

Dear Jim, Re Philip Nobile interview with Bob Smith 6/1/75

There is an insane man who periodically sends me clippings, generally also from the garbage press, sometimes from the local papers he sees (Michigan). Yesterday's batch includes a 1973 big-puff interview with Bob. The paper is unidentified because of the way this guy clips. He marks clippings up insanely and heavily. In this case he did not use red so I did, if you ever want to read this one.

I've never had any interest in Bob per se and had no file on him. However, there is such stupidity and insanity in this one that it has to raise questions about Nobile (from whom I've never heard) and Smith. (I know of no decent writing Nobile has ever done. This was for ~~Michigan~~ Universal Press Syndicate.)

Even after it almost caused me to lose the thumb I was not prepared for the incredible lack of fact and understanding Bob reflects. Or the opinions it is not as easy to dismiss as from his psychoses.

He comes across as the absolute defender of all the executive agencies and as virtually without criticism of the Commission, too. Where he does criticize the Commission, an argument can be made that the criticism is unjust, even unfactual.

One thing in particular I would call to your attention. He again says that the CTIA handled my spectro suit. His comments never mention my name or that of anyone else. It is the CTIA's suit, explicitly: "The committee has a case pending in the Court of Appeals under the Freedom of Information Act to obtain access to the FBI's analyses of the bullets..."

This merely duplicates earlier and authenticated reports. Offhand I recall Bud and Sprague at Penn and both of them and Flammonde, I think making the same allegation, on the old Fred Gale Show on WMCA. (Policoff has the original tape, I a dub.)

I regard this as pretty serious misconduct on Bud's part. Particularly because of the specificity with which I told and wrote him I would under no circumstances have anything to do with anyone in or the CTIA when I knew no more than those he was asking to serve on his board.

It is not merely that I want you to know this. It is that I think if and when the time comes when there is a real problem with Bud, it may be a means of trying to get him to behave on the personal and professional level, perhaps of getting Bill in a position where he might be willing to try to use some influence toward these ends. Of course this also relates to the total falsity of Bud's recent letter a copy of which I gave you yesterday, as it does to my response when I was unaware of this interview.

I really believe this was unprofessional conduct on Bud's part.

It ought not surprise you that to Bob all others (not in CTIA, that is) are "kooks."

How it is that Nobile manages to do only terrible writing that serves to misdirect and confuse strikes me as a legitimate question.

Best,

Bob Smith:
Many things are
missing



UNCOMMON CONVERSATIONS / Philip Nobile

The assassination: a decade of debate

TEN years after the assassination of John Kennedy, the harvest is plenty but the laborers are few. Most of the overnight experts have turned to other pursuits, and the buffs are a dying breed. Standing practically alone in the assassination wilderness is the Washington based Committee to Investigate Assassinations. With a paid staff of one, and a mailing list of 1,000, the committee fights the good fight by suing the government for secret data and acting as a clearinghouse for information concerning the JFK, RFK and Martin Luther King murders.

Who pays the bills? The committee's founder and executive director, Bernard Fensterwald Jr. Fensterwald rose to prominence recently as counsel for Watergate defendant James McCord.

In order to learn the latest on the JFK assassination, I talked to the committee's mild mannered research director, Bob Smith. Smith is a latecomer to the assassination business. He worked as a Defense Department analyst in the 1960s until his security clear-

ance was lifted, a decision that was reversed in court last year. Although Defense Department lawyers accused him, he says, of displaying "four different psychoses," Smith appears pretty sane to me, especially on the subject of JFK.

If the JFK assassination was a conspiracy, then it turned out to be a perfect crime. Nobody's cracked the conspiracy yet, and nobody even seems to be close.

I have to agree with you. Insofar as no one has confessed to or come forward with incontrovertible evidence of a conspiracy, the presumption is that there was no conspiracy or that it's so small and tightly held that no leaks have sprung.

Various critics contend that the Warren Commission didn't try very hard, and even intended a whitewash all along.

I don't believe the assassination

was covered up by the government. Nor do I accept that any of the conspirators were agents or employes of the government. However, I do fault the Warren Commission for covering up its oversights and for conducting an incomplete investigation.

Those are the kindest words I've ever heard from an assassination expert about the Warren Commission. Could you give me an example of the incomplete-

ness of its investigation?

The ballistic details of the case were ignored. Although three bullets were supposedly fired by the assassin or assassins, only the equivalent of one and a half bullets were ever found. These fragments were analyzed spectrographically. And laboratory data exists on them. Yet the Warren Commission failed to inquire whether all the bullet fragments came from the same source. The answer could have been determined quite simply if the lab reports had been consulted.

Is it possible for outside investigators to get a look at the ballistics file?

We're attempting to do that. The committee had a case pending in the Court of Appeals under the Freedom of Information Act to obtain access to the FBI's analysis of the bullets, but the court ruled against us about a month ago.

On what grounds?

