

Mr. Sam Donaldson
ABC-TV News
1717 De Sales St., NW
Washington, D.C. 20036

7627 Old Receiver Road
Frederick, Md. 21701
8/18/87

Dear Mr. Donaldson,

On page 203 of your book you err seriously. You there hold the late Merriman Smith up as a model of understated accuracy. You say that despite knowing that President Kennedy was dead Smith said no more than that he had been shot. You have your quotes reversed.

Smith was in the pool car, as I recall the sixth in the motorcade. When he heard the shots he and AP's Jack Beall both latched for the microphone of the radio phone. Smith was closer, got it, refused to relinquish it after he sent his flash, and in the tussle to keep Beall from sending anything pulled it out, made the phone inoperable.

It was some time later, after quite a few miles, that he saw Clint Hill and the President at Parkland Hospital.

Smith's writing about this was remarkably inaccurate. He did an anniversary piece for use 11/22/66 and if you want an idea of how grossly inaccurate it was, about any of the readily available detail, ask your researcher to compare that piece - if it is the source of your quote - with the summary of the Warren Report, its first chapter. That piece got enormous distribution because there then was considerable controversy, beginning with my first book, which was the first book on the Warren Report. This is to say that Smith was responsible for deliberately misinforming many Americans about that (to me) most subversive of crimes. And its official investigation.

It may give you a bit more of the picture, what could and could not be published, to know that the next year Julius ^Hransden asked me to do the anniversary piece. I do not recall a single use of it in any of the many major papers that published Smith's concoctions, all in support of the official "solution" of that crime. UPI was satisfied with what I wrote and did put it on the wire as, to the best of my knowledge, its only anniversary piece in 1967.

I'm pretty sure I have copies of Smith's piece if you doubt my word but I think it ought be obvious from the time on the flash that it was sent from the motorcade and it is also obvious that Smith had no chance to talk to Clint Hill or anyone not in the pool car until after it got to Parkland.

You did an interesting and I think honest book. You may want to correct this for any future reprints. If you do, may I suggest that you bear in mind that if you alter more than that one page you'll have a real job with your index?

The Warren Commission faced the identical problem the night the presses were to roll on its Report. It also had numbered footnotes and could not vary even the number of footnotes when it had a major problem to correct.

Sincerely,



Harold Weisberg