

Alex Kitman  
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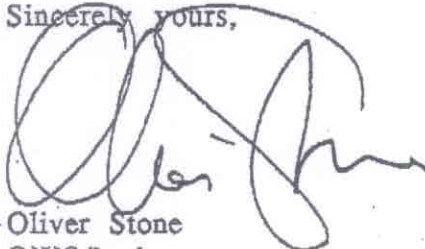
May 22, 1991

Ben Bradlee  
Executive Editor  
The Washington Post  
1150 15th St. NW  
Washington DC 20071

Dear Mr. Bradlee:

Enclosed is my response. I feel strongly it merits being published in the same Sunday section and space in which Mr. Lardner tried to ruin my reputation as a serious filmmaker. I hope, out of a sense of fairness, you will extend me this courtesy.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Oliver Stone", written over the typed name below.

Oliver Stone  
OWS/kwh

# CAMELOT PRODUCTIONS CORPORATION

May 22, 1991

Letters to the Editor  
The Washington Post  
1150 15th St. NW  
Washington DC 20071

RE: "DALLAS IN WONDERLAND" 5/19/91

Dear Editors:

Before addressing the numerous errors of fact and interpretation in Mr. Lardner's diatribe of 5/19 ("Dallas in Wonderland"), let me first explain why we are making this movie and what it is about.

The murder of President Kennedy was a seminal event for me and for millions of Americans. It changed the course of history. It was a crushing blow to our country and to millions of people around the world. It put an abrupt end to a period of innocence and great idealism.

Today, nearly 30 years later, profound doubts persist about how President Kennedy was killed and why. The Warren Commission conclusion that Lee Harvey Oswald acted alone is not believed by most people. The House Select Committee on Assassinations concluded in 1979 that President Kennedy "probably was assassinated as a result of a conspiracy" and that "government agencies performed inadequately" in investigating the assassination. Our movie, which I'm proud to say includes many distinguished actors such as Kevin Costner, Sissy Spacek, Jack Lemmon, Donald Sutherland, Walter Matthau, Joe Pesci, Gary Oldman and Ed Asner, is a metaphor for all those doubts, suspicions and unanswered questions.

It is not the "Jim Garrison story". It does use the Garrison investigation as the vehicle to explore the various credible

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assassination theories, and incorporates everything that has been discovered in the twenty years since Garrison's efforts.

It does not purport to "solve" this murder mystery. What I hope this film will do, when it is finished, is remind people how much our nation and our world lost when President Kennedy died, and to ask anew what might have happened and why. As the inscription on the Department of Justice building reminds us, "Eternal vigilance is the price of Liberty."

In sticking by "The Warren Commission Report", your newspaper, The Washington Post, has always supported and held to an account of the assassination more fictional than I could ever imagine.

The Post believes the findings of the Warren Commission that:

1) Oswald acting alone killed President Kennedy and Dallas Police Officer Tippit, 2) Jack Ruby acting alone killed Oswald, 3) there was no credible evidence of a conspiracy, 4) only 3 shots were fired.

Even today, our film is having to rely on bits and pieces of information because, as you know, your paper and the Warren Commission urged that the Commission's material be sealed and kept from the public until the year 2039. Even then, the CIA has the option of continuing this censorship until the year 2118.

Do you think the interest of the American public is served by waiting this long?

I don't know if I'm more shocked or amused over the fact that The Washington Post and a reporter of the stature of George Lardner, who for years has covered government intelligence activities, would find our movie so important that he would admit in his article to obtaining a stolen first draft of our script, and then proceed to quote from it out of context (the draft has significantly changed as we are now on the sixth draft). Aside from the issue of whether a newspaper can print copyrighted material (including the end of a movie) and consequently seek to damage the commercial prospects of a private enterprise ( a film company is not a government office; our documents are not public property), it is accepted practice in the theatrical sector, 1) to wait for the movie to be made and review that (not the script) and, 2) not tell the audience what they are going to see. This is a standard you seem dedicated to changing.



