

Dear Dave,

6/26/92

The first time I used the CPAC gizmo the doctors think will help me breathe more when I sleep I awake feeling I was getting a cold. I didn't. Same think this morning, before I and wide awake. This time I have a heavy one. Wasn't as heavy then but has been getting more and more as time passes.

I enjoyed what you said about Liz and her friend but because I want to take a nap this will be brief.

Especially because of what you said about AHR policy I think the time spent in answering those stupidities with a college degree will be wasted.

I'm glad that when I bought cards I got good ones. One that you dropped, enclosed, that Lil found near where you parked your car is in rather good condition for having passed through several severe thunderstorms and a few normal rains.

Not much after I got on the 28 Years of Silence chapter. It precedes the two I've sent you. Got quite a bit done on it but think I'll take it easy for the rest of the day, mine now more than 13 hours long. As with the others, I'm doing only the necessary editing and cutting. That can be done later. I want to get it on paper.

Where I quote news stories in this I have them but won't copy and enclose them.

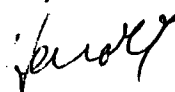
If you want to write AHR, I think the letter reflect what they claim not to have, a position on the assassination and it is the official one.

It is obvious you did not have to visit that crap to be in a position to comment on what is written about it. You wrote about the article, not the craphouse. In this sense, really in both, they do not respond but make personal attacks.

Where the first one says so what else is new, you can say when she writes reflecting what you said instead of in endorsement of the official mythology and when the stuff on display reflects it, that will be new.

The enclosed note from the US editor or representative of the German/Dutch editions of Penthouse reflects a minor but very nice thoughtfulness. Audi is an editor or special staffer for it. I liked both him and Gabrielle and they seem to feel the same way about us.

Best,



June 23, 1992

Harold Weisberg
RR 12 Old Receiver Rd
Frederick MD 21701

Dear Harold:

I arrived home in good order. It took more time than I thought it would getting the car turned in and my ticket cleared for Chicago and Stevens Point. I then went to the departure counter for United and asked if I could be expedited on availability of seats for the next 747 leaving. They said yes but had only first class seats, which they gave me one at no extra cost. So I got to Chicago first class with all the trimmings--silverware, linen napkins, big wide seats, polite stewardesses, etc.

Thank you and Lil for everything.

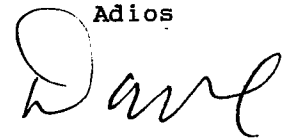
Today I think Elaine and Liz will try "The Lillian." But they sit around talking so much I cannot believe they will find the time to do it. It seems Liz and her friend Vickie Seligman would drive their car over the endless plains, the only car for hours, and no house or human habitation anywhere in sight for hours, and then stop and have run free time--when they would just run over the plains like antelope.

All and all her four weeks was quite an experience for her. As part of her study, for example: In the normal population Papp smears on women have a 2% incidence of possible cancer or cancer prone indicators (whatever that can mean) among the Sioux it is close to 40%. Much of this from venereal disease Liz said. Anyway when I have finished debriefing her I will know more.

Enclosed are copies of three letters to the editor of the Journal of American History. It is the best journal for American history in the nation, read by 10,000 historians. I was restricted to 500 words. As you can see I got it good and plenty from the Brandimarte and Hunt. The problem is the Journal has a policy of not taking any further correspondence on a subject once they have printed a negative and a response. But these are too vile to permit to stand without some effort at response. I was wondering if you might think of some manner of reply and give me some suggestions. I do not believe anything can be printed in the Journal, but I have never tried of course.

David R. Wrone
1518 Blackberry Lane
Stevens Point, WI 54481

Adios



Letters to the Editor

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Schweninger
University of North Carolina
Chapel Hill

To the Editor:

Cynthia A. Brandimarte's review of the Dallas Kennedy assassination exhibit (*JAH*, June 1991) reveals the necessity for subject-matter knowledge of this complex crime. The purpose of history is not to heal. What is to be healed? Outrage that the Warren Commission wrote the conclusion and outline of its *Report* before it began its "investigation"? The end of history is to define the world at whatever cost to person and society as the only enprincipaling ground to civic action.

Omissions and factual errors abound in Brandimarte's review. For example, she omits reference to James T. Tague, wounded at a time and place that refutes the official findings that a single person fired all shots—and she says "fatal shots" but there was only one fatal shot. Moorman's (not Woorman's) photograph was not taken "as the bullet struck President Kennedy's head," and Brandimarte ought to have noted which of the three basic forms of the photograph the museum chose to display. The evidence in each conflicts with the others.

Brandimarte also contents herself with obscure phrases such as "small extremist groups" which suggests only exotic fringe activists. Before November 22, a Minutemen paramilitary group secretly vowed to kill JFK when he arrived, threats were also made at an anti-Castro Cuban public meeting and twice by the National States Rights Party. No known evidence connects these threats with JFK's murder, but federal authorities did not investigate them. An exhibit even mildly interested in a valid picture ought to discuss the milieu.

