

Harold Weisberg Hyattstown, Md. 20754
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Editor, The Sunday Times
London, England

Dear Sir,

Especially because your paper is so respected and responsible, your story on the books about what you headline as "Kennedy's Death" is an important contribution to the ultimate unrevelling and to the ultimate triumph of truth and justice. My single regret is that the only error I find in it is hurtful to me. I do not believe this was intentional. A simple answer suggests itself: the author had no copy of my book or no time to read it. This is suggested by the nature of the errors and the absence of any reference to the contents.

WHITEWASH is unique in a number of ways. You are in error in giving its date as June 1966. Had your writer possessed a copy he would have seen the copyright date of 1965. This book was completed in mid-February of that year and a limited edition was published that summer to protect my rights. The current edition is of May 9, 1966. From this you can see that of the books on the Commission - and mine is not - there is a subtle difference - mine is the first, preceding even Fox's. My book is on the Report, not the assassination, and not the Commission. It deals with both in terms of the Report. Yet it has more about both, actually, than all the competition for which it and I broke the ice. The Report was not drafted by the members of the Commission. The investigation was not conducted by them. The eminent Trevor-Roper errs in saying the chief justice did the bulk of the work for only about a sixth of the total hearings of the Commission was attended by a single member. The real work was accomplished in what amounts to back rooms in Dallas. Usually there were present but the Commission's assistant counsel, the witness and the stenographer. History, I am satisfied, will show this subtle difference to be an important one. So, while you are correct in saying that we have different attitudes toward the Commission and its "maltreatment" of truth, it would be more precise, with reference to Whitewash and its author, to substitute "Report" for "Commission".

This is not to say the Commission did not err. I believe the

the strongest book with the most thorough criticism and the most exhaustive research behind it. I know it covers more than all the others I have read combined and that they have nothing important not in WHITEWASH, which by so much pre-dates them. My book alone is restricted 100% to the official information of the Commission, and with this alone, point by point, it demolishes the Report. There are a third of a million words of typed words alone behind it, as you can learn for yourself.

It is a strange irony that the strongest book, the one that until too late could not find normal publication, the pathfinder, if I may ~~use~~ ^{use} the phrase, is the single one that does not point the accusing finger at the members of the Commission personally. This is also revealed in my correspondence. It is not something I came by lately. It is my personal belief. WHITEWASH is the only one that takes cognizance of the realities of political life and the responsibilities of the kind of prominent men who could be appointed to such a post. You will find this in my introduction. I believe if you read it carefully, you will find that one of the books for which your writer has high regard is little more than an enlargement of part of this introduction. It really has little to do with the actual evidence.

Another goes so far in the direction of holding the members of the Commission personally responsible for the content of the Commission's files and its Report that he actually edited every single excerpt from the transcripts to eliminate the names of all of the assistant counsel, the men who really did the work. The reader of this book, including scholars of the future, will have no way of appraising the failures and errors of the men who really did the work and who in this book are entirely nameless. The original transcript, as WHITEWASH shows, always has the name of the questioner. Yet this book retains the names of the members of the Commission, substituting the letter "Q" for all the assistant counsel.

Because of the approach of WHITEWASH, your ordinarily quite correct statement that with the death of the witnesses "the evidence necessary...is crumbling

is not quite as pertinent.

away". WHITEWASH, restricted entirely to the Commission's evidence as it is, preserves the essentials of that evidence and is a guide to others in researching the evidence. Those witnesses who are dying in a rather sharp upset of the actuarial tables are, to a very large degree, already recorded. True, all they had to offer may not have been extracted. But the hope for the solution of the crime of the assassination, but one of the crimes involved, may largely depend on other sources.

"And now the X-rays and pictures are matters of contention" you say. True. But not only now. I drew this attention to them 18 months ago, not now, and was the first to set on record with the proper officials both a protest and a brief in opposition to their decision -and I here do not refer to the Commission, which ceased to exist before that. Because we are here dealing with both the assassination of a President and its dubious inquest, which involve the national honor and integrity, may I suggest that what normally might be considered responsible public relations would here be inappropriate. There are a number of things I have done and am doing entirely in private simply because I consider what is involved more important than the personal benefits they might yield.

But there is a considerable hazard inherent in the current attention fixed on the X-rays and pictures. They are, in fact, entirely unnecessary to the destruction of the Report and the beginning of a new inquiry. It makes no difference what they show, in this regard. Had your author read my book with care, especially the two long chapters on The Number of Shots and The Doctors and the Autopsy, you would understand that the medical testimony is entirely against the Report, and even the autopsy doctors said the bullet hole in the clothing would coincide with the location of the rear, non-fatal wound of the President. Even the photographs of his clothing, which mean little without artistic assistance, are entirely unnecessary, as you will find by reading page 185 of WHITEWASH. It is for this reason I did not use such a picture in my book. To one really if

familiar with the evidence and willing to do the work required to make it available, such devices are not necessary.

