

Harold Weisberg
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Mr. Weisberg:

Enclosed is a copy of a rough manuscript for a high school final report.

Please look over it, and feel free to make corrections or point out where I went wrong.

Your criticism would be appreciated.

Several Bobby Kennedy articles are in route to you.

Please mail this back to me corrected.

Please stay in good health.

Thank you for your time and patience with me.

Respectfully,

Shane Salerno
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Dear Shane,

6/1/90-beginning

I've read a few pages of your high school final report and skimmed to see what you have for illustrations and notes. It is impressive, quite impressive. But around here it would be due now and I don't know how rapidly I can finish reading it. I know I won't have time for writing you in as much detail as I could. So what I decided to do is use a highlighter to call your attention to what attracted my attention and I'll sometimes have a few notes or comments.

I'm beginning to write you now while I have a few moments because I do forget more than I once did and because we are having working and social company for a few days.

What I plan is to substitute your paper for my reading when I have my daily walking therapy. I don't recall whether or not I told you but I'm now 77 and I'm surviving a number of illnesses and surgeries. I begin each day with walking therapy at a nearby mall. I can take only about 500 steps before I must rest. That is when I read, while I rest. I begin early in the morning. I hope that between the breaking day and the auto light I'll be able to see well enough before the mall lets us walkers in. And that there will not be much talk when I rest inside the mall.

This is not the best way to prepare a critical analysis but it is the best that is now possible for me. There are many other things on which I must spend time.

I'm impressed by your writing and by the amount you've been able to get an absorb while you do your other school work.

Perhaps I missed them but I did not see your notes. I wanted to check one of the first because your source is wrong or you misunderstood your source, probably the former.

All readers are the creatures of the writers of non-fiction. Few have the knowledge required to question what is published. And bright as you are for your age, you also lack the experience usually required. So before I get to what I'm going to get to, I suggest that as a general rule you ask yourself two questions, first if something is reasonable and then if it is possible. These are two simple tests that have wide applicability, particularly in the field of political assassinations, where most of the writing is nut stuff. By sincere, well-intended people for the most part but nonetheless not merely wrong-really nutty.

You are wrong to say, and I'm not checking your exact words, that ^{see p 3} Mongoose was a Kennedy family plot against Castro. They didn't even know about it until an incompetent wiretapper and bugger provided by the ~~USA~~ CIA to confirm Sam Giancana's suspicion that his girl friend, Phyllis McGuire, of the McGuire sisters, then a big act, was sleeping with Dan Martin, of Rowan and Martin, was caught. If I think of it and can locate it I'll enclose a copy of a CIA report that is explicit, only six people in the world, all high CIA officials, had any knowledge of it. This is to say, in effect, that your source was wrong. It may or may not raise a question about your judgement in depending on that source.

Of course I could not miss your reproduction of pages of Marrs' book. Using any of it is not good judgement. For all his supposed experience he knows remarkably little of the established fact of the assassination and is often wrong about it. You can get the nut theories from him but other than that, only error.

The supposedly mysterious deaths ^{see} start with Penn Jones, who is as well-intended and serious as he is nutty. One name caught my attention so I'll illustrate, not from whatever Marrs says but from what Penn did. Whaley was the first car driver killed on what Penn called "active duty" in as I recall 37 years. He meant while driving his cab.

Now if you'd read Whaley's testimony, or what I wrote based on that testimony, you'd know that rather than helping foster the official mythology Whaley was a disaster to it. He ever recognized this and apologized for it when he testified to the Commission. So, unless you would postulate revenge, the conspirators had no motive for killing him, did they? Certainly not to shut his mouth, the general allegations relating to those deaths.

Well, how did Whaley get killed? How did the conspirators close his mouth?

He was driving in the correct lanes of a divided highway and an octagonarian was driving toward him in the wrong lanes. No, did you ever hear of the CIA or any others using octagonarian kamikazis?

The test of reasonableness.

I'm sure Hank Kellum is there, too. So, how did he die and what terrible secrets did he take to his death with him. Or could he have.

In the wee hours of the early morning he went through the plate glass window of a store in as I recall Tampa. So, who in his right mind kills that way and how certain is it to kill? And what did he know - or could he have? What he might have heard from the former Ruby stripper he'd married. Do you really think he could have heard anything at all that could have had any relevance?

See what I mean by saying the trusting reader is the creature of the writer?

You referred to the Bay of Pigs and JFK in it. The fact is that it was an Eisenhower administration project on which VP Nixon was the "action officer" for the White House. Allen Dulles briefed JFK on it during the interregnum, when JFK was resting at his father's place in Palm Beach. My recollection is that the briefing was incomplete. When later JFK wanted the end the project, Dulles threatened him by asking him what he'd do with the thousand plus armed and trained revanchist Cubans in Guatemala.

I'll not be able to take this much time for other comments. I begin with what I intend to be illustrative.

But be not of faint heart. You teacher will not be able to draw on what I can. If as I doubt you are questioned all you need be concerned about is the faithfulness with which you used what you drew upon.

