of this writing. They have never been there. They are not printed as part of Exhibit 397, as required, and are not in either Commission File 371 where they are required to be or in a duplicate of this file. (WHITEWASH II, pages 114-5;125-7).

"Did the bullet fragments found in the governor's wrist, rib and thigh match Exhibit 399?" No fragments were recovered from the rib or thigh and the size of the thigh fragment has been kept secret (I have it if you want it, in the appropriate report of the FBI). But there were spectrographic analysis made, including of the fragments of a bullet or bullets found in the car and recovered from the President's head. These have been suppressed (WHITEWASH 161-4; 190; WHITEWASH II pages 241-2).

I sincerely hope Playboy will continue to be as generous with its space and effort on this subject, because I believe it is a touchstone issue of the day and because we must recapture the lost national honor - and solve a horrible crime.

Sincerely yours,

Harold Weisberg