It is something less than a fair comment on my book or my personal attitude and beliefs to say I believe in or tried to prove "there was a 'great conspiracy' behind the assassination". There was, without doubt a conspiracy. I was the first to prove it, and I did so with the Commission's own evidence alone. The implication of the phrase "great conspiracy" I think I should avoid. I do not believe it applies to me or my work.

"Even more ironical, many of these early theorists seemed to rely for much of their data on Lane's work." I never heard him speak, anywhere, and I have none of his early work, save a single article that seems to be unrelated to his book in its content and approach. I read it when it appeared and no longer could locate it if I desired. My book was completed before a single magazine article appeared, to the best of my knowledge. There is absolutely none of Lane's data in my book. I am less certain about the use of my data by others,

"And oddly enough, it has taken three of them - Mark Lane, Edward Jay Epstein and Harold Weisberg - just about the same time to burrow their way out again." I suggest the facts already cited clarify this. Lane's book draws heavily on his personal inquiries. Epstein's has quite little from the 26 volumes. He makes no pretense that it has. There is no basis for attributing to him the ransacking of these tomes, and I have never seen such a claim attributed to him. His approach was entirely different. I alone restricted myself to the official evidence, and all the other books together do not approach what I have of it in WHITEWASH. I suspect this is one of the problems I faced, the factual unassailability of my work. I can show you correspondence from publishers that may so be interpreted.

"When Harold Weisberg set out to do the same job (not true - the first duplicated nothing; those who followed duplicated) he did it noisily and often

tendentiously - so his difficulties in finding a publisher, which ended in his publishing privately are at least understandable. Lane's difficulty is surprising. And then you report, accurately, that Lane's book was not ready for its 1965 publication contract, when my work was completed.

Ah, those words, dear editor! Those two, and that combination, have been addressed to me and my work but just a single other person and but a single other publication. And how they contrast with the only other published comment in England about me and of which I am aware. A responsible and I believe important London paper used these words: "Impressive", "sober", "free from crankiness". The ⁿindefatigable language used by your writer is one of the clues that impel my belief a copy of my book was not in your hands. This I shall rectify. Had he read the preface, your writer would have known that at the last minutes, when I got offers of commercial publication, I found that they demanded changes that would result in stridency and I rejected them. The one case in which this reason was used to explain my failure to achieve publication - and this is quite false, as the letters quoted in WHITEWASH show - was in an article entitled, in July of 1966, "The Second Oswald". The eleventh chapter of my book is entitled, "The False Oswald". This rather lengthy work ^{publish} duplicates, a year and a half later, ^{a little of} my work, attributing but little - really very little - of it to me and even berates me in one part of the article ^{what} the author uses in another! I believe if you read that article, which is in your position, and my book, and realize the difference in dates, ~~fr~~ further comment will be unnecessary.

But on the fact, I am blessed with a very kind English gentleman for an agent (Seven declined the subject in the United States) I am looking forward to meeting sometime. I think he can give you the appraisals of ^{the} a number of British publishers and several university dons, who read my work and others. You will find it quite to the contrary. I think it inappropriate for me to quote one particular British publisher by name. But he found my work "excellent" and a

"high quality piece or work". He had decided to offer me a contract, after having my book appraised by British university dons, and in the last minutes, upon receipt of information he had every reason to trust but was quite inaccurate, entirely for commercial reasons, turned it down. I hope he saw your article and phoned you, for this is quite damaging to me because it is not true and because Mr. Harbord is really trying so hard, ^{seriously} putting in more than a minimum amount of effort. I'd really appreciate it if you'd speak to him, for the effect of your article is quite hurtful. I am satisfied you had no such intent. He is at 53 St. Martin's Lane and he can supply you with a copy of the book.

Of all the many publishers with whom I spoke and from whom I have letters, not a single one even suggested they held the opinion your writer got from another. Most went out of their ways to say complimentary things, even including the prediction the book would be a best seller. It would have been less embarrassing to have merely said they didn't like the book, would it not?

