

7627 OLD RECEIVER ROAD
FREDERICK MD 21702

May 23, 1991

Mr. Oliver Stone
Camelot Productions Corporation
512 S. Peters St. - Suite 202
New Orleans LA 70130

Dear Mr. Stone:

Whatever the self-serving purpose of your ill-advised and dishonest letter to the Post, it requires response from me, too. And not merely because you at least inferred that I stole your script. I did not and, had I wanted to, could not have. It has not been safe for me to travel for years, and for many years I've not been out of Frederick except to be taken to the hospital.

Were I the editor you addressed, you'd not have been long in learning how fortunate you are that Lardner and his editors are not out to ruin your reputation, there is that much of what you have done with this obscene commercializing of the great tragedy that turned the world around that can be said and they did not say.

If your reputation suffers, and I think it should and will, it will be your doing only. Like unfortunate Jim Garrison, his own kind of gifted man, you needed nobody to lead you astray. Your consummate ego and greed were enough, but there was more - your contempt for fact and for the history you said you would be recording to take to the still sorrowing people and your ignoring the clear warning I gave you so long ago and to which you did not respond.

Not later than when I wrote you you had ample reason to know that Garrison's "On the Trail of the Assassins" is a work of self-justifying fiction. But you didn't give a damn.

Sure, your Jane Rosconi phoned and asked if you might call the next day and I said certainly and that next day has not yet come.

I also told her that you are welcome to access to all the records I have that I got by a series of Freedom of Information lawsuits, as everyone is, even though most I know in advance will write what I would not agree with. I mentioned specifically the Warren Commission executive session transcripts because your Andrea Jaffe had ordered only two of my six (not three, as Rosconi said) books on the JFK assassination, the two that hold facsimiles of two of such transcripts.

Sublime in your ignorance and that of the irresponsibles you hired as experts, you did not want any fact to jeopardize the fame and fortune you anticipated from this indecency you were vulgar enough to proclaim was inspired by your love for JFK. That, sir, is the kind of love men pay for.

That you could continue to regard as experts that collection of assassination nuts after they wished Ricky White and his fabrication off on you simply is not rational. You not only knew they had gone for that utterly outrageous concoction - you had to know they persisted in their faith in it after it was fully exposed as untrue, impossible, and partly plagiarized - you even had some of it in the script after people speaking for you said you were not using it. And some of that he plagiarized, including from even a novel, the only place that complete impossibility appears.

When I pointed out to one of your "experts" how impossible the Ricky White effort at commercializing both his dead father and the martyrdom of the President¹⁵, his response was, "Well, there was someone on the Grassy Knoll!" When I took the time to explain to another of them the impossibility of the theory he was then working on, he thanked me and then, with his "investigator," held a press conference to advance it. And when they were asked about the glaring conflict between that invention and Ricky White's, the response was that there were both true, simultaneous and separate conspiracies at the same time and place.

You sure know how to pick "experts" and where to place your trust, how to vest the reputation you have earned, how to express your love for JFK, how to take "history" to the largest possible audience!

If you had really wanted to prove that JFK was assassinated as the end product of a conspiracy, there are government records I obtained that you would have wanted, but I'm glad you had no interest and I say no more about them now so you won't be able to misuse them to cleanse a bit of the filth you are producing.

That there was a conspiracy is without reasonable question and, contrary to what you write the Post, my first book, which dates to mid-February 1965, left this beyond question.

But this does not entitle you or anyone else to tell the people, as you have already told them, that what you are giving them records fact and history when in truth you are giving them a melange of unproven theories. To do what you have already proclaimed you are doing requires you to be factual. It also requires honesty, and when you did not respond to what I sent you about Garrison's book and instead went ahead with a movie based on it - and you can't have changed the script enough to eliminate this without writing an entirely new and different script - you established not only your dishonesty but your intent to be dishonest.

Central to Garrison's self-justification that took the form of deliberate lies even when lying was not essential, and of this I sent you one proof long ago, is his canard that Boxley was a CIA plant on him. You knew from me that this was false and that he knew it was false. Two of his staff, having failed to talk him out of commemorating the fifth anniversary of the assassination by charging a man who had killed himself more than a year before the

assassination and Edgar Eugene Bradley, then west-coast representative of an extremist east-coast preacher, with being part of his theorized and entirely baseless conspiracy, asked me to try to dissuade him. I succeeded and I still have a copy of at least part of the memo I prepared for him. The very first page says it was apparent that Boxley was feeding back to Garrison what he knew Garrison wanted - made it up because Jim wanted it.

