

Lane and Novel Confrontation Produces Heat, but Little Light

By Abe Zaidan

Special to The Washington Post

COLUMBUS, Ohio, May 14

—Clearly, the spirit was not in keeping with that warm, deep-down-inside feeling of Mother's Day.

Mark Lane, the author, lecturer and critic of the Warren Commission Report, hissed that he had been libeled, and left in a huff.

Gordon Novel, whom New Orleans District Attorney Jim Garrison has described as a key witness in the Kennedy assassination probe, fumed that Lane was nothing more than a "propagandist" for Garrison anyway.

Jerry Weiner, Novel's Columbus attorney, glumly allowed as how he might have spent the morning on the golf course if Lane hadn't insisted on the rendezvous with his client. But then he went into detail about Novel's pending libel suit against Garrison and his circle of financial backers in New Orleans.

The only show of cordiality came when an office secretary asked for Lane's autograph. He responded graciously.

The encounter in Weiner's law offices this morning started when Lane asked to talk with Novel before driving on to Denison University at Granville, Ohio, for an afternoon lecture.

What got Lane really worked up was a 17-point questionnaire that Weiner's private investigator, Stan Greenbaum, distributed to the handful of newsmen while Weiner, Lane and Novel talked things over behind closed doors.

The questionnaire, which Novel wanted Lane to answer while strapped to a lie detector, was a masterpiece of Red-baiting.

His loyalty challenged, Lane put newsmen on notice that the statement was libelous. He accused Weiner of "unethical" conduct.

Weiner, who revealed equal surprise at Novel's assault, apologized. But Lane assured everyone that he would never come back. By this time, Weiner was saying he wouldn't invite Lane back anyway.

Lane said he came to discuss the case with Novel because of the author's continu-

ing interest in it. But he said he was leaving with reason to believe that Novel is not "at all being frank."

He charged that an earlier lie detector test which purported to clear Novel of involvement in the assassination conspiracy was "rigged by segments of the media." This, he said, plainly meant the National Broadcasting Co. and Hearst Headline Service, who paid for the test.

"If Novel has nothing to hide, he ought to appear before the grand jury in New Orleans," Lane contended.

"If I went there," Novel responded indignantly, "I'd be incarcerated for life."

Novel is facing extradition on charges that he burglarized a munitions dump in Houma, La. He has maintained that Garrison's whole case has been a fraud. Lane has been saying that Garrison has the case wrapped up.

And Greenbaum plaintively remarked to everyone this morning that "it's nice to know we're on the right side. We're the ones who are defending our Government."