

Paul Valentine
JP, JW

1/18/72

Mr. Ben Bradlee
The Washington Post
1515 L. St., NW
Washington, D.C.

Dear Mr. Bradlee,

You cannot have consulted your man in Memphis before serializing Jim Bishop, for if not his own recollection of his own excellent reporting, certainly his nose would have warned you of the self-defamation and the abuse of your readers and their trust.

You certainly did not follow established custom or accepted good business sense in buying serialization after publication and after certification of literary failure.

Nor were you consistent with your own orders to Geoffrey Wolff with regard to what was then the only book critical of or even on the Warren Report, not to review it or any of those to come, the net effect of which is that the Post failed to review it only.

Having no fetish for literary latrine-sniffing, I had ignored your page-one-ing of this miserable excrement until a concerned reporter phoned me with questions about the second instalment. A skimming is all it requires. It is incredible that you had nobody check your own morgue on this awful stuff, for there is no accuracy in any of its simpler elements. It is the cheapest fiction. Your own picture file will disclose that the bathroom was not "that door...at the head of an alley stairway." With no witnesses present, you know there is no way of saying, not honestly, anyway, that "The Simler" (ugh!) then "took his rifle and his binoculars and went into the bathroom". But with a target 100 feet away and a scope on the rifle, why the binoculars? Consult your filed pictures again to see if the assassin "found that by crouching a little he could see the motel porch." With a good "crouch" was the one way he could not see it. Those pictures again, or your own reporter: it was impossible to shoot "standing in the tub". But does one "crouch" and "stand" simultaneously to see what one shoots?

Your files will not disclose what happens to a rifle with "a ledge...used as an ideal rest for a rifle". My own work is poisonous to you, the more so because it has stood the testing of time and all who would confront it in person, so do not consult it. Ask the National Rifle Association. They have a publication on it I quote.

Of course, you have no way of knowing, but it is false to say "he watched the black men move in and out of Room 306." It was not used as the meeting place, and once the King party returned there, it remained there until it left.

Your own morgue will tell you that it was not "Bernard Lee [who] cut in to tell Dr. King that it was chilly, that he ought to wear a topcoat." It was Solomon "ones. Skipping two graphs, Kyaes was not "halfway down the stairway" or "the first to realize that Dr. King had been shot." I interviewed him, but of course, this you wouldn't trust, not even on tape. So consult the transcript of his sworn testimony. I am fairly confident it says what he told me, that he had turned and taken five steps.

Now, the account of that bullet: I spare you most of the error for a simple test you can make from the transcript. It had not "embedded itself in the spine at the

bottom of the neckline..." The fastest and most certain way to check is in the autopsy, which I had to sue the Department of Justice to get (the filing of this suit was not news to the Post, nor was the summary judgement I won, you having reported so many of them), but your own morgue will show the official allegation that this "bullet" lodged under the left shoulder. Both accounts are false, by the way, as the autopsy shows. For the bullet fragmented. However, it left no part where Bishop placed it.

Why Bishop had to improve on the officially-determined time of the shooting I can't even guess, but by no account was it at 6:04. Morgue again. Nor is there any account that has Ray leaving the bathroom with the gun and binoculars "both wrapped in newspaper." (There is a picture you should have showing a box wrapped in a bedspread. Willy Anchues did not come out of his bedroom. According to the duly-sworn affidavit (which happens to be suborned perjury) it was Charlie Stephens.

(There is no evidence, official or otherwise, with which I can address that "dirty moment", but I would have supposed your copyreaders or proofreaders might have had other tests, if not your traditional objectivity.)

As for those "fingerprints" that were "all over the gun", there was but a single print on the gun itself, which does attest that at some time Ray touched it, but there was no print anywhere on it where he would have had to leave one had he used it. In the same graph we learn that it was "the pattern[sic] of stupidity" which compelled Ray to drop his bundle where the doorway rather than the window can be properly described as "recessed".

Thus I also skimmed the first instalment, to learn of the SCLC that "we got no intelligence on Memphis", which is hardly consistent with your own files and the graphic account of Rev. Bevel, or my own extensive information on the advance knowledge of several dependable reports that King was to be assassinated on his return, or the well-reported accounts of how King was begged not to go back. This, no doubt, is why you faithfully report that King was "frightened". Now there is no doubt about Bishop's intended meaning, for I can play you the tape of his appearance on the Frost show, where he used the word "coward". Is this how you feel of King and his career in so many jails, his marches, his whole life?

There is little point in continuing this further, but the rifle you identify as a Remington 700 and 760 was also a Springfield 404 by the same authority on the Frost show.

And thus the people are informed by a great newspaper so that a representative society may function properly.

By a remarkable coincidence, the serialization of the slo-flop coincided with the "release" of the pictures and X-rays of the President who was blessed with so many friends. Oddly, there was no question in your paper about why, when the President's urine was unrelated to the crime or its investigation, a urologist only was given "access". By another coincidence, he happens to be a right-winger from his published writing, which on this subject is scant. I am not suggesting that at this particular moment were a real pathologist to see this stuff, the requirement of the contract were any medical man to be permitted to, it would serve the national need or any Kennedy interest. I feel the opposite. But you raised no such question, you seem to have no curiosity. And no paper wondered how by looking at pictures and X-rays it could be determined who fired any shot or shots, the almost universal lead and head on the carefully-staged leak.

I knew of this leak in advance, and I offered to background the Post. It refused, which certainly is its own business and a decision it alone could make. I would think more highly of the Post if it would agree that I can live with this incident better than

it can. We both know only too well that there can be no benefit to me in taking the time to try and help you serve your function, if not preserve your integrity. I think you know I know the time I take to write this letter can do me no good and may further your determination to present any shameful scrawling on one side of this national issue and your clear record of suppressing the other.

It is possible to conclude that I am a fool to take the time, expecting no possibility of any benefit. But if I am not a fool, perhaps I have a purpose that is more than letting you know about the kind of trash you are setting in type. You might wonder if I have Santayana's caution in mind, that those who do not learn from history are doomed to relive it.

Were I a friend of any victim, past or possible, I would find this painful. And were I in any way involved in any of the story, as you may or may not recall you were, when I would learn what eventually you will, I'd find the pain greater.

When I first found this out, quite some time ago, I phoned Larry Stern to tell him. He was brilliant (lit.) in his sarcasm, so I followed the effort no further.

My regrets,

Harold Weisberg