This ugly truth was not enough for you. You had to exculpate Garrison even more by making Boxley a regular member of his staff rather than the outsider he hired and paid from private funds, over staff objections.

With this only a small part of your record, you have the gall to complain that you ought not be subject to critical - and I add completely truthful - comment until after your further fictionalizing of fictions is foisted off on the country as a truthful account of how and why the beloved President was assassinated?

What, exalted sir, gives you this immunity you claim?

Sure, I know that you contracted the right to use other books, including Jim Marrs' garbage dump. And that, although she detested Garrison and had nothing like what is in your script in her magnificent "Accessories After the Fact," you tried to get the right to use Sylvia Meagher's book. Man, you don't stop at anything that exploits the dead if you can see a buck in it, do you?

This is already too long to go into Marrs' stinker. But I'm not reluctant if you want me to. Especially his cataloguing of the "mysterious" deaths, like all those heart attacks and cancers that never happen in real life, of course, a notion he took from Penn Jones without mentioning Jones' name. On its face this is at least irrational, but to give you a clue, take William Whaley, the cab driver who, at least by inference, took important secrets to his grave. After doing all he could to wreck the Warren investigation, and even apologizing to it for so doing, he was killed in a head-on crash by an 82-year-old man who was driving the wrong way on a divided highway.

Do you really think that the CIA has 82-year-old kamikazes?

Of course, Garrison has nothing in his book on the fake book, "Farewell America," fed to him by the French spooks. They even changed its name at Garrison's suggestion, he was that hooked on it, from "L'Amerique Brule." This is one of several fake books in Marrs' bibliography already inflated by inclusion of many irrelevant books.

Is this what makes him so very "credible" to you?

Or, perhaps his listing of Philip Geraci's "particularly suspicious" death by electrocution ostensibly because he was a "friend of Perry Russo" and told of an "Oswald/Shaw conversation"?

Well, there were three living Philip Geracis then - and none of them said a word about any "Oswald/Shaw conversation" or friendship with Russo of which I know. There is no reason to believe that any one of these three Philip Geracis was a friend of Perry Russo's. The one that as usual Marrs

can't get straight, the one he has in mind but knows nothing at all about, is Philip Geraci III. The one who was electrocuted was Philip Geraci II, his father. The youngest ignored Garrison's subpoenas but he did agree to be interviewed on tape by me.

So what is "particularly suspicious" to your "credible" Marrs is getting all the Geracis mixed up and then attributing to the one who, through his own carelessness, electrocuted himself what was true of none of them.

You certainly know what "credibility" is!

Garrison is an authentic American tragedy. He had a rare opportunity and he blew it. He betrayed the trust of the people and he did more to undermine the credibility of criticism of the official mythology than any government agency did or could have done.

And now you are preparing to rehabilitate him, to tell the people that he did not fail them, to make a greater hero of him than he was able to do in a knowingly dishonest and false self-justification.

And you have the colossal gall to claim that in doing this you are not and ought not be subject to truthful, factual criticism?

For Shame!

I make a few additional comments.

You attribute "numerous errors of fact" to Lardner and the Post. I see this allegation in your letter but I do not recall a single one from his story and you don't make a case of any factual error.

You say your film "incorporates everything that has been discovered in the twenty years since Garrison's efforts." Except for your dredging of the literary sewers, you have not a single new fact about the assassination.

You flaunt your ignorance when you actually represent that the crime was really investigated and the results of that investigation remain withheld: "our film is having to rely on bits and pieces of information because, as you know, your paper and the Warren Commission urged that the Commission's material be sealed and kept from the public until the year 2039.:"

I do not recall that the Post took this position and I know very well that the Warren Commission didn't and could not have if it had so desired. In fact, it was the Commission's own people who saw to the transfer of its records to the National Archives and, in fact, as these records were accessioned and reviewed for claims of security and other reasons for withholding them they were made available.. Access actually began about a year after the Commission's final publication.

What do you mean, "our film is having to rely on bits and pieces of information" when I have about a quarter of a million pages of official records to which you were offered access?

You say that Garrison "discovered" information. He did not "discover" anything real. He made it up.

You refer to the alleged assassination rifle as "high powered." It wasn't. It was actually of a medium velocity.

Maybe Pershing Gervais was "an avowed racist" but in all the time I spent in Garrison's office I do not remember seeing a single staff lawyer who was a black or a woman, the latter an "oversight" you corrected in your script. Were there no suitable and competent black or woman lawyers in all of New Orleans?

You perform some amazing feats of levitation, making me think that Garrison helped you write your letter. You don't learn easily, do you? After saying that "Obviously, Lardner is unfamiliar with the evidence," you place Carolyn Arnold and Barbara Reid on the second floor where they saw Oswald "immediately after the shooting."

