

2/24/73

George Lardner
Washington Post

Dear George,

Your this morning's review of what to me is Sheridan's self-justification is the only balanced and fair one I've seen. I write not to praise you but on the chance that you will be following this story as it unfolds. If so, perhaps some of the information I've accumulated might be of interest. It is not the result of investigations of either Sheridan or Hoffa, for I had no interest in either per se.

It may help if I begin with explanations of two things. I met Sheridan twice only. The first time was in response to my request of Elliot Frankel for a transcript of an NBC show. Sheridan drove up to our farm in response. I never got the transcript. He told me he was doing a special and would want to interview me for it. He questioned me about my attitude toward Garrison. I told him what it was as of that date. It has changed from time to time. He drove his car so close to the house I wondered later if he had himself wired, as you may recall he was caught in the New Orleans courtroom. Later, in New Orleans, Rick Townley, who was with WDSU and was working with Sheridan, made a supper date with me and then stalled for hours on the pretense someone else was to join us. Ultimately Judge Wisdom's horsey daughter did and of all the places to which we could go, ~~Rick~~ Rick chose just the one in which Sheridan had just been seated. My relations with Garrison were never as presumed and sometimes reported. Your story saying he took his approach from my script was the beginning of this change. I doubt you want details but from the time of my third trip to N.O. we have barely been on speaking terms and in his book I am next to the cardinal sinner. That is Sylvia Meagher. I began devil's advocacy with my first trip and on aspects of Russo nobody else was ever interested in. There is quite an untold story there. Sylvia, who had indexed the 26 volumes, I assumed to have a better knowledge of them than I, agreed to fill this role and then refused, so when I learned this I did. You got to know enough about Jim to know how unwelcome that was. I think you can understand how much we trust each other when I tell you he has refused to let me have transcripts he has of the hearings on the federal charges against him and I have unquestionable proof that Shaw swore falsely twice and other than as Garrison charged of which Garrison to this day has no knowledge, with the Shaw civil suit close to trial.

I never saw Shaw in the role in which Garrison cast him, as my writing shows. What I picked up about him, and it is a fair amount, was in every case incidental to other work. Shaw's counsel, who are satisfied with my writing about him, made allegations against me in one of their motions, but you may remember that when they issued more than 30 subpoenas, they addressed none to me. Despite Regis Kennedy's dissembling at the trial, he did find out that a man using the name Clay Bertrand did exist, and I have the proof. You may also remember the prosecution did not confront him with this at the trial. I am here suggesting that I have reason to believe the FBI did not lie to Ramsey Clark or to you at the time of Clark's confirmation hearing. At the same time, I do not suggest that this in any sense validates the indictment. As early as 11/67 I got more on this in personal interviews. So, there really was a Clay Bertrand and none of this was used in the trial. Likewise, whereas I had earlier agreed to be the prosecution's Dealey Plaza expert at the trial, although the New York Times reported my presence at the counsel table, I had, in fact, refused to have anything to do with the trial, was in New Orleans during the jury selection and left before it was completed, and never once set foot in the courtroom. I refused direct and indirect importunings to return to the trial. I was not in New Orleans again until 11/71 and then on other work. As best I can now date the change in my own thinking, it was 11/67, when I got reason to doubt Jim's explanation of the origin of his "probe"-not long and not in November 1966.

So, I was my own man and did my own work, often consulting with Ivon in it and generally at loggerheads with Jim.

It is I who brought the suppressed Secret Service information on "Ferry" to light. Earlier I had been attracted to the palpably false testimony adduced about Ferrie. He always was one of my major interests. I now have more information than I could use in a long book on him, including an enormous amount of the suppressed information about him plus at least as much developed from unofficial sources. Pursuing information about Ferrie led me to Morris Brownlee and the fink who went by the name of John George Wyatt. I turned both on, separately, while Sheridan was active down there. I taped not less than six hours of John George in my motel room one night, lasting until dawn. He spilled his guts. I was able to check some of it out with people like Hoke May and got considerable confirmation of what he spilled. Of what is relevant to the Hoffa story, this included some kind of relationship with Sheridan in Detroit. Remember that affair of the contrived black witness NBC aired, later exposed as a fake? Brownlee and John George both told me this. It also included an offer of, as I now recall, \$25,000 to John George by Sheridan for some dirty work the nature of which I don't clearly remember. Hoke set their meeting up. He told me he had never seen a man so frightened in his life as John George. The point was to somehow boobytrap Garrison.

At this time both these dubious characters had been fixed up with jobs in Baton Rouge on the Hoffa matter by Sheridan and Whitey Partin. Aside from what they told me of this, I have accidental knowledge from two other sources, Sarg Pitcher, who was doing some checking on them, and a Baton Rouge reporter whose name I have somewhere in my notes who was astounded at the openness of the whole play by Partin, who was contacting the press himself so pictures could be made of him bailing Brownlee out on a contrived auto-vehicle charge. As I remember it, this Baton Rouge reporter was an experienced man who had spent some time in Washington with UPI. The two finks told me then, at that early date, that Sheridan, Epstein or both had arranged immunity for Partin on a series of serious charges in return for his help in getting Hoffa. If I am not mistaken, the current charges against Partin do not include the earlier ones. On those the pre-Nixon and the Nixon Department of Justice has done nothing.

