

Vincent Salandria 1/10/25

"I do not want that man in this house again!" Lil announced with firmness as soon as Vincent Salandria left. With him was his then brother-in-law Harold Felfman and I think ^{one or} several others. It was in 1968, as I recall when it was ^{still} warm. That is how badly he behaved without throwing furniture around or anything else. His really bad behavior was in words and in his superior, really omniscient attitude.

It was an extraordinarily strange matter, like so much involving him and even more involving ^{him and} Jim Garrison always were.

It began when I was in New Orleans working as best I could on Oswald, trying to learn more about him and about his activities there. At some point that trip I was asked to join Garrison and others including, I think, Bud Fensterwald. It seems like Garrison was either reluctant to file a law suit or, having agreed, wanted to back out, probably the former. The suit was to be for JFK assassination information and objects, like the rifle and the President's clothing. For some reasons I do not now recall Garrison had the incredible belief that it would lead to some government dirtyworks. The idea, and I do not know whose it was but it well could have been Fensterwald's, was to show that JFK assassination evidence ^{sought} to the jury in the trial of Clay Shaw. I could see nothing wrong in it and believed it would be worthwhile to have independent examinations of them and more and impartial accounts to the people. It was all so very irrational! There was no way in which the government could have intruded into Garrison's case because he showed that evidence to his jury. After a lengthy wrangle in which Garrison's paranoia was more than obvious, he finally agreed that if Vincent Salandria agreed he would.

A meeting was arranged for here, with Fensterwald, Salandria and ^{and} others he brought, for a Sunday. No less paranoid than Garrison, Salandria was astounding. My recollections now are not clear but as always he wanted to dominate, projected himself as more intelligence and better informed ^{especially politically,} than anyone else, things like that. It was almost beyond description and it was amazing. If he came up with any argument against having that evidence shown the jury I do not remember it. It was just crazy and he was loud in it and spoke endlessly. It was rather difficult to put up with and there must have been more than I recall for Lil to say, for the first time in our married life, that she did not want him in our house again. Here and wherever we lived before here she saw an unusual parade of people ranging from trade-union organizers and officials, ~~the~~ to witnesses before the Senate Civil Liberties Committee, whose editor I was, to Broadway showgirls (that led to a regular and justified complaint - I invited those young and lonely women without consulting Lil or telling her), to Congressmen, former Congressmen, the youngest officers in the Spanish Republican army, then an OS/A gent just returned from an overseas assignment (he stayed for six months!) I'd been asked to take in because he was still rather young and had no Washington area connections, ^{or relatives any where.} I think I need recall no more to indicate that Lil was accustomed ^{and tolerant of} to all sorts of different people, and aside from the legitimate complaint, that ^{two of them} I had neglected to consult her, had never made any

complaint. That she found Salandria intolerable reflects how, with all her experiences then of 30 years, badly he behaved.

But in the end he agreed and as soon as he did he phoned Garrison. Garrison had delegated his decision at district attorney, as prosecutor in that case over which he had gotten international attention, to Salandria. From what Salandria told us, Garrison gave Fensterwald, who was to be his attorney, the go-ahead. I'll return to this.

I first met Salandria in the early summer of 1966. I had been invited to do a four-hour talk show on a ^{WCAU} 50kw, clear-channel radio station in Philadelphia, the Jack "Kinney show. It reached a large audience, the entire east coast and into Canada and below Florida and from people who told me they heard me on it as far inland as Iowa. The show began at 8 p.m. and lasted until midnight. It was taped and the tape was played beginning after the midnight five-minute newscast. My sister lives in a Philadelphia suburb and I arranged to stay with her instead of driving back to where we then lived, an hour from Washington and a little longer from Philadelphia. Somehow Salandria told me he'd come and pick me up and take me to the station. It was in a part of that large city I'd never been in, although I was born there and had returned often as a young adult. With him was his then wife, Virginia as I remember her name. When we got to the station my suspicion was confirmed, he was to be on the show, too.

