

Dear Dick,

10/18/91

Anson's long article with the apt pun for a title, "The Shooting of JFK," confirms, I think, my judgement about the potential of a book. Current Esquire.

If you do not see the magazine I'll send you a copy, if you'd like it. But I call to your attention now:

"Oliver's had a bad press before," shuddered Robert Spiegelman, a mass-communications professor serving as a Stone consultant, "But this is going to be the shit storm of his life."

Then about an "incident" that seemed to mark a turning point for Stone,...

"... in his attitude about the assassination and his film. Never again would he wax so eloquent about Garrison, whose appalling blunders he had belatedly begun to appreciate....he was not even willing to admit doubts (to staff)..."

If I do no more, and I do expect to, I have not failed in what I started even if that did not proceed as I'd hoped, and I think my judgement on that also now seems to have been correct.

Helen is on her fall break. I'll be glad when she returned Tuesday so she can continue going over my clippings and copying all quoted of Stone that she'll then arrange by subject.

And I think as I did to begin with that this is a natural for a major magazine article to be expanded into a book. ASAP after the article appears.

By the way, Anson also says that Warners now have some misgivings.

In a report I wrote when I decided to finish reading this article before reading and correcting it, for which I won't now have time before we leave for supper and mailing this, I refer to what the local cardiologist told me about "contentment" being the most important thing for me.

He may not have believed me when I told him that one part of me is content, that was not why I wanted to talk to him.

I am content now with this, much as I'd liked to have done more.

And who knows? Maybe I will?

Perhaps have when the LIFE story appears in December.

Best,

*anon file*

*Portion of article in Dallas Morning News*

### Editor chides 'Esquire'

tion we had at the center," Mr. Howard says. "We sent him books, videotapes and more than 800 photographs. And we made arrangements for Oliver to meet 23 (assassination) witnesses. I told him what I thought. Then he made up his own mind."

Less to Mr. Howard's liking was Robert Sam Anson's detailed report on "The Making of JFK" in *Esquire*. He read the story that *Variety* has termed "scathing" and fired off a letter to the editor.

"Your article is an assassination — one of character," Mr. Howard wrote. And he chides the magazine for allowing the author to attribute observations to "a friend," "sources" and "assassination buffs" instead of naming the individuals quoted.

In its story, subtitled "Oliver Stone Reshoots History," *Esquire* repeated the characterization that Mr. Howard is "the P.T. Barnum of the conspiracy."

"That's kind of derogatory," he says. "But if I have to be a P.T. Barnum to bring out the truth in this business, I'll do it."

*Larry Howard responds to Sam Anson's comments about him in Esquire Magazine article*

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### Stone Shoots Back

ROBERT SAM ANSON'S ARTICLE ("The Shooting of JFK," November) is filled with numerous errors, omissions, out-of-context quotes, and misunderstandings. Some cases in point: 1. *The character assassination of Jim Garrison.* Anson accepts the old disinformation rumors that Garrison is tied to the mafia, that he bribed and hypnotized his witnesses, and that he destroyed an innocent man, Clay Shaw. Not one hard shred of evidence is presented. One could, with more evidence, assert that it was the government and members of the press that bribed and otherwise obstructed Garrison's witnesses and falsely brought Garrison to trial on charges that seemed to be part of a frame-up; and that Shaw as a contact agent of the CIA and a perjurer on the stand was far from innocent. Anson accuses me of sensationalizing Shaw's homosexuality when he fully understands that it was that milieu that led to at least three crucial identifications of Shaw knowing Ferrie and to the discovery of Shaw's mysterious alter ego, Clay Bertrand. 2. *The character assassination of Colonel Fletcher Prouty.* Anson fails to mention the patriotic service Colonel Prouty has devoted to this country as a covert military operator linked to the CIA. More than an "aide," Prouty was, at the end, chief of Special Operations, working for the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and a key player. Through other sources I know he often briefed Dulles, Landsdale, Bissel, et cetera. His revelations and his book *The Secret Team* have not been discredited in any intelligent way. I regret his involvement with Liberty Lobby, but what does that have to do with the Kennedy/Vietnam issue? The truth does not always come from lawyers in three-piece suits. In cases like this it more often comes from street types, criminals, and people with "histories" who talk. "Cautious buffs," Anson calls Prouty's detractors, as if they had some special dignity. Men, I call them, who have never been behind closed doors with Dulles and Cabell. 3. *The character assassination of Oliver Stone.* Aside from having two thirds of my quotations out of context ("truth in the eyeball" was a quote about cinematic style in reference to *Born on the Fourth of July*—here transposed as if I had the truth in the JFK killing, which I never had or claimed to have), Anson resorts to the tired cliché of a Hollywood megalomaniacal director, blinded by his Oscars, thinking only he can solve the mystery, only to be defeated

in the process by "cautious buffs" like Gus Russo. The problem of Russo, who was offering information we already had, was the problem of many other researchers who, with some notable exceptions, were lining up like pigs at a trough to get money from us. Because we could not afford twenty-five researchers and the exorbitant sums asked for their books, we made enemies. These enemies have done their utmost to destroy the film before it is seen and in doing so have helped those who want the "lie" to continue. Anson gives full credence to the *Libra* rumor. As if there is anyone in this business who can stop a competing financial entity. It doesn't happen that way. The *Libra* script was written and made many rounds long before *JFK*—and was rejected on the basis of its quality, or lack thereof. *Ruby*, a film of a similar nature, was made simultaneously, and it hounded us all over Dallas. 4. I never offered the role of Jim Garrison to Mel Gibson, so he never turned it down. 5. Kevin Costner did read the script several times and stretched me at several meetings to make improvements before he would commit. At the pinnacle of his career, it was brave of him to take on such a politically difficult project. 6. Madeleine Brown never said the idiocy to me that is ascribed to her. 7. Larry Howard may be a "P.T. Barnum" to Anson, but his exhibit in Dallas is a valuable educational tool for many thousands of visitors who would otherwise be limited to viewing the official sixth-floor exhibit. 8. Last, I have not, nor do I intend, to "distance" myself in any way from Garrison's or Colonel Prouty's long efforts in this case. They may have made mistakes, but they fought battles that Anson could never dream of.

In making *JFK*, my point was not to indict individuals, but to understand history. Garrison's investigation is part of this history but hardly the focus. Jim Garrison was not perfect. He did not string up the assassins and solve the case. The Clay Shaw trial is over, but the larger questions—who killed Kennedy and why?—persist.

—OLIVER STONE  
Santa Monica, Calif.

EDITOR'S CORRECTION: The correct title of Erica Jong's new book of poetry ("Women on Men," October) is *Becoming Light: Poems New and Selected*.

Letters to the editor should be mailed with your address and daytime phone number to: The Sound and the Fury, Esquire, 1790 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10019. Letters may be edited for length and clarity.