I had two John George tapes. As I now remember it, when I loaned Ivon the first one it somehow disappeared from his office. This had also happened with an earlier and to me much more important tape more directly related to my JFK work. So, thereafter, I never let Ivon have another tape. I probably dubbed some for him, but no more originals. So, I know I have the second tape. On it John George spells out how, if Garrison got his charges against Sheridan and Townley into court, they were all going to testify that Sheridan would never have been party to any such thing, that it was all Townley, and when this pure and noble Sheridan learned about it, he got rid of Townley. Bearing on this, Rick gave up a good thing with WDSU and went to New York, despite his liking of New Orleans. He did not go with NBC but with Metromedia.

Some time later, there was a mysterious, deliberately non-fatal shooting of John George, never solved by the police. To the best of my knowledge he has been silent since. From before I knew him he was a narc fink. He planted a case against someone friendly toward Garrison, confirmed to me by the federal narcs. The case was dropped. At the time of the second tape, he was already afraid of me. Brownlee thereafter ducked me and I had too much I could do to persist because I felt I had already gotten from him all I would about Ferrie. Ferrie had been his godfather. He was a profound influence for evil on Morris, as on many other young men. (And he did know Oswald, and they were in the CAB together. Garrison's people were plain incompetent on this, partly because they were professional cops and were protecting one of their own from not less than a perjury charge. Less than 24 hours after Ferrie's death, there was a kidnaping related to this by police of two parishes, admitted to me by the victim, a young gay, in the presence of his mother and his lawyer, on tape.)

Since DJ started going after Partin, he has been blowing hot and cold. Once when hot he gave a long deposition to a lawyer then didn't sign it when the court reporter typed it up. If you are interested, I can let you read it but because it is not my work I can't give permission to use it.

Now that Garrison has laid his egg and as I see it is doing as much as he can to help the feds put him away and to lose the Shaw civil suit (which isn't really aimed at him but is designed to milk the three richest T & C men), perhaps you may have some information of Ferrie that you picked up down there that you need not hold confidential. I don't know what you got from whom, but I have since then learned so much about Ferrie that I think it is possible that what might have seemed to have no significance to you could mean something to me. Bringulier, for example, had an involvement quite different than he told the FBI and he perjured himself before the Warren Commission. The testimony of another witness was altered to provide a quote supporting Bringulier's perjury. I have the pre-alteration typescript and the change was by the Commission lawyer. I believe you interviewed Bringulier.

Just as the FBI dissembled on Clay Bertrand, they dissembled and suppressed on Ferrie. The friendly Ferrie-FBI relationship grew to the point where they were having good times with some of the press just before Ferrie died. I have the notes of some present on those occasions. Much fun! from these descriptions. Some reporters filed copy that was not used, but is illuminating.

Jack Martin, by the way, was not the one who first called attention to the Ferrie-Oswald relationship and what Herman Kohlmann actually said was grossly misrepresented in the earliest FBI and Secret Service reports. Adding to the mystery on this, less than two hours after the JFK assassination, the Louisiana Secret Service was looking for one Jack Martin, of an offbeat religious sect, at the request of the Dallas Secret Service office. I have the reports, including Rice's of his investigation near Goldonna. I also have the suppressed report of the Kohlmann interview and I have interviewed Kohlmann myself. The first report was from a CAP colleague of both Ferrie and Oswald. And that is when - and I suspect why - Ferrie went on that crazy trip. His phone interests were other than Garrison speculated. He was trying to reach Wray Gill to find out what the score was. Martin was used by the feds to obfuscate the whole thing. They knew where Ferrie was at the time of the assassination. He was with Regis Kennedy, in attendance upon the court in the Marcello case. A week later Kennedy filed a report that is so brief it makes no mention of Ferrie. I have it if it interests you.

I go into this not to bore you but to indicate there are many ways that what you could have been told when you first went to N.O. might have meaning you had no way of knowing. What the feds told you could also have meaning. Did you know that one of the first things the FBI did in New Orleans was to freeze the Secret Service out of any investigations there and then to start suppressing, including what the Secret Service already had? The ban against the Secret Service was from Washington, was first conveyed by the N.O.FBI and was then confirmed by the Washington Secret Service. I will be writing about this, but I'll be glad to tell you the whole thing in confidence if you have any interest in it. I find it a fascinating story. One of the tapes that disappeared from Iyon's office was of my first interview with one of the foreclosed witnesses. I later re-interviewed him, again on tape. Good thing, too, because he was killed in Hurricane Camille. In and of itself it puts the entire story of the assassination, of Oswald and of the FBI's investigation in an entirely different perspective. I also have confirmation of this witness by the only other one in the world, again on tape.

Sal Panzeca knows I have proof that Shaw swore falsely other than as Garrison charged him. I told Sal. In an effort to persuade him to abandon what I believe would be another injustice, I told him one of the things, but not my proof of it. And who else also swore falsely about the same thing.

Sincerely,

Harold Weisberg