On it was hardly the word. He was it and unless I made a scene he would continue to be. I could not get a word in edgewise and he rambled with misinformation and paranoia. The big thing he had, and he used it over and over again, was that he and Gaeton Fonzi, then with Philadelphia Magazine, had made a study of the Zapruder film and in it had "discovered" that Governor Connally had not been hit by any bullet until no more than two seconds before the so very visible shot that exploded the President's head. Fonzi never abandoned that impossibility. I think he may have mentioned the same number in his mistitled book.

When Salandria was not holding forth on that craziness, for which there is no rational explanation and is contrary to all the certain evidence, he found some other way of being the center, of dominating, of propagandizing. It was quite an exasperation. I had the first book on the Warren Commission in circulation by then, I'd made that trip to promote it, and all that got promoted was certain to discourage rational people who wanted to hear fact about the assassination. Only to have this incredible nonsense getting to all those many people.

When there was a break and "Kinney got up to go to the mens' room, I also did. He was an amiable, friendly, very pleasant and tolerating man. As soon as we were alone in the mens' room I told him that I intended no offense but that if Salandria opened his mouth one more time I was leaving. He agreed with me. It had become that much too much for him. It is a measure of Salandria's determination to bludgeon his great discovery that was no discovery at all into the audience mind that even the moderator could not

control him. When we returned to the studio, before the mikes were opened, he told Vince that I had made that trip to promote my book, that his audience certainly wanted to hear about that book, and he was giving the rest of the show to me. It was part of a half hour or part of an hour, more likely the latter to allow enough time to go to the mens' room.

That dose of Salandria is what I learned was the real Salandria.

I did that show often. McKinney and his audience like me and what I said. That was the time I got least reaction from it. I suspect that much of the audience was turned off by Salandria's determined craziness.

This may be hard to believe but it is rather understated because with the passing of time I have forgotten so much. My sister and brother-in-law had taken the show in. They were aghast, could not understand that McKinney let Salandria do what he did. But I suppose he wanted no scene of any kind.

When I was in New Orleans beginning the next summer I learned from Garrison and from some of his bewildered staff that the Salandria-Garrison relationship was that of Svengali-Svengali and was it "Trilby"? He completely dominated Garrison's thinking any time when he was there. Garrison was dedicated to whatever crap Salandria gave him, mostly paranoia about what the government was doing to him when it heeded to to ~~but~~ nothing because Garrison himself was doing himself in, particularly with the media. The reporters did not begin opposed to him as most of the papers did. He turned them off with his excesses and the impossibilities and irrationalities he loaded on them.

When Salandria and I were in New Orleans at the same time I made it a point ^{not} to be where he was. That was not difficult because he was always with Garrison. I never knew Vince to do any work there at all. And as I was told and then saw, Garrison loved it. He regarded Salandria as the wisest of men, the best-informed on the politics of the assassination as they came to develop it together. All unreal!

Late that spring or early that summer I got wind of a supposed KGB desire to be of help to Garrison and to give him its alleged assassination information. I do not go into that now but on the face it had no credibility. Once when I was leaving for the airport to return home Garrison gave me about of fourth of what he said was a book manuscript he wanted me to read. It was ^{single} spaced on legal-size paper so as soon as I saw it I had questions. Nobody ~~we~~ ever does a manuscript that way. I read it on the plane and then wrote Jim a detailed explanation of why and how it was a fraud and might have been intended to influence him. (As beyond believe it really did!)

Early that October, just before I was to leave for appearances in Chicago, San Francisco and Los Angeles, with a side trip to speak at the university in San Diego, Bud Fensterwald, who'd probably heard of my misgivings about Garrison, asked me to stop off in New Orleans on the way back and then give him my appraisal of Garrison, with whom he'd spent a great amount of time. When I agreed he, wealthy man that he was,

and knowing that I had no regular income and was in debt, then gave me a \$100 travellers check. For a trip from Los Angeles to New Orleans and for staying in New Orleans however long it took!