Filmmakers and book publishers stay in business because they entertain and educate the public. Movies like "The Alamo", "Patton", "Dances with Wolves" and "The Battle of Algiers" have to sift through volumes of documentation, much of which contradicts itself.

Contradictions are the nature of reality. I hope you will remember that Congress and your own expert, Harold Weisberg, believe that the FBI and the CIA withheld evidence that might have resulted in different findings by the Warren Commission.

The Washington Post, and Lardner in particular, have stood by in silence, while agencies you cover for the public (the CIA and FBI) have allowed evidence of a crime and historical documents significant to our history to be stolen or destroyed. It is as hard for me to understand your silence as it is to understand your attacks on an entertainment project.

Lardner takes a curious position on the assassination. He ridicules Garrison for thinking that the Warren Commission didn't tell the "truth" (his quotes) about the assassination and never bothers to say that the Federal Government wasn't convinced either - why else did the House Select Committee on Assassinations exist? He even makes Weisberg - supposedly his ally - out to be anti-conspiracy despite the fact that Weisberg has done more damage to the Warren Commission than any other researcher through his persistent Freedom of Information Act suits.

You criticize Garrison for not having found the truth. Instead, we see Garrison as one of the few men of that time who had the courage to stand up to the establishment and seek the truth. He symbolizes the American public's nagging sense of doubt about the pat conclusions of the Warren Commission. And in him we have found a protagonist of merit.

Jim Garrison did not want to see the flame of life that was John F. Kennedy extinguished without bringing his killer -- or killers -- to justice. Is the sad part that he failed, or that he was one of the few persons in America willing to try?

Concerning Lardner's presentation of the "facts":

- In the matter of Ferrie's death -- Lardner is the last man we know of to see Ferrie alive. He claims he left Ferrie's apartment at

4AM, but the Coroner (Dr. Chetta) claimed that from Ferrie's state of rigor mortis, he had been dead since before 4AM. Also, the presence of two suicide notes and 15 bottles of pills (some empty) should indicate something more than natural causes. Additionally, the House Assassinations Committee heard testimony that Ferrie worked for the CIA and confirmed that he was deeply involved with CIA funded Cuban exile terrorists.

Also, in his story last Sunday, Lardner described David Ferrie as a "vain, nervous flight school instructor". Yet in Lardner's sworn testimony to the District Attorney's office the night after he died he called him an "intelligent, well-versed guy on a broad range of subjects." Did time, or other evidence, cause him to change his mind?

- In the matter of the verdict -- yes, the jury returned a verdict of "not guilty" on Clay Shaw, but Lardner does not point out the larger accomplishment of the trial. In interviews after the trial, most of the jurors indicated that they were now certain that there had been a conspiracy to kill the President, but whether Clay Shaw was part of it hadn't been proven beyond a reasonable doubt. He also ignores former CIA officers Richard Helm's and Victor Marchetti's statements that Mr. Shaw was associated with the CIA. He also ignores that he was director of a company expelled from Italy for illegal espionage activities. Additionally, Mr. Lardner implies Perry Russo was the only witness to link Shaw, Ferrie, and Oswald, when in fact there were more than half a dozen witnesses who linked this trio. The HSCA in 1979 established "an association of an undetermined nature between Ferrie, Shaw and Oswald".

- Bill Boxley -- Lardner compares our character of Boxley, now "Broussard", to William C. Wood, the man who used the alias of "Bill Boxley" and worked as an investigator for Garrison. Lardner did not realize that Boxley/Broussard is a composite of several characters - even though our character is an Assistant District Attorney and the real Boxley was an investigator/ex-CIA man.

- The hobo photos -- He says "They may have been guilty of moper, but they had nothing to do with the assassination." I'd love to know the source of this, especially as these men have never been identified. Also, they were marched off by Dallas Police about 25-30 minutes after the assassination - not 90 as Lardner asserts. The Warren Commission testimony of Dallas Police Sargent D.V. Harkness places the hobos' arrest about 25-30 minutes after the shooting.



