

20734

10/12/66

Dear Mr. Raiford,

Without perhaps so intending, I think you today made it look as though I fear a confrontation with Mark Lane because of your imprecise recollection of my discussion with Miss Clifford about appearing on the same program. I did not refuse to. I said I preferred not to for two reasons: I thought it unfair for him to fly down from New York only to have to divide his time, and I did not want to get into a hassle with him without serving a constructive purpose.

The truth is that I have appeared jointly with him on a TV program yet to be aired. Depending on how the four and a half hours of taping are edited, you will see that a) I do not fear him and b) will call him when he errs, which is not as uncommon as I'd like it to be. On that program, Mr. Epstein declined to show, despite the encouragement of his friends, of which I have personal knowledge, of his publisher, where I overheard the phone call, and the pleas of the producer to Mr. Epstein, when I happened to be in the producer's office.

But so you will have no doubt about it, I will appear with either or both, and at any time. I suggest it will be unfair to Mr. Epstein, whose knowledge of the subject has been inflated out of all proportion by skilled public-relations work. His knowledge of his own books is less than it might be for such a short work. He has, in the past, declined to appear with me on several occasions, which is his right and of which I have made no use.

The purposes of my call were not to argue but to answer. First, I did not say, as he took your words to mean, that he was influenced by my book. I am now sorry I ~~x~~ started that way, but I did because I wanted to be fair. On the dates, which he is the one who first raised, not I, WHITWASH was completed in February 1965, first published on August 18, 1965, revised and republished May 9, 1966, index and additional photographs added and republished July 25, 1966, and this last printing has been reprinted twice since then. So, my work was published before his thesis was written. My use of the FBI report is dual. In the original work there are eight or ten references to it. In the first revision, published almost two months before his, despite his and his publisher's claim that he was the first, I quoted the December 9 FBI report (pages 192-5). I was careful to give the date I first saw the FBI report in order to make it a matter of record among the strange people working in this field that I was not claiming to be the first who saw it, as though that makes a difference. It was quoted before Epstein and before me by Vincent Salandria. I believe both of them misuse it, and the most casual examination of my book shows <sup>+</sup> interpret it differently, for the parts about which they and the other makes a big thing had, actually, been leaked by the FBI earlier, and I refer to these leaks.

This does, however, address itself to his unscholarly comment about his having seen things I "never in his (my) life saw". It is true that the reportedly right-wing member of the former staff, Wesley Liebeler, slipped things under the table to Epstein who used them uncritically. The major thing is this FBI Report. There are others. As recently as two weeks ago Epstein claimed to have first published pictures of the President's garments in a letter to the Sunday magazine of the New York Times. This is

flase. The Commission printed five such pictures in the first volume of its exhibits. I elected not to use them because, like the one Epstein used, they show nothing without artistic improvement (see his page 56, which shows nothing without the arrow and, really, nothing with it. This is flackery). However, I do what he did not, I use all the testimony on this, and it is extensive, on page 185. He has two other pictures in his book (pp. 52-3) both of which are also in mine and were regardless of what I allegedly never in my life saw.

I never said the fragments of the bullets were not marked with the rifling of the C2766 rifle, as he said and as I was unable to rectify on the air. The answer to this, of course, is what he let slip out, that he had not read my book (which I very much doubt). Actually, there is extensive discussion of these fragments and in a manner nobody else uses. This begins of page 156 in the long chapter "The Number of Shots".

It was not until Mr. Epstein made this wrong accusation of inaccuracy against me that I phoned, and it was for that purpose. But since we are on the subject of accuracy and inaccuracy, Mr. Epstein's own scholarship, if that is what is involved in his ~~book~~ book, becomes a legitimate question. Among those things I heard him say that are wrong and reveal inadequate or no scholarship are that the whole bullet was found "on" Governor Connally's stretcher. This is the false claim of the Report. It is not the testimony of the man who picked that bullet up, who said he could not sleep if he said this were the case. On the alleged burning of the autopsy notes, this is also false by the testimony of the man who did the burning and is in detail in my autopsy chapter. In common with just about all the others whose work is second-hand in this field, he said the notes were burned because of the inexplicit language of the doctor's certification (WHITEWASH 187). Actually, the doctor swore (Volume 2, page 372) that it is the first draft of the autopsy that he burned. Had Mr. Epstein been his own researcher, he would have known that the appendix to the Bantam edition (pages 172-3) contain proof that these notes existed after the burning, as does also the testimony of this doctor months later.

Without Wesley Liebeler Mr. Epstein had no book. It is therefore comprehensible that he believed Mr. Liebeler, including Liebeler's delineation of his own field of responsibility. However, in saying that Liebeler was responsible for Oswald's history, which I believe is what I heard him say, he was in no sense reflecting the areas in which Mr. Liebeler worked on the Commission, as I think I will soon prove from my sequel, which is now done. Thus he in no sense reflects Liebeler's responsibilities on the Commission or what is really important, in its Report.

The radio was low when I was waiting on the phone and it is possible that I did not hear clearly. However, I believe I heard Mr. Epstein say that the Commission disagreed on whether one bullet hit both the President and the Governor or whether they were hit by two. Unless the Commission could conclude without equivocation that a single bullet did inflict all seven non-fatal injuries, with one bullet having exploded in the President's head and inflicted no other injuries and one bullet having missed the car entirely, as the Commission admits, more than a single bullet for all the non-fatal wounds means at least another assassin and a conspiracy.

If I may make a personal comment, it is that I seriously question the morality of an author claiming his work is intended for one purpose and for considerable profit permitting its use for another. The claims made for and the pretense under which INQUEST is sold are shocking in the light of Mr. Epstein's statement on your program that he "never questioned whether Oswald was guilty". The truth is he didn't and seemingly doesn't, one of the reasons his book could be published. Is he not, however, in the same position as he claims the Commission is, having made no separate inquiry into the Commission's central conclusion and accepting it without question? An additional personal comment needs no pointing up: he has written a review of WHITEWASH and other books for Esquire but he had not read WHITEWASH! Sincerely, Harold Weisberg