(In San Francisco at least I got a break. I was the house guest of one of JFK's lady friends, a wealthy woman and an attractive, pleasant and honest one. I was to have returned for us to do an oral history she would put aside for years but at first I could not afford it and then was deep into other work. *Then she died rather young.*

Early the week I was to return home Louis Ivon, Garrison's chief investigator, asked me if I would take a copy of the ms. of that book I'd described as a fake to H.L. Hunt, the ultra-reactionary oil tycoon. I arranged to do that ~~through~~ ^{through} Hunt's chief of security, Paul Rothermel, Jr., a former FBI agent. That, not the ravings of the insane Harry Livingstone, is how and why I met them both. All I ~~was~~ ever got was the ticket to Dallas. When Rothermel told me it was to be at the ticket counter I told Ivon ^{would} I was not need a ticket. And that, except for one drink at the Petroleum Club, is all I ever got from either.

Hunt was one of the chief assassination villains in the fake book prepared by the French CIA, SDECE then. And of course both were grateful. I think Ivon's idea was to through that get some support for Garrison from the exceptionally wealthy Hunt.

Just before I was to leave for home Garrison phoned me. I just had to come back, he had the most important evidence of all and he wanted me to see it. Long before then I'd learned that his concept of assassination evidence was not what he learned in law school. I'd been away for more than three weeks and needed to get home. But when he insisted I agreed. I left Dallas on a mid-afternoon plane the first stop of which was New Orleans and when I got there I had no luggage! It had not been lost. It had been intercepted and examined and that not for the first time.

The next morning Garrison had this big meeting in his office. A number of his staff were there and a Commission witness, Charles Hall Steele, Jr. As soon as Clancy, the ~~agent~~ Garrison detective who did his photographic work, darkened the office and started a projector up, I recognized what he was showing ~~was~~ ^{was} a rather poor print of what remained after outtakes from Johann Ruyh's films, I was really disgust! It happened that before going to Dallas Ed Planor, then WDSU-TV news director, had agreed for me to have a print. He made the arrangements for dubbing it where they had that work done, at PanAmerican films, and gave me his file copy to take there to be copied. What I agreed to is not to use ^{public} any of the footage without WDSU permission and not to give it to Garrison. When Garrison already has a print the antecedents I'm aware of ~~is~~ because it was a poor substitute for what I'd asked one of his assistants, Andrew Sciambra to get, I did not consider it to be a breach of that agreement to use the better copy. I interrupted to say that, Garrison was visibly surprised—he did not even know that I was responsible for his having the poor print —Clancy removed the poor print and used my clear one. Garrison provided

explanations that at their best were silly. And yes, this is part of the Salandria story.

There came a point in the film where Rush had p⁶inted his camera to his left, toward Canal Street from the main doorway to the old Trade Mart building and was following people as they walked toward the camera. As soon as that started Garrison warned us to be alert, that the big thing was coming. And then, when a man was opposite the buildings fire floor, he exclaimed, "There he is! There is Shaw! That is his secret entrance!"

It was not Shaw and fire doors open from the inside only. Besides which, why did Shaw need a secret entrance into the building he managed?

There was no reaction to that showing, I got my film back, and Garrison began questioning Steele. He had been hired by Oswald to help distribute his handbills at the ITM building the time Rush was there. Oswald had arranged for that. I listened to the questioning of Steele and it was a waste of time. When Garrison finished I asked Steele if ~~you~~ he would answer a question for me. I knew the answer but Garrison did not.

"Was there anyone with you and Oswald?" He said there was another ^{young} man he did not know. And once Garrison heard that he did nothing about it. That was in the discarded ~~outtakes~~ but I knew from a former friend of Garrison's, the information officer of the ITM, Jesse Core, that there were three of them. It was Jesse who complained to the police and the FBI about that Oswald picketing.

Not only is this peek at the real Garrison pertinent to Salandria but it helps explain how ^{much} Garrison ^{trusted} was so impressed by him.

