

# Spectator's Dismal Reporting On COPA Conference

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I would have written sooner responding to Max Holland's dismal reporting job on the COPA Conference, but I was preparing to attend the Dallas ASK Conference--things came one after another this Fall.

The level of media reporting in general on the JFK case has been dismal, so Mr. Holland need not feel out of place in his profession. Recent pieces on the informative *Vanity Fair* article by Anthony & Robbyn Summers (December issue) seemed to find novel only stories which were reported back in the mid-1970's (poison pen handed to AMLASH November 22, 1963, Joseph Milteer story), and reported none of the new evidence cited in the article.

This is the same media, of course, which fell swooning at the feet of Gerald Posner last year when he produced his prosecutor's brief *Case Closed*. Actually, I should give prosecutors more credit: few would go into court with so easily discreditable a case, littered with misrepresented testimony and provably false statements.

Your introduction describes Max Holland as one who "has written widely on the Kennedy assassination," but later you report that "he began researching the Warren Commission in 1992." Gerald Posner claimed to have mastered the cast in 18 months; now Holland is said to have done so in two years. Neither shows much sign of it in their writings.

In standard pack Journalism tradition, Holland begins by referring to researchers in the case as "buffs," long considered an offensively pejorative term in the research community. "The Warren Omission," attributed to "speakers" is the title of a forthcoming book by Walt Brown (a fact which appeared in Mr. Holland's program, had he taken the time to read it carefully). This sort of lazy journalism continues as he describes Mark Lane as having "pioneered conspiratorialism," as though it first appeared on the American scene in the mid-1960's (which he knows is false if he has read the Hofstadter book he cites later).

He focuses on John Newman's writing on Vietnam,

which (despite Mr. Holland's statement) does not offer a theory about the JFK assassination, and ignores Newman's recent work on the Oswald files released by the CIA (discussed in part in the Summers article, as well as at the COPA and ASK conferences).

Holland is also much too quick to dismiss the work of Peter Dale Scott as fantasizing "a political wonderland." In fact, in *Deep Politics* and in a previous book, *Cocaine Politics*, Scott explores the seldom-reported ties between the CIA and the DEA (and previously the Federal Bureau of Narcotics), an area also explored by George Michael Evica from a different angle at ASK. Both published by University of California Press, they are important, thought-provoking books. I wonder if Holland read more than the "two pages" of *Deep Politics* he mentions.

Holland mentions the education of participants, the courtesy, the "democracy with a small 'd'," then returns to the pejorative "buffs." Laughably, he then calls those who believe in the Warren Commission (most of the major media, apparently, judging from the reaction to Posner) as "heretics." Since when is the predominant establishment opinion "heresy"? "Opinion leaders" don't seem particularly bothered by the fact that 80-90% of the American people don't believe the media on this one. To the major media, most of the population are "heretics." To the American people, the media are the "heretics" this time.

A broad discussion of conspiracy is usually the most convenient way to avoid dealing with any of the evidentiary issues in the case, and Holland is quick to resort to this method. In another tried and true discrediting tactic, he refers to items "widely on sale," though sales were confined to a single, rather small room at the conference, except for a set of the conference abstracts, which it would be worth your time to examine (it would give you a more accurate picture of the conference than Holland does).

Oddly for a Journalist, Holland seems almost annoyed that the Records Act was passed (perhaps because the credit goes in large part to Oliver Stone, while Journalists mostly sat on their hands on the issue



of classified files: don't cite me the exceptions--I've read them). He also seems supportive of the suppression of the autopsy photos & X-rays, though this is key evidence in any controversial murder case. And he seems to ridicule the concept of the FBI and CIA stonewalling to prevent the Board getting key documents out, but the record shows they were very successful at this as the life of the House Select Committee on Assassinations drew to a close. Whole file cabinets full of information on Lee Harvey Oswald were kept from the Committee, despite G. Robert Blakey's oft-made claim to have seen "all the files" (this nonsense is also a favorite of David Belin of the Warren Commission staff; none of his colleagues have had the gall to make the same claim).

Holland's acknowledgement of the importance of the Records Act comes late and seemingly grudgingly. He implies, as Posner has said more explicitly, that none of the records (those records neither has seen, mind you) will change the "facts" of the assassination: that Oswald, acting alone, killed JFK. He thinks we'll mostly learn more about the Cold War. He assumes he knows what Earl Warren meant by the things that wouldn't be known in our lifetimes ("no doubt referring to U.S. communications intercepts").

Mr. Holland's uninformed and uninformative report on the COPA conference ill served the readers of the *Spectator*. In years of reading the publication, his article comes the closest to a content-free piece of reporting I've seen. I'm accustomed to better journalism on those pages.

In general, the media has failed the public in this case. To admit conspiracy, the media would have accepted the shame of its failure, and I don't think they are big enough to do that.

If they could get over their failure, they might begin focusing on some of the questions in the case:

Why did a former FBI agent (Guy Banister) tell his employees that Oswald was working for him when he passed out pro-Castro leaflets? (*Conspiracy* by Anthony Summers; *Deadly Secrets* by Hinkle & Turner).

What was Oswald's connection to David Ferrie? (Photo of them together on last year's PBS "Frontline").

What was QKENCHANT, the CIA project on which Clay Shaw had a high level security clearance? (Summers, *Vanity Fair* article).

What does Kerry Thornley know about the conspiracy? (Bits and pieces mentioned in a TV interview a couple of years ago).

Who was the rifleman on the knoll seen by Lee Bowers (in a just-released Bowers letter from 1966), Ed Hoffman and Beverly Oliver (and possibly Jean Hill).

What can Oswald's American Express records tell us about his return trip from the Soviet Union? (Filip Coppens article in latest issue of *The Fourth Decade* research journal).

Why were Army and Naval Intelligence files on Oswald destroyed?

What did the KGB learn from their interrogation of Oswald? (Acknowledged on "Nightline" special on KGB Oswald Files, "Frontline").

What is contained in the CIA debriefing report on Oswald? (finally acknowledged last year on "Frontline").

Where are the George DeMohrenschildt reports filed through the CIA Domestic Contact Division on Oswald? (*The Assassination Chronicles* by Edward Epstein: DeMohrenschildt chapter).

Why were a half dozen or more divisions of the CIA closely monitoring all reports from all agencies on Oswald prior to the assassination? (research of John Newman from recently released CIA files).

Why did Jane Roman, one of the officials signing off on these reports, lie to the CIA's own Mexico City Station, only six days after receiving a lengthy FBI report on Oswald, telling it that CIA Headquarters had received no new information on Oswald since May of 1962? She had received another lengthy report on Oswald the previous month. (also Newman from CIA files).

Why were no tests done to determine whether either of Oswald's guns had been recently fired?

Time-LIFE has acknowledged that a lab error resulted in damage to the Zapruder film that led to the loss of frames 208-211 and an obvious splice in the film at that point. Why have they never acknowledged the earlier splice which led to the loss of frames 155--156, or explained how that damage occurred? They've released frames 208-211 from a copy of the film (Josiah Thompson printed them in *Six Seconds in Dallas*)--why have they never released frames 155 and 156?

What happened (see SHACKELFORD on p. 19)