Such unusual action by police on the day the President was shot concerns your "national security" writer, Lardner, not at all. Bona fide hobos or imposters - either way, there's no justification for Dallas law enforcement officials' negligence in taking their names at such a critical time.

- Acoustics evidence - On page 71 of the HSCA Report, it says there were six impulse patterns on the Dictabelt, two of which did not come from either the Texas School Book Depository or the Grassy Knoll (the only locations tested). All six of these impulses exhibited the traditional S-curve of high-powered rifle fire in Dealey Plaza (i.e. they could not have been anything else). Lardner claims that there is no evidence of a fifth shot, but what he should be saying is that the fifth shot - and the sixth - did not come from either firing point tested by the HSCA but from a third location.

- Vietnam policy - Lardner has misinterpreted National Security Action Memo 273, either wittingly or unwittingly, asserting that it "explicitly stated the 1000 troop withdrawal would be carried out". Not true at all. It did not say that, and the withdrawal never happened. What we have here is a deliberate attempt to disguise the policy reversal in the wake of Kennedy's death. After November 1963, no actual reduction of US military men in Vietnam ever occurred. As we all know the opposite happened. Kennedy is quoted several times by associates as intending to withdraw from Vietnam after the 1964 campaign

- Pershing Gervais -- joined Garrison's staff for a brief period of time but was asked to resign due to conflicts with other staff members. In addition to the pinball scam Garrison writes about in On the Trail of the Assassins, Gervais was also in hot water with the IRS and offered to set Garrison up in exchange for their erasing his tax problems. He performed his duty - giving Jim an envelope of cash - and then the IRS reneged on the deal. Gervais fled to Canada, turned on the IRS and said it was all a set-up. Taken together with such telling comments as: "I should give my son a blood-test because I can't believe such a nice person could be my kid", one might conclude that Gervais, an avowed racist, is not the most reliable of sources and certainly he's got an ax (or two) to grind.

- "Oswald doesn't pull the trigger. He's putzing around at the Coke machine in the second floor lunchroom of the Book

When?  
Depository: -- Obviously, Lardner is unfamiliar with the evidence. Witnesses Carolyn Arnold, Roy Truly, Barbara Reid and Marrion Baker all saw Oswald on the 2nd floor immediately after the shooting. Oswald told the Dallas police that he was in the first floor snack room and then went up to the second floor lunchroom during the time the motorcade passed by the Texas School Book Depository. Two co-workers corroborated his presence on the first floor. No one saw Oswald in the sniper's nest.

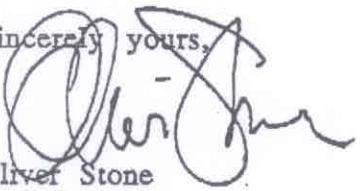
- The fourth shot --Lardner comes close to making history here as he admits "experts conclude there was indeed a fourth shot from the Grassy Knoll". This is the first time The Post has printed that there were four shots. Of course this destroys the Warren Commission. Or does Lardner think there were two lone assassins, each trying to kill Kennedy at the same time?

Why is Lardner so worried about our movie? Why is he so concerned that the investigation not be reopened? Why is he so afraid people might see it? If I am the buffoon he and your demonizing cartoon make me out to be, no one will really believe my film. I can't help but feel there is another agenda here. Does The Washington Post object to our right to make a movie our way, or do you just object to our disagreeing with your views that the Warren Commission was right?

I suppose I shouldn't be surprised by a newspaper trying to kill the making of a movie. That has happened in Hollywood ever since the Hearst Papers and its' reporters attacked "Citizen Kane". Should we be so surprised by history repeating itself so long after "Citizen Kane? Not really.

But then one purpose of our movie is to see that in at least one instance history does not repeat itself. We can only hope the free thinkers in the world, those with no agenda, will recognize our movie as an emotional experience that speaks a higher truth than the Lardners of the world will ever know.

Sincerely yours,



Oliver Stone  
OWS/kwh