On returning home I usually used one of two Eastern Airlines planes that went to the Baltimore airport. Less traffic there and less on the longer road home. One of more of Garrison's detectives, who were friends of mine, took me and picked me up. Just before leaving I got into a conversation with Ivon and Sciambra. In retrospect I believed they planned that. The long and short is that I learned that Garrison had new and ever more outrageous plans for commemorating the assassination fifth anniversary. (That was the first week of November.) He was going to charge Edgar Eugene Bradley, ^{based} ^{based} entirely on one of those tramp pictures that does not have Bradley in it, and Robert Lee Perrin, with being the assassins on the Grassy Knoll! I knew, I was sure Garrison and his staff knew, that Perrin had killed himself in New Orleans in August of 1962, the year before the assassination. Garrison and Boxley, who he'd hired with private funds and was not a city employee, had ^{made} ~~made~~ the wildest tale up. I do not now go into that. There is a separate record of what I did do when Ivon and Sciambra asked me to. It is not recognizable in Garrison's book. They told me that another assistant, Jim Alcock, had talked Garrison out of what else he planned for that commemoration but ~~that~~ ^{he} ~~he~~ would not budge on those two. They asked me to try. I agreed to return as soon as I could after I got home. I asked Ivon for two sets of prints of those tramp pictures and two envelopes that would hold them. At the airport I addressed one to Henry Wade, the Dallas DA who was and remains a friend, the other to Rothermel, and mailed them with

a hasty ~~note~~ scribble on ~~the~~ pad + carried. I did not tell either that I had asked the other to investigate for me and find the truth. I'd been debunking those pictures and as soon as I wiped on crazy invention out they made up a new one, Garrison and his clique of nuts.

On the plane home ~~at~~ I wondered how I could do what Garrison's staff could not do. I evolved a simple thought: if it takes a crook to reach a crook, then it takes a nut to reach a nut. The next day I phoned Salandria and told him that in New Orleans I had just learned that the CIA had cooked up something to ruin Jim. I explained it. I then asked him to go there with me and help me defend Jim. He agreed. I suggested, once we agreed on the day, that he take the Eastern plane that went from Phila to Baltimore non-stop and then made its first stop in MO. I asked him to keep a seat next to him so I could fill him in. That is what we did, and we both stayed with the Matt Herrons, who had been ~~friends~~ ^{fr. fr.} of Salandria when they lived in Phila.

On the plane Salandria regaled me with his favorite craziness, of the parallel between the assassinations of Trotsky and of Kennedy and of their interrelationships. (I think but do not know he was a Trotskyite.) He and Garrison spent all the time I was there ~~at~~ there revelling in that kind of insanity that was so real to them. Garrison loved Salandria even more for that brilliance. That kept Salandria out of my way and Garrison from tumbling to what I was doing.

As always, Ivon had a souped-up Chevy II serviced, gassed up and awaiting me. In those days New Orleans took the vehicles of gangsters they caught. They distributed those cars to city ~~employees~~ ^{offices}. Garrison's office had better ones but ~~no~~ ^{NOBODY} in the office would use that one. Not without cause! ~~I~~ Ivon also kept his word to have his detectives do whatever I asked of them. And they did it well, rapidly, fully professionally. They were city police detectives assigned to the DA's office.

Ivon found enough that Boxley had put on paper about this business. That was fortunate because he avoided memo and reported to Garrison verbally. It turned out to be enough. As I went over those memo ~~I~~ noted what I wanted investigated. First I broke the whole story Garrison had made up and Boxley invented proof for, with those dicks going where I asked and doing well what I asked of them. They really made it easy. I could sit and work and not waste time in moving around. Of the evidence they got for me that I asked for with my ~~version~~ ^{copy} of the memo the original of which I gave to ~~Sciambra~~ Sciambra + kept only two things that ~~he~~ ^{now} recall. Bear in mind that Garrison had not had his professional detectives, even not his chief investigator, involved in any of that. They made no investigations at all. I had no trouble with those tramp pictures because both Rothermel, who investigated those pictures himself, and Wade, who sent his staff detective to do it, gave me identical reports: those men were winsos picked up long after the assassination in a parked railroad box car behind the central annex post office at 217 S Houston. That is a Woodwest of the MSBD and two and a half south of it. I had fun with those

7
imaginary CIA ^{SIGNS} ~~sigs~~ and rifles so assassins could see around corners at any distance and then fire around corners! The ridicule took care to ~~that~~ that nonsense.