Barbara Reid was a kind lady who lived on St. Philips Street in the French Quarter. She tried her best to be helpful to Jim. She was kind and helpful to me. But she was not at the TSBD then. It was Mrs. Robert Reid.

You didn't have to levitate Carolyn Arnold quite as far as from New Orleans. But she also was not on the second floor then. Or even in the building, whatever any one of your sources you describe as "credible" may later have written.

On facing pages of my third book (210-11), I reproduce in facsimile an FBI report on its interview with her and a retyped copy of a handwritten statement she signed March 18. I also have the holograph and assure you that she made the corrections required for accuracy.

She stated that "at the time President Kennedy was shot, I was standing in front of" the building and that after leaving the building at "about 12:25 PM" she "never returned to the building on that date."

These two are your basis for saying that "obviously, Lardner is unfamiliar with the evidence ...?"

You are not excessively modest in saying that your movie "speaks a higher truth" than mere fact. With this the way you close, that you begin by exploiting the "many distinguished actors" in your film is appropriate. Did you tell them, or say, Ed Asner, before they signed that Garrison had made up the the book on which your film is based? They took you on faith as, absent exposure of your fraud against history, the people who go to see it also will.

This additional postscript is prompted by the fact that on a single day I got a threatening letter from your lawyers and a phone call from Robert Groden clearly inspired if not ordered by you. Until then I believed that you were showing desperation. I now believe I see tinges of hysteria. Therefore, I add to the record between us.

You have skewed yourself on the lance of your own dishonesty and the more you squirm and wriggle the more firmly you impale yourself.

I don't know how the Post will react because lawyers worry about the costs of defending frivolous lawsuits. I have not consulted, have not even thought of consulting, any lawyer. To begin with, I see no such need. And if you are not aware of it, as you are not aware of so much to which you pretend expertise, I've been down that road with more powerful opposition.

Your record in this matter is that you can't tell the truth even by accident. Perhaps you have been too successful in inventing it.

I was reminded of this when your lawyers' letter and Robert's phone call, both parroting you, led me to reread Lardner's story and then your letter to the Post.

You lied in what I quote from your letter, referring to Lardner: "He even makes Weisberg - supposedly his ally - out to be anti-conspiracy..."

What Lardner actually said cannot possibly be misinterpreted into the meaning you give it, "Weisberg ... who has little patience for many of the conspiracy theories that keep popping up ..." Meaning unproven theories from nuts and exploiters like you.

In looking for your exact words I notice in the same paragraph that you actually say the legislative branch is subordinate to and part of the executive branch of government: Lardner "never bothers to say that the Federal Government wasn't convinced either - why else did the House Select Committee on Assassinations exist?"

Can it be that you successfully completed compulsory education not knowing that the Congress is not "the Federal Government" but is one of three separate branches?

Or is it that as in the ancient maxim, penis erectus sciam non habet, once you get any notion, no matter how wrong or impossible, it is right merely because you believe it is or should be or because the viability of your wrongness requires it?

Whatever explains it, it is another of your endless flouting of truth and fact because at the moment it popped into your mind you wanted it to be true, even though it wasn't, so you said it and, because the Great, the Only, Oliver Stone said it, all other and lowly creatures are to bow 'mid loud amens!

I do not enjoy writing you as I do any more than I enjoy you and your lawyers referring to me as a thief. We clearly have different concepts of what public responsibility is and of the obligations imposed upon those of us who take what we represent as information to the citizens of a representative

society. And although I have no reason to believe that you believe what is true if it is not what you want to hear, I am also certain that those with whom you have surrounded yourself, whether yes-men or nuts, would not dare tell you - if they know. Nonetheless, I tell you where I'm coming from.

While I am far from being unique in being the first member of a family born into freedom - ever - I am among those to whom this means much.

Because if not the first I was certainly one of the first to see and describe the JFK assassination as one of history's most significant turning points, I regard it as a rare blessing that, in Robert Frost's words, there are promises I have been able to keep in the miles - alas! now so few - before I sleep.

In meeting the obligation I assumed I have undertaken to make and leave as truthful a record for history, for our future, as can possibly be made. I do not know whether there will be significant uses of it, but I do know that unless such a record is made the gross and unconscionable distortions, fabrications and outright inventions by those with the means to get attention for them will be unchallenged and what the nation might learn of this great tragedy will be smothered and lost in this mass of incredible garbage.

You clearly do not know it, but the thrust of my work, which is a study of how our basic institutions worked in those times of great stress and since, is that all our basic institutions failed.