Well, the decision had nothing to do with national security or taste or delicacy. The file contained nothing but routine scientific

data. Apparently the court was persuaded on the narrow legal grounds that the law does not require the FBI to release its investigatory files.

Still, withholding of crucial evidence seems suspicious to me. What has the government got to hide? No wonder people suggest that the CIA was behind the plot.

You can't draw conclusions from the absence of data. Sure, for 10 years we've known that many things are missing, and some things have disappeared only lately. But until this information becomes available, we can't be certain what it will prove. All the more reason, therefore, that we ought to get that information. Let's not leave unanswered questions for history to decide.

What is the significance of

LBJ's admission to a journalist a few weeks before his death that he never believed in the lone assassin theory and that he was disappointed by Ramsey Clark's failure to poke holes in the Warren Commission report?

I challenge the authenticity of those LBJ remarks. After all, Ramsey Clark denied that Johnson ever asked him to review the Warren report, pointing out that he didn't become attorney general until 1966, two years after the report was issued. But assuming that LBJ did harbor such doubts, I hardly think that he could have absorbed enough detail of the case to have any better opinion than you or I. The ramifications are just too great.

Then why did LBJ slap a 75 year ban on the release of information?

But he didn't. And I'd like to clear up that confusion. The 75 year ban on certain documents is by statute and not by the will of the president. Also, a lot of other documents are being withheld for an indefinite period because of the factor of personal privacy.

Apart from the ballistics file, what evidence would you really like to lay your hands on?

A magazine advertisement for a handgun was allegedly found in Oswald's possession. Someone had written "October 1959" on the ad. The FBI has never identified the handwriting and now they claim they've lost the ad. Yet this is possibly an important piece of evidence. If it was not Oswald's handwriting, then whose was it? Perhaps the ad could lead to Oswald's

Important

accomplice or to someone who framed him.

I have always been curious about the reaction of the Kennedy family. Are they interested in pursuing the case?

Not as far as reopening it. They believe that we're wasting our time, and they say that we are offending their feelings. I suspect that the family too was once convinced of a conspiracy. But the kooks finally got to them. Even as late as 1968, the Kennedy family maintained at least a casual interest in the conspiracy theory. An associate of Bobby Kennedy's, Walter Sheridan, went down to New Orleans to gather information on the Garrison case.

What assassination lore do you dismiss? It would be useful to discover which theories and which so-called facts have been discredited.

It may sound shocking to you but I place no credence in the grassy knoll theory. The medical evidence we have been allowed to examine, if valid, shows rather clearly that there was no entry wound on the front of the head and no exit wound on the rear of

the head. Consequently, no guns could have been fired from the grassy knoll or from in front of Kennedy.

By no means do I eliminate a second gunman. Another gunman could have shot from the rear, either from the Texas School Book Depository, where Oswald was supposedly located, or from another nearby building.

Second, I am convinced that no large team of conspirators was involved in the assassination at Dealey Plaza. There's just no evidence to support this theory.

Third, theories that postulate the outright fabrication of evidence are preposterous. You couldn't keep that kind of conspiracy quiet.

What hard evidence do you have that two or more gunmen fired from the rear?

The bullet's trajectory as indicated by the wound in the president and Gov. Connally apparently can't be matched up with a rifle location in the sixth-floor window of the depository. The Warren Commission hedged all around this question but finally said that everything was consistent.

Oswald could have fired the head shot, I'll concede, but not the one that hit the president's back and throat and Connally's chest, wrist and thigh.

What about Oswald? Was he or wasn't he involved?

Of course he was involved. But his involvement might have been no greater than the use of his gun. He could be innocent of the actual shooting, but his gun could have fallen into other hands, either inadvertently or with his collaboration.

Oswald obviously showed some sense of alarm that afternoon. He did flee, and that shows anxiety, if not guilt.

If Oswald had help, what were the roles of his fellow conspirators?

They could have been gunman or evidence planters. I incline toward a second gunman in the Texas School Book Depository and perhaps one other person to coordinate matters and make last minute suggestions as to the right spot from which to fire.

Naturally, other conspirators could have paid for and planned the whole operation.

Watergate is beginning to be mentioned in the same breath as JFK's murder. Do you see any connection?

There is an analogy between the evasiveness and mysterious activity associated with both cases. But I've found no factual link except for Frank Sturgis. Sturgis, one of the Watergate Five, came up in the course of the Warren investigation under the name of Fiorini. It was alleged that Fiorini (Sturgis) met Oswald in Miami and had a fight with him at a demonstration.

There's also the possibility that Howard Hunt might have had something to do with the people who were investigated by the Warren Commission because he worked in the shadowy intrigue of the Cuban exile movement. Hunt recommended the assassination of Fidel Castro and, it is said, he plotted the assassination of the president of Panama. Hunt is the type of man you'd expect to find buried away in some assassination plot against the president, but the propensity to carry out an assassination does not mean that he did.