

Mr. Les Whitten
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1/19/77

Dear Les,

I write Jack through you because I want you to be aware of this correspondence and because I want you to know that I do not mention you in it and do not consider you personally responsible for one of the worst examples of whorehouse journalism I recall.

Enclosed are copies of my today's letters to Ms. Orr of the assassinations committee and to Congressman Edwards. I regret it has been impossible for me to take the time to read them. I will ask my wife to read and correct this. For the first time in a long while I am not feeling well. I will go to bed as soon as I type this. I will carbon Mr. Edwards.

It had been my intention to ridicule this column. For expose specialists as for an investigating committee this begs for ridicule and for contempt. Contempt in particular over this morning's TV ~~xxxxxxxx~~ assault on reporters against whom no charge of inaccuracy was laid. Their sin was in doing their jobs.

From the opening paragraph of the column, considered with what to now has been the unquestioned evidence, the committee is as magical as the column is uncritical. This "mystery witness has sworn" that "a CIA agent introduced him to Lee Harvey Oswald in Dallas three months before Oswald gunned down President John F. Kennedy."

The unquestioned evidence, of both the commission the column claims had evidence withheld from it by the FBI and of the FBI is that three months before the assassination Oswald was in New Orleans, not Dallas. There is sworn testimony that he did not leave New Orleans long enough for this to have happened.

At the least, elemental checking by the committee and the column before all this attention would seem to have been called for.

This is followed by a version of the not new story of Sylvia ^{Odie}. I first published it in 1965. I followed this up in my second book, published the end of 1966. The column asked for copies of both and I delivered both personally.

There follows what in context can fairly be taken as a deliberate confusion in time. If it is mere carelessness then it is a self-description of the column.

First we have "Congressional investigators have now learned that the late [and I interject safely dead] J. Edgar Hoover deliberately misled the Warren Commission about Mrs. Odie's mysterious visitors." For reasons other than the columns I could make this case out from my personal investigations of years ago. But the column instead follows with "She was such a persuasive witness ~~in~~ that the commission staff was preparing to investigate her story thoroughly." This is false. Had the commission staff ever had the intention there was nothing Hoover could have done to prevent it. To the contrary, they kept out of the Report what tended to give Mrs. Odie credibility. The undated - and the date is important - speculation of the staff - you omit the names - by accident? - is accurately reported but entirely out of context.

"But Hoover abruptly blocked this line of inquiry by notifying the Warren Commission on Sept. 21, 1964 that the FBI had located and identified Mrs. Odie's callers."

Incomplete and partly true. It was on that day. It was in fact that night. But what then prevented the commission from going further? Nothing of course. This is obvious. What is not obvious and is absolutely true is that the Commission and its staff knew of Mrs. Odie's story about two weeks after that assassination. They then delayed until a matter of days in conducting any further investigation and they in particular did not ask any of the FBI, which was not in charge of the investigation. If you will look at the direct quotation of the evidence the Commission elected not to ~~xxx~~ publish that is in my second book, which goes into all of this at some length, you will find that ~~xxxxxx~~ once the Commission decided it could not get away with suppression of this story - my interpretation - and it did ask the FBI to investigate, Hoover worked very fast. Days only.

There is a significance to the September 21 date such demon reporters and Congressional Sherlock Holmeses should not have missed. And would not if their interest was in fact or fairness.

Before then the report was in page proof. It was when the Commission decided it had to do something about the Odie story and asked Hoover to investigate.

That night the presses were to roll on the Report. I have a magnificent account on tape by the staff lawyer in charge I will not go into here.

I'll keep it simple: why did the Commission not meet its responsibility in this matter until by its own schedule the effort was too late? Why did it wait 10 months? How can this with any kind of fairness be laid to either the dead Hoover or the FBI?

Hercule Poirot, Sam Spade and Boston Blackie must have joined this committee of such unprecedented investigative prowess for "Now the Congressional investigators have uncovered evidence that all three denied visiting the Odie apartment and that the FBI had obtained their denials BEFORE (your caps) Hoover wrote his letter to the Warren Commission."