You quote Lane as saying that "once I was accepted by Holt, Reinhart and Winston things began to change." Mr. Lane is unaware of the facts, including the background to his own current relationship with that unnamed New York TV station. I do hope you will not assume a lack of modesty on my part, but I am quite prepared to show all the evidence to your Washington correspondent, who is not far from my home. It is my book and I who opened up this field, who made the subject respectable. In fact, it was I who, without so intending, launched the Epstein book 32 days ahead of publication date! It was I who did the pioneer work with the electronic media, most particularly with that TV station, whose current interest in it with Lane alone but with all of us. They aired a previously taped program for two hours the night of July 23-4 that was quite exciting. Here I was able to show that it is not those who say the Report is wrong who lack responsibility. I was confronted by four lawyers (and I am not a lawyer), without prior knowledge and entirely without preparation. So dramatic did this become that during the taping the station spontaneously increased the allotted time from a

half hour to two hours. They then made a "special" of it. This particular TV program, I believe, will be recorded in history as a changing point in the public ^{media} attitude. It preceded appearance of Mr. Lane's book, by the way, and, while I cannot, on the basis of what has been reported to me, say that his publisher had nothing to do with it, I believe it is fair to say everyone was surprised at the outcome. What really happened there will someday make a rather interesting story, I believe.

The immediate consequence of that program is the decision of that interest to do another two-hour special, on which the referred-to footage will be used, on which material in my book and no other will be used, and on which most of us "doubters" will appear. A prominent personality will moderate, and the program will be syndicated.

Although I have written this in haste, for I haven't time for what I must do, it has grown longer than I intended. That is, perhaps, a reflection of the seriousness with which I regard the entire subject and what is wrapped in it. My present writing means much to me, and when it is completed, I shall see to it that a copy is available to you. You may, perhaps, be interested in reading a sample now in Mr. Harbord's possession. I am not now prepared for it to be used publicly, but if you will regard it as confidential, it may give you a different insight into the entire subject. It will be a chapter of my present work, which is largely now completed, although it will require extensive editing, for I am compelled to speed and have all the functions of an entire publishing operation to perform.

I do hope you will realize that, although I believe you have injured me, I am quite satisfied it was not a purposeful act but was caused by the rather unusual circumstances. I have no public-relations organization to inform the press, to add the subtle nuances that are so often helpful, if less than completely faithful to reality, to make claims that may have little or no basis.

And I do hope a responsible member of your staff will read my book closely, with particular attention to what may seem elliptical. While this may or may not benefit me, I am quite anxious for such an important paper as yours to be possessed of the information contained in it, for this matter is not closed.

You will find in it facsimilies of some of the evidence that may interest you. Almost without exception, they are in WHITEWASH alone. Should they interest you, subject to Mr. Harbord's approval you may use any or all of them. The large picture on pages 292-3 is the property of the Associated Press, of which I bought the right for book-use only. Much of it is entirely unknown in England, and it is typical of what I found that others did not. The certification on page 187 may interest you because of Trevor-Ropers' apology and the basis of the attack upon him. The excerpts from the FBI Report were in WHITEWASH before Epstein's book appeared. You may find my handling of the meaning of this document not the same as that of others.

On page 198 and in the appropriate text you will find evidence that eliminates the need for consulting the unofficial comment of a chest surgeon on orthopaedic matters (and there remains a fragment of the bullet in the governor's tibia). Here, despite the obfuscations of the report, the autopsy doctor in charge, two days after the assassination and a day and a half after the completion of his examination, still records the medical opinion of the Dallas doctors that the President was shot from the front.

No one else has printed the destruction of the crucial frames of the Zapruder movies. I have this evidence on page 206. If you have Volume 18 available, you will find this on page 19. The first printer broke his agreement, destroyed the plates, and left me with 20% of the negatives requiring last-minute work. We did not discover his tampering with this page until too late to do other than insert the identification of the second frame in the sprocket hole. It is quite faithful to the Volume, as you can see by comparison. May I suggest that I do

believe Senator Russell cut out what the Commission itself held were the crucial frames, and may not, even today, know of it unless he read the copy I sent him. Nor do I believe Congressman Ford used the scissors on the picture at the bottom of page 203, or that any other member of the Commission had any reason to suspect such practises existed.

While I complain of hurt, I must thank you for the mention, for the success of WHITEWASH in the United States cannot be attributed to its mention on the printed page. I have found a rather remarkable fiction prevalent in the midst of the 20th century, that to some of the world's most respected journals a private printing does not exist. As I can live with Mr. Hoover's personal "Emperor's clothes" (see page 201), so can I survive this mythology. Despite the cost, I get my money's worth in laughs when I recall that one paper which has confirmed this to me in writing, nonetheless after receiving 12 free copies wrote and requested a thirteenth for "reference use". Rather a tribute to a nonexistent book.

Sincerely yours,

Harold Weisberg