Those tramps were walked off the tracks past the TSB, the only way, about an hour and a half after the assassination!

It took longer on Perrin because Garrison had made up a story that the assassins, planning long in advance, ^{in 1962} had killed and buried an unknown Venezuelan seaman under the Perrin name and Perrin lived and thrived as a writer named Starr. But those detectives got me what I asked for, including the handwritten morgue book that had not been altered, the hospital records of Perrin's admission and the diagnosis, and of the report of the state trooper who had been Perrin's friend and who Perrin phoned to bid farewell after he took the arsenic, *Could move, much more than I wanted.*

It was at this point that I needed Salandria. I'd filled him up with ^{my} the CIA plot on the plane. I kept adding details as I learned them and put them together when we saw each other at the Herrons each night. I was there most of the time, ^{typing} away on what is too high but all I had, the dining room table. The only typewriter I had was a defective East German one Matt had picked up somewhere! The Garrison office did not have a portable. ^{by} the time I finished the draft of my investigative report, on a Saturday night, Salandria was ready to assault the CIA alone and unassisted. He would do anything to protect his friend Jim from them and their dirty tricks. I phoned Sciambra and told him to come pick it up. That copy had all the documentation I had accumulated. He suggested that I take Vince with me and meet him at the office the next morning and I could sit and work there while he and Vince met with Jim.

^{Salandria} ^{Not having the} ^{notion} ^{that I} ^{was} ^{using} ^{him} ^{and} ^{believing} ^{as} ^I ^{could} ^{so} easily convince him that it was all a plot to ruin Jim, Sciambra did not have a hard time convincing Jim that the CIA was out to get him. But he and Garrison both knew the truth and by then Garrison knew not only that I knew it but that I had it documented.

After several hours ^{too}, as Sciambra was known phoned to exclaim, "Hal, you did it!" He then said that he and Vince were coming to pick me up and we would go to his home for the best Italian meal I had ever had. ^{and} I was ^{raised} in an Italian neighborhood. He did not exaggerate, his wife was that good a cook. Not did he indicated that it would be the most abundant I've ever had!

As we drove to his home and had to stop for a ~~drawbridge~~ drawbridge as I recall Moo turned to me and said, with satisfaction and excitement, "Hal you just save Jim from being disbarred by the Supreme Court of the United States of America." I did not ask him how. If true I believe it was because the Shaw case was then before that court.

So, my thinking like Occam and seeking the simplest solutions- in this case that it takes a ^{bit} to reach or to catch a nut, worked. Hail Occam!

Knowing the truth, that he had made it all up and Boxley had gone out and invented evidence for him, knowing full well that it was no CIA plot to ruin him, Garrison fired

Boxley and in ~~this~~ press release - may I be forgiven!!! - said that Boxley had been dispatched by the CIA to wreck his investigation.

It is not unfaithful to the real Garrison that in his book he attributed all that I did to Salandria and his staff. I do not recall that he even thanked me. I guess he was that unhappy about being foiled with his big thing.

Aside from what I remember of Salandria's early writing in minor magazines about the shooting, which as I remember was pretty good, I can think of nothing else good that he did in the assassination other than not tumble to the fact that I was using him and by doing exactly what I had expected him to do. I know of nobody else who could have reached Garrison as he did. When I had Vince convinced he convinced Garrison. He and the documentation I had and the report in which I put it all together. *should be a detailed oral history*

If Vince ever thanked me, ~~and~~ I do not recall that he did. I think he was happier being the hero who saved his pal Jim. Even though he knew I'd done the work and that he'd had no part in it.

I do not recall which of us left New Orleans first but I do not remember ever hearing from him since then.

In my haste I did not finish the story about that Garrison case in Washington. I have only the suspicion that Salandria was involved in how that ended.

