

Steve, Paul, J. B., Barbara

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Editor, Open City
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Sir:

A flower in the mouth of Kerry Thornley is as appropriate as the word "love" in the mouth of a whore.

It is unfortunately typical of that major part of your issue of May 31-June 6, devoted to two lengthy diatribes by Dave Lifton and Kerry the Great (ask him) Thornley.

In all of this biased outpouring, which is in no way related to the charge of perjury against Thornley, there is not a single word in refutation of that charge. In fact, not a single word from it is quoted or, indeed, alluded to by even the most remote indirection. Instead, there is a drumbeat of lies, distortions and self-justification (Lifton's, for all the bum steers he has so industriously fed).

How honest is your caption on the picture of the bearded Kerry Thornley? There are a number of photographs of him of the time of the assassination. Could you not have found a single one of them? Why not print one side-by-side with what you used?

If Thornley's testimony before the grand jury was anything like his deliberate misrepresentation of me and when I said what, there was no way for him to avoid a perjury charge.

For minor example, I described his magnus opus as of pamphlet size. Now, the outside dimensions of the page are 4 by 7 inches. Of what Thornley wrote, there are between the covers a total of 67 pages, with large areas of blank space. Included in the padding, which is half of the "book", are three dozen pages of Thornley's "testimony". He has trouble with the word "official". It sticks in his mouth, as your readers may recall. So, he "improved" on the "official" testimony by editing it, an appropriate contribution by this modest man. His benefactions extend to the questions asked of him. These, too, he edited!

Have you not seen many pamphlets with more than 67 pages of writing? And how many books of this size do you recall?

Thornley paints a picture of a new kind of "Communist", a man whose idol was Orwell, who to Thornley's knowledge had a secret security clearance in the Marine Corps while getting Communist literature openly in the mail (and the officers telling the enlisted men to forget about it), a man who never spoke another word to him once Thornley called him a Communist.

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Naturally, it does not come out this way in the piece he did for you, where he refers to "scuttlebutt" that Oswald had a secret clearance (every man in the outfit, a U-2 unit, had at least "confidential" clearance, a new kind of outfit for a "Communist"). His testimony before the Warren Commission is subject to the kind of misinterpretation he offers you and your readers if one has that intent, for he does refer to a "rumor". However, at the bottom of page 84 of Volume XI of the hearings, after swearing that Oswald had worked in the "security files" (another new kind of Marine Corps assignment for "Communists"), when asked, "And that was a level of clearance - ," he interrupted to say, "Probably a secret clearance would be required." And this relates to but a part of Oswald's assignment, not his major function.

Of that the officer in charge gave this testimony (Volume VIII, page 298):

"He must have had secret clearance to work in the radar center, because that was a minimum required of all of us."

To this I add the assurance that top secret was not high enough for what this new kind of Thornley-annointed Communist, Lee Harvey Oswald, really did. His clearance, above his top secret, was "crypto".

Having only recently read some of Thornley's vitriol, in which he laments the leftish tendencies of Wall Street and assails any concept of its regulation (Thornley, defender of widows and orphans!), I am surprised to find him in your columns under the banner of "peace and freedom".

But wouldn't it be nice if, with all that crap on which you wasted type, you could have found space to tell your readers the charges against Thornley, wherein he is alleged to have perjured himself?

And wouldn't it have been nice if he had told you that, after being interviewed by the FBI, he went back, on his own, to stool-pigeon? Now, the day after the assassination, he was interviewed by the Secret Service. Two days later, the FBI. Two more days, and he went back to the FBI, on his own. "Libertarian" is the word with which he describes himself, this FBI-seeking Thornley, the same Thornley who pinned a bum "Communist" rap on the murdered Oswald when his other Marine Corps buddies would not.

Here are the words of the FBI report of November 26, 1963:

"KERRY WENDELL THORNLEY, 1824 Dauphine Street, New Orleans, Louisiana, voluntarily appeared at the New Orleans Office at 12:30 PM November 26, 1963 ..."

How does this come out of Thornley's mouth? Interviewed on WTVT-TV, Tampa, January 14, 1968, beginning 1 p.m., and asked why "they (federal agents) approached you so quickly", Kerry the Truthful said, "I know exactly why they came to me so quickly because later I learned that a man named Tony Shimbosky (phonetic), an artist in Pirate's Alley, had called them."

According to the FBI itself, not until December 3, or a week after federal agents first interviewed Thornley, did they speak to the artist. I enclose a copy, of as good quality as the character of the archive to the martyred President provides, thinking your readers will find it of interest. While it is not possible to authenticate the words attributed to Thornley (the Warren Commission, with

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great delicacy, not having embarrassed him by asking him about them under oath), his former girl-friend said he had told her, "If Oswald hadn't killed President KENNEDY, he would have done it himself."

Dig that flower in the mouth! Thornley, man of peace and freedom, flower-boy!

Why not have another article by him, consisting of just the letters he wrote friends and editors about President Kennedy and his murder? I think you'll find it not inconsistent with the above.

And may I ask with his own language from the TV interview above, does it seem so utterly impossible that Thornley could have committed perjury?

Those lies Thornley wrote about me are not worth dignifying. Suffice it to say that, when he had the chance to confront me on his local radio station, he did not. Does the above give a slight indication of why? However, I think it worth reminding him and your readers of what he neglected to burden them with. In early November 1967, I sought out his "literary agent", Clint Bolton, and asked him to tell Thornley that if Garrison knew but part of what I did about Thornley, his interest was inevitable. I suggested that as an aspiring writer it was possible he knew fact the meaning of which was lost upon him, and that if he were unwilling to go to Garrison I would be glad to discuss what he knew with him. The eminent and judicious Mr. Bolton thereupon wrote a letter to Thornley not dissimilar from Thornley's own writing in your pages. Through the anti-Semitism, it is clear that Mentor Bolton also recommended this course to Thornley. It is surprising Thornley did not heed Bolton's advice, for is there not this highly literate dedication in his "book":

"To Clint Bolton, who first said to me: 'Go home and write - ya bum!'"

Famous first words!

It is unfortunate that you did not adequately inform your readers about the credentials of Dave Lifton, who writes of what he calls the "theories" of others. Dave is best known for the deep conviction that President Kennedy was assassinated from paper-mache trees in Dealey Plaza. More recently, he has been the associate of Wesley J. Liebeler, most active member of the Warren Commission staff, the man who wound up in charge of that part of the work of which Thornley was part.

Yours for "peace and freedom" - and truth,

Harold Weisberg