Here Gutenberg loaned his support. I published the time sequence on this in my second book, in 1966. You and these sleuths omit it. The FBI did the right thing - and you have not heard me say this often. Its field agents phoned Washington immediately and then mailed the reports in. Nothing in the world prevented the Commission from delaying its report for a day or two to await the mail. And certainly there was nothing to prevent its inclusion of these reports in those 26 massive volumes that did not go to press for another two months. The staff and the Commission suppressed these reports. I brought them to light. Your column refused to print them when I gave them to it. And as for the denial, well, I have interviewed two of these men. It was years ago. Each was armed when I did. I was not. They are these types. I am not checking my tapes - each may not be able to turn the tape-recorder off at will and each agreed to be taped - but it is my recollection that at least one did not deny it and did place himself and others at that point and at that time. By this I mean in Dallas and at that apartment complex. Then, too, he also gave me the name of another person with him.

What without doubt was the greatest strain on all the resources of this committee and its investigators will lead me to our first meeting: "The investigators have also obtained the tape of a fascinating conversation, predicting two weeks in advance that Kennedy would be shot 'from an office building with a high-powered rifle.'" This is the Milteer story. What so taxed the committee in obtaining this is reading ~~English~~ English. It is printed in my Frame-Up beginning on page 468. And now we have some interesting coincidences. One of the committee staff called me about the ~~Milteer~~ Milteer story, which I first printed in 1967, last week. Another phoned me about obtaining copies of this book - last week. Still another obtained all the copies of which I knew in Washington - last week. All of this is just in time to feed the column, no? But what investigatory prowess! A quote from 1967 and 1971 books - accurate quotes, too - even identical one to those I selected for the text.

What follows I also published years ago, all of it. Then we come to "Milteer later admitted to the FBI that he had been in Dallas in June 1963..." Turn to Frame-Up, page 482. There is in facsimile. (I'll return to how I obtained this.) Then the column has a little more from the informant, Willie Somerset: "I don't do any guessing," replied Milteer." Turn back to page 477 for that facsimile. My source: the Warren Commission's unpublished files. Their source? The FBI. But in neither its Report nor those 26 tomes did the Commission or its staff find space for these records. Instead it suppressed them and now you blame the FBI for it.

The column asked for an exclusive on Frame-Up. Without asking me my publisher agreed to it. I was asked to its office on several occasions. I ~~was~~ was asked for other xeroxes and I supplied them. But the column used nothing and killed the promotions for the book. Can you wonder why I find what published and is not attributed to a superspectacular

investigation for which only this morning Jack demanded an unprecedented \$6.5 million?
 Or why it is now such hot news when it was not news at all in 1971 when an exclusive was
 asked and granted?

There are legitimate complaints against the FBI. I am hardly its apologist when from
 the first I have charged it with covering up and when I have sued it with some regular-
 ity, all the way to the Supreme Court once and with two current cases.

This criticism of it is not only unjust - it can kick the Congress in the teeth.
 It can be sued by the FBI to hide its real sins, many as they are.

Our first personal meeting was social. I then asked you for the return of my xeroxes.
 I never received them. But then I guess the most diligent of investigative reporters
 either do not keep files or do not use them.

My opening description of this column is of wherehose journalism. If anyone has any
 objection to my use of the word I solicit it as I solicit refutation of any statement of
 fact in the foregoing from the column or the committee.

These assassinations were terrible crimes, the most subversive of crimes. But more
 than these crimes subsequent official dishonesties tore the country apart. I had for years
 looked forward to the day when perhaps the Congress might clean this up. I wish I could
 expect it now. I do not. I cannot.

I have not gone public on any of this. I do not plan to and I do not plan to send
 copies to any of your editors now. I say nothing about the future, only what I now have
 in mind. I don't want these kinds of stinks. It is lonely trying to go down the middle,
 it is difficult seeking truth and its acceptance for as Solzhenitsyn said little ~~xxxxxxxxxx~~
~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~ truth as there is in the world the supply exceeds the
 demand.

Today it was worse than this. Those who sought and reported fact were condemned
 for it. "A motley crew." I am one and with this kind of record I will continue to be.
 The stories I read are good reporting. That now appears to be their fault - on coast-
 to-coast TV timed to this column, also coast-to-coast.

With sincere regrets,

Harold Weisberg