One night Fensterwald called me. He said grab a tooth brush, rush ~~down~~ and meet me at the Hot Shoppe on the south side of Key Bridge. When he did I followed him to his home in Arlington. He had gotten what the government had withheld and that it was going to use in court the next morning, when the judge heard that case. I suspect that someone he knew saw how dirty it was and ~~leaked~~ ^{leaked} a copy to him. The hearing was the Friday morning before the impaneling of the Shaw jury the next week, on January 20. Leave it to Garrison to pick the day Nixon would take office!

What Bud had ^{had} two parts. One was the pleading to be filed in court the other was the documents attached to it. Bud and his partner did the legal work and I marked up what I had with a red crayon pencil, there being no markers like we have today then. I marked the parts for our expert, Dr. Cyril Wecht, to use cold, absolutely cold. We met him less than an hour before court convened. He trusted me, used what I marked with remarkable effectiveness, and we won! As we expected the government immediately filed an appeal. Other strange things had happened in and out of the courtroom. Garrison's staff lawyer, ^{MUNA BERTEL,} got a call from him ~~at~~ on the courtroom phone! He said nothing other than "uh-huh." But his conduct was visibly different and he said just about nothing to the judge.

When we left he said Jim had backed out! After he'd won! There are details I do not need. I was ^{do} disgusted when I left them and walked ^{alone} to my car. Bud and I had used the same parking lot. When I turned the ignition ^{IGNITION KEY} on the radio I had tuned to the all-news station was broadcasting a Garrison flash. He had withdrawn from the case because he had discovered that it was all a CIA trap to ruin him and his case!

9

Long, long earlier Jim had asked me to be what he called his "Dealey Plaza" expert. I was packed and ready to ~~take~~ leave. I shouted to "Ensterwald and Bertel what had just happened and that when I was home I'd cancel my plane reservation.

I had not been home long when Sciambra phoned me. He told me that Jim had had nothing to do with that, that it was all the doing of his first assistant, Charlie Ward, about whom Jim would do something when the Shaw trial was over. He said they really needed me for the evidence having nothing to do with Shaw. I suppose ^{what} in retrospect is that what really persuaded me to go ^{with} the fear of what they would do if I did not. I was on the Sunday morning plane, I was met by ~~a~~ detectives who drove me to the home of Al Oser, who was to do most of the trial work and was good at it. But as he and his assistant went over with me what they were going to do I was stunned. They had nothing but conjecture and their case was built on Oswald as the assassin. Precisely what for two years Garrison had proclaimed he wasn't.

I told them that if they ^{counsel} proceeded on that basis I would have nothing to do with it, would not be at the ^{counsel} table (and the New York Times reported I was when I was never in the courtroom, never laid eyes on Shaw), would be on the Midday plane Thursday, that they would lose and that they deserved to lose. They broke ^{up} at five, I went to the Herrons and then and there began writing "Part II of Post Mortem, That DJ report in it had been kept secret until needed at that trial. It is the basis of that part of the book.

It takes exceptional craziness to believe that either than the President's clothing would have been delivered to the Shaw trial by an Archives official, what the judge did order and Garrison abandoned. Or that they ^{could} produce a different rifle with that bumper cut into the steel. (I believe that in original an manufacture there somehow were two.)

What Garrison blew, assuming as was likely, that the appeals court upheld the decision, was the only opportunity to have independent experts examine that clothing and use it as the basis for public testimony that was certain to be broadcast and telecast all ^{around} the world. That represents Salandria thinking and what he has been saying for years to discourage all work on the assassination. But I do not know that he persuaded Garrison of it. If anyone wants to see the major sensation that would have emerged and destroyed the official mythology beyond repair they need only look at the shirt collar pictures in Post Mortem and the use I made of what I discovered in that DJ medical-panel report, that the fatal head wound was ^{four} inches higher than the autopsy said.

With the attention that could not avoid getting, the entire assassination mythology would have been destroyed forever. That is what Salandria and Garrison blew. Among other things but these more ^{of} important, more certainly fatal to the mythology.