Central questions about the legitimacy of the objects displayed are glossed over. The evidence does not exist to reproduce faithfully the alleged perch of the assassin: Dallas officials tes-

tified that they moved boxes and raised and lowered the window before pictures were taken. Moreover, serious scholarship finds no credible evidence connecting Oswald to the sixth floor or to the murder: scrutiny breaks down points such as fingerprints and carrying the rifle to work, and other evidence removes Oswald from scene. The Commission, whose artificial scenario refutes eyewitness testimony, theorized and concluded but did not and could not "determine" what was false. The Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Secret Service both disagree that the first shot struck both JFK and Governor John Connally, a *sine qua non* for holding Oswald was the sole assassin.

The reviewer and the museum have fallen into the conventional view that sees only two positions; a third is ignored. Throughout the many years of controversies, responsible critics have diligently struggled against the propaganda of both the wretched theorists and the official conclusion, which is itself merely a theory. These critics see the exhibit not as "intelligent", but as the work of ignorant mythologists who blindly affirm official doctrines and peddle them daily to tourists as "history." For the Dallas Foundation to erect a museum on the sixth floor is an assertion that consciously devised myth is reality. Like "Memory of the Nation", it is tinsel propaganda but not history.

David R. Wrone
University of Wisconsin
Stevens Point

To the Editor:

Had David R. Wrone actually viewed "The Sixth Floor" in Dallas, Texas, instead of hosting "assassination symposia" at his home in

Stevens Point, Wisconsin, he may have actually been able to comment on the quality of the exhibition. Instead, he attacks the reviewer who, while not making an entire career of the assassination of John F. Kennedy, as Wrone himself has done, understands the joint mission of history and museums, as Wrone certainly does not.

Critics of the assassination investigation compose a kind of cottage industry—attracting all sorts of serious and dilettante enthusiasts. Wrone and his cronies count themselves as being among the “serious.” And, indeed, Wrone is serious enough to compile, with DeLloyd J. Guth, “a specialist in pre-Reformation legal history, with an avocation for bibliography and historiography,” a Greenwood Press bibliography, *The Assassination of John F. Kennedy* (1980), containing over five thousand entries on the subject of the assassination.

Wrone has even read some of them. After doing so, he is “convinced that, in the JFK case, two conspiracies did exist. The first killed Kennedy and the second . . . has served to subvert and obscure the truth.” He has further concluded that “members of governmental institutions worked primarily to protect their own agencies and secondarily to sustain confidence in the federal government generally, with only a tertiary concern for solving this murder case” (p. xviii). Tell us something new, Mr. Wrone.

Unfortunately for him, Wrone’s conclusions have less to do with an ability to evaluate an exhibition that he has not seen than he would like to think. On the other hand, my review describes in an objective manner the portion of the exhibition that deals with the investigations subsequent to the assassination. “Panel boards and a six-minute film set forth in a clear and concise manner the findings of the various committees—Warren Commission, Rockefeller Commission, and House Select Commission of Assassinations, for example—and discuss the evidence and state the controversies. The summaries avoid none of the issues and deal effectively with the inconclusiveness of the committees’ findings. . . . The text posits the numerous conspiracy theories. . . . Two decades of investigation are evaluated and controversies are presented in an understandable manner.” I state that the “exhibition planners do not embrace one particular view, nor do they posit any new theories. We learn that throughout the 1970s

and 1980s, polls showed that few believed that Oswald had acted alone, and most favored the possibility of a plot.”

We can only imagine an exhibition that Mr. Wrone might have curated. One that would have ignored the audience that the Dallas Historical Foundation tracked for eleven years, omitted any record of JFK’s life and legacy, and focused solely on listing the errors of the Warren Commission. Perhaps Wrone is judging a museum exhibition according to the standards of book writing. And, indeed, a book might well be the best medium for his ideas, but then again he agrees with too many authors, like Sylvia Meagher, Howard Roffman, and Harold Weisberg, who have already gained recognition from their books on the subject. I see Mr. Wrone’s dilemma in finding a suitable forum for his opinions.

One of the assumptions underlying the relatively recent Exhibition Review section of this journal is that museum exhibits are a distinct medium for organizing and communicating historical information and interpretation. Mr. Wrone has missed an opportunity not only to learn about exhibitions, but also to foster understanding and cooperation among scholars working in diverse areas of history. Let us hope that he does not continue to miss the opportunity to view and learn from “The Sixth Floor: John F. Kennedy and the Memory of a Nation.”