I made a copy of the CIA record so I won't forget it. I'm sorry some of the notes I made are not complete in the copying.

On your sources again, my wife not being ready for me to take here where we'll go: John Davis and his Mafia Kingfish fiction. You used the paperback reprint so you'll have to get the hardback. Have the paperback with you so you can see the changes he made when I insisted. There is a page in the 400s where he says that the man he earlier described as the top mafia lawyer, Jack Wasserman, spent much of a year rummaging through my files. The deceased Wasserman, who could not sue if he'd wanted to, being dead, was not a mafia lawyer. He was one of the best and most respected immigration lawyers. And he and I never laid eyes on each other. He was never here and he never asked anything of me. If he had wanted those records, all having been disclosed to me, all he had to do was ask the FBI for copies at 10¢ a page and he'd have gotten them. Much easier and cheaper than working your way through about 40 full file cabinets, isn't it? In fact, he could have gotten much more from the FBI because it had disclosed more of Marcello. I was not interested in Marcello per se and did not have those other disclosed pages. So much for Davis' dependability, for using him as a source - which you had no way of knowing. I'm not criticizing you.

Now for Davis as a person. There is but one person in the world who was able to, in his word, "rummage" through my records - John H. Davis. He asked me for help and although I disagree 100% with what I knew he was going to write, I told him he was welcome to anything at all but I was not physically able to do the searching for him. I offered to get a college student, he liked that idea, and she spent all her free time for an entire semester copying records for Davis. I have no idea what she copied but I do know that she sent him both the originals and copies of my scanty correspondence with Wasserman. And he would not take time to locate the duplicates and return them. (I initiated the slight Wasserman correspondence, not he, and he never had the interest Davis bases his book on.)

Is your source on the mafia burning the Normans a solid one? I happened to be in

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New York that day and saw it. As I recall the results of the investigation, it was what had been known to cause such fires in the past, careless welding.

On the same page, if the mafia was at all involved in the election in Illinois, it was not through the Kennedy family. The Chicago vote was delivered by the boss, Mayor Daley. Nixon did nothing about any irregularities there because his people could not stand any investigation of the down-state vote, which went heavily for Nixon.

"A comprehensive look at the conspiracy behind the death of President..." First, be a bit modest and don't say "comprehensive." You can't do that, be comprehensive. And do you want to say "death"? He didn't just die. He was assassinated, killed, murdered, etc. and the subtitle, "Judicial Procedure." There was none until the Ruby trial so is this the right way to put it? But the Commission did and what the FBI did was not in any way judicial.

Marrs' list of death^s is grossly inaccurate, almost always irrelevant, stupid, silly and young as you are I'm surprised you did not question at least relevance in most cases.

6/4- I think that this was not Mongoose, which came later. I don't know of any real proof that the Kennedys ordered or approved Castro's assassination.

For your age and for the limited amount of time you've had to gain various experiences you've done very well. What it is not easy to be aware of when we are young and full of energy and ideas and our minds are growing and expanding is how much we don't and can't know, don't or can't think of. There is an enormous amount you know nothing at all about and have no way of knowing about.

I do think that you are bright enough for this to be a valuable learning experience for you, a multi-faceted one. If it is, by the time you get to my age you will have benefited from it often and much. What I am saying is that if you now read what you have written and make your own critical analysis you will learn much from it. The Jones/Marr list, for example. I've not marked all I could have in it, but go over it again and ask yourself how could those people have had any real relevance, how could most of those deaths, even if the people had been relevant, be attributed to any conspirators, any foul play of any kind. If you can learn to be your own devil's advocate at your age, particularly if you intend to write or as I recall produce documentaries, your work will be ever so much better and substantial and, what is very important, accurate.

I do think you reflect enormous potential. I mean this. I am not saying it to make you feel good. But those of us who write in a representative society, where the people at least in theory govern themselves by making their wishes known, must take the truth to the people. I am talking about responsibility. Writers assume responsibility and they must be responsible. Otherwise they are Davises, Conses and Marrs and mislead and deceive the people and in this matter, exculpate those who did wrong. The assassination of a president, Shane, has the effect of a coup d'etat, and that, to me at least, is the greatest subversion in a society like ours. Your paper does not take the truth to the people. But for this, at your age and experiences in life, this is not a major criticism. Your judgement compares favorably with that of your sources and when the age and experience ~~and~~ differences are considered, you are better than they.

But try to learn from this, including not only the tests I've suggested. Relevance, too. If you can detach yourself and give your work critical analysis, you will have learned and grown much from this effort. and all your work henceforth will be better for it.

Please excuse the haste with which I've done this. If when you have finished you'll return the copy of your paper I've marked it can in the future be of help to others. All my work and records will be a free public archive at a fine, small local college, Wood, and it ~~will~~ would be there for students in the future.

I do congratulate you because for your age and experience in life you have done well.

Sincerely, Harold Weisberg

Harold Weisberg