

Rt. 8, Frederick, Md. 21701
7/2/75

Editor
Washington Star
Washington, D.C.

Dear Sir,

A month ago I wrote your editorial page editor in protest against a malicious column by Garry Wills. I included a letter to him, asking that it be forwarded. I also included a xerox of the formerly TOP SECRET Warren Commission executive session transcript Wills so grossly and deliberately misrepresented. I asked you to read that transcript so you could understand how you treated your readers and to forward it to Wills' syndicate so they could offer it to those papers carrying Wills' column.

Opinion has a proper and necessary place in newspapers. I do not believe propaganda does. Nor do I believe that those who are syndicated ought pretend detachment from that of which they write if, like Wills, they are not dispassionate. He has his Jack Ruby book to live with.

Your silence since then and the lead editorial of June 28 present you with what in my old and once traditional view of journalism is an ethical and professional conflict of interest.

I have no objection to the fact of the editorial or the fact that it reflects opinion. However, your record in the matter of which I write casts that editorial in a different role.

Whatever your opinion of the JFK assassination or its investigations, it remains, I hope you will agree, an unsettling subject and one about which there remains considerable doubt and suspicion. People, especially young people, find it both justification for a lack of confidence in government.

AP had a long A-wire story on this transcript for 5/18 use. While it was a page-one story throughout the country, by the most remarkable of coincidences it was not mentioned in any of the three papers seen by most on Capitol Hill, your paper, the Post and the New York Times.

One reason I wanted you to read the text of the transcript itself is so that you could get the actual words of these eminences when they felt they were protected by perpetual secrecy. What goes on in government when there is the expectation of secrecy has in itself been of national concern, a concern I believe proper and necessary in any society that wants to enjoy freedom.

Because there is no doubt about your right to editorialize however you choose I pass no comment on that editorial. However, when you have suppressed the story that by any traditional concept was legitimate news, then publish a vicious distortion that in context is libellous and then remain totally silent after I wrote you and did not have the common courtesy to let me know whether you had forwarded my letter to Wills and the transcript to the syndicate, I do believe it is not unreasonable to infer that you, too, are not detached.

When so long a time passed with nothing but silence and because I knew Wills was also a liar, I spoke to the reporter he pretended to quote. That reporter had written personally about the same matter, his reporting of the report that Lee Harvey Oswald had had federal connections. I have that story and know that what Wills wrote cannot come from it because if it did that also would be a deliberate lie. This reporter told me that Wills had spoken to him, that he had told Wills the truth - that only the number was an invention - and that if Wills wrote anything else and attributed it to him it was false and not accidental.

Whether you are aware of it or not - and from Wills you'd not be - this is not the only reporter to have written a story of this nature. I have published FBI and Secret Service reports dealing with these accounts together with two Warren Commission formerly suppressed executive sessions. There thus is added dishonesty in the entire handling of the entire matter at the very least with Wills, who pretends to have investigated, and I believe it can fairly be said with you.

If I also do not question the right of the Star to have whatever associations it elects with those of whom it writes, I do think the kind of relations you and your staff have had with exactly those agencies with whom there are the allegations Oswald had had a relationship impose a great obligation on you to be entirely impartial and not to give rise to suspicions that you pay back for favors with editorial treatment and non-treatment.

I believe this correspondence will show that I have made no demands despite the fact that I believe there is no reasonable doubt about dishonesty and malice and for one in my position, what amounts to libel. It certainly is defamation and it certainly is not innocent.

Your editorial also lacks innocence. You pretend that nuts and self-seekers and others without legitimate credentials of any kind are all there are in the field of those who have written against the official accounting of the assassination of a President. As it relates to me - and I am alone in the area covered by your readership - this becomes a new and separate defamation and one that lacks any factual basis at all.

For one example, long before the Rockefeller Commission interested itself in the irresponsibles it used for going outside its mandate I personally had denounced those same people, in public and in private. I made a speech exposing them in New York City April 25. My exposure of them to individual reporters - and their insanities are not at all new - go back well over a year on that which received most attention and much longer on other aspects.

All of this has a special and unusual context Wills and through him you gave it. I was actually denounced for making available to the press the actual text of the actual words of the members of the Warren Commission when they let their hair down. I asked and got no pay. There was not in the reporting even the mention of any of my books or the remotest indication of how people could reach me. When I have been expending considerable and unpaid energy going back to 1967 to obtain this and other documents I have made public - a function that certainly also is that of the daily print press - and then give it away only so that it can be available to the press and thus to the people, I fail to see the remotest basis for this kind of abuse or any rational basis for your editorial judgement in the uncritical printing of it.

When to this is added the clear and deliberate distortion of the thrust of the entire transcript (its own kind of propaganda and suppression by Wills), the dishonesty, the malice and the defamation are, in my opinion, apparent.

I would still like to know if you forwarded the letter and the transcript. Ordinarily I would not consider asking this is asking too much. But when I have heard from neither you nor Wills nor the syndicate, I do ask to know.

This is, in my experience and ^{what} from I hear from the younger generation, an example of what has destroyed faith in the press. I regret the press has this little concern for its own integrity and from this kind of departure from its traditional function earns the loss in credibility it has sustained.

Sincerely,

Harold Weisberg