Cynthia A. Brandimarte
Texas Parks and Wildlife Department

To the Editor:

David R. Wrone’s letter re: Dr. Cynthia Brandimarte’s review of the Sixth Floor exhibit in Dallas, is an attempt to “kill the messenger.” He asks far more from a review than is appropriate or necessary. As the former curator responsible for the content of the display, I would like to comment. First, the exhibit uses history as a interpretive tool, not an end, in the examination of three major themes: Kennedy’s life, his death, and the legacy to society. The assassination itself is one third of the focus.

Nowhere does it state that the government has solved the crime; the major concerns of the critics are presented within the context of the

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fine an exhibition that Mr. curated. One that would elience that the Dallas His- tracked for eleven years, f JFK's life and legacy, and ing the errors of the War- rhaps Wrone is judging a according to the standards d, indeed, a book might um for his ideas, but then oo many authors, like Syl- d Roffman, and Harold already gained recognition h the subject. I see Mr. finding a suitable forum

tions underlying the re- lation Review section of this m exhibits are a distinct ing and communicating a and interpretation. Mr. opportunity not only to ns, but also to foster un- peration among scholars as of history. Let us hope nue to miss the opportu- from "The Sixth Floor: he Memory of a Nation."

Brandimarte
Wildlife Department

letter re: Dr. Cynthia Bran- e Sixth Floor exhibit in to "kill the messenger." a review than is appro- e former curator respon- the display, I would like exhibit uses history as an end, in the examina- mes: Kennedy's life, his p society. The assassina- of the focus.

te that the government e major concerns of the thin the context of the

official investigations, then showcased in the section entitled "Who Did It?" Even the children who have toured the exhibit are able to get the message. The popular, "mythological," legacy of JFK is one of hope; the legacy of his death, one of doubt.

The exhibit does not try to persuade visitors to any point of view; the text notes the injury to witness James T. Tague, but lets the visitor decide its relevance. Other disturbing elements of the official investigations are presented. The unenhanced, original state Mooman photo is on view; experts debate whether it was taken microseconds before or after a shot hit the president's head. All photographs are shown within their original historical context of place and time.

We did not present unsubstantiated theories about Dallas threats against the president, but the exhibit openly examined the anti-Kennedy feelings present there in 1963. Mr. Wrone seems to want us to enter the fray of speculation, casting aside the objective thrust of the interpretive tone. Our consulting panels of critics, academics and former investigators cautioned us against efforts to solve the crime when so many historical records remain sealed.

Apparently Mr. Wrone has not visited the exhibit; otherwise he would know that the sniper's perch is shown as a conjectural reconstruction, based on examination of a dozen surviving historic photos and films, with full label discussion of the destruction of the original assemblage. The display presents the arguments, pro and con, on the issue of Oswald's innocence; the bulk of clean scientific analysis links him to the crime. The government's magic bullet theory is presented as theory; again, we leave it to the public to decide its credibility.

With or without Oswald, most inquiries tie the sixth floor of the old Depository to the crime. The space was available and long-term visitor interest showed a compelling need for interpretation near the site of the murder. Exhibitions are not books reprinted on the walls, they are experiential exercises in public education. Dr. Brandimarte cannot be expected to retell the 100 pages of text, the 400 photos and 43 minutes of film in her review.

We did not create the exhibit as a forum for debate among opinionated assassination scholars. We created it for a wider public, which hap-

pens to find solace by reliving a painful tragedy, and by confronting the very elements that make up the legacy of doubt that has regrettablely prolonged that pain.

Conover Hunt
Dallas, Texas

To the Editor:

Since my article, "Black and White Visions of Welfare," was published (*JAH*, Sept. 1991), I heard from Randall K. Burkett, Associate Director of the Du Bois Institute at Harvard, of an error I would like to correct. In the course of his own research he discovered that G. Elsie Ayer and G. Elsie Johnson McDougald, whom he had originally considered two individuals, are in fact one and the same. I apologize to readers for this mistake.

Linda Gordon
University of Wisconsin
Madison

To the Editor:

In his review of John Salmond's *The Conscience of a Lawyer: Clifford J. Durr and American Civil Liberties, 1899-1975* (*JAH*, September, 1991), William A. Donohue complains that Salmond never explains why the Alabama born New Dealer "who is cast as a champion of liberty came to the defense of those who sought to sunder civil liberties. After all, liberals such as Abe Fortas refused to defend known Communists. Why didn't Durr?"

John Salmond can defend himself, but, since Clifford Durr died in 1975, he cannot. Professor Donohue's question suggests that there is a contradiction between being a champion of liberty and defending members of the Communist Party. To ask the question is to reveal far more about Mr. Donohue's conception of the Bill of Rights than it does about Clifford Durr's. There is, I might add, an unintended irony in Professor Donohue's pairing of Durr with Fortas. On more than one occasion, Abe Fortas referred such cases to Durr not because of any principled opposition to defending Com-