The media is one of these basic institutions. The movies are part of it and the media, too, failed our society.

That you were able to get Warners to put up the reported \$40,000,000 for what any critical reading makes clear is a sham and a travesty adds to the existing proof of the failure of your part of the media.

All elements of the press also failed, including, in the earliest days, with a few exceptions, the Washington Post. All accepted the Warren Report. But in your ignorance, your dependence on those you by now ought have learned you can't trust or your utter disregard for truth and your proclivity for believing that whatever you say is truth the moment you say it, you are wrong and ignorant about the Post's record and about Lardner's personally.

This happens to be the first anniversary of the first major story critical of the Warren Report. It was in the Post. If the prestigious reporter assigned to it had performed on an assignment a year earlier, that story would have appeared a year earlier.

Charles "Mac" Mathias was, early in 1965, a Congressman and a Member of the Judiciary Committee. He read my first book in a night and a day while recuperating from surgery. As soon as he was up and around, he first tried to interest Manny Celler, then the liberal Judiciary Committee chairman, in looking into it. Celler refused. Mac then took the manuscript to Al Friendly, then an assistant managing editor. He assigned it to Larry Stern, who never got past page 47 of the triple-spaced copy. After the experiences with publishers'

rejection of the subject recounted in it, I decided to publish it myself right after I began to comb the Commission's records in the Archives. (Yes, you even lied about their being withheld.) As I now recall, it was while the book was being printed that I took a couple of records I'd obtained (of which I have a clear recollection of two pages) to Friendly. He looked at them and took me in to see Bradley who looked at them and then assigned the book to a reporter who was then about to leave the Post. He had that reporter, Dan Kurzman, and Stern speak to me in the newsroom. They asked me to prepare some questions for them to ask Howard Willens, I think the third ranking member of the former Commission's legal staff. I sat down and typed, off the top of the head, a single sheet of questions. I was there when they returned. Stern went in to speak to Bradley and Kurzman told me that Willens did not have a satisfactory answer to any of the questions.

If Bradley had not assigned his two top reporters, they were close to it.

When Kurzman left the book was assigned to Richard Harwood, his replacement. Harwood and the Post jumped the release date on Edward Jay Epstein's "Inquest" by a month and did the story on both books. With exceptional prominence for the Post: across the entire top of the front page, with a banner headline and two or more inches of type in each column above the paper's name and related material. There also was about a page of carry-over.

FOIA lawsuits have received scant attention. Mine are no exception. But at least three reporters, of whom Lardner is the second, did report them for the Post.

When I got the results of the FBI's scientific testing after much FBI stonewalling, it was on a weekend and Lardner had those days off. He voluntarily, without its being assigned to him, spent the weekend working on that story, handed it in on a Sunday and it appeared the next day. It was not favorable to the government.

With news it is not as it is with movies; you can't invent fact and get away with it and get attention for it.

Each time I obtained copies of the suppressed Commission executive session transcripts, the Post carried lengthy and critical stories.

You have a research staff. This is not to say that the script represents what can without contempt for meanings be called research. Have them get for you what is said about the Post's coverage in the only scholarly bibliography on the subject, by Drs. Guth and Wrone (Greenwood Press). And if they are not able to perform any real research, I'll make and send you copies.

Of all the papers in the country, the Post was preeminent.

Only Garrison didn't like truthful reporting.

I could go on and on showing you that in crediting and then magnifying Garrison's distortions and exaggerations you just lied.

Robert Groden, among other things, started badmouthing Lardner over his coverage of the House assassins committee. When he had done this long enough, I reminded him that on most of those stories I was Lardner's credited source in his exposes, as I was for the New York Times and other papers. The St. Louis Post-Dispatch at one time had a series of four major page-one stories it also syndicated, among a number of other stories, all critical of the official mythologies, all from me. And factual and documented.

The Post's, and particularly Lardner's, reporting of the FBI's so-called "general releases" of December 1977 and January 1978 alone make a liar of you. I had to sue to get my set. The Post is one of the six newspapers or agencies which bought them. Lardner reported my lawsuit to get them and if you'd like a copy of his story that is anything but favorable to the government, I'll send it.

You've been dealing with people none of whom can recognize fact even when kicked in the ass by it and then you enhance their guff.

I have no idea who you intended to impress with the concatenation of lies, distortions, misrepresentations and other infidelities in your letter to the Post but you are lost if anyone checks you out. Knowing this and having no reason to believe you are an idiot, no matter how idiotic what you have done is, I believed initially that you were getting desperate because Warners began to worry about their many millions invested in an overt fraud.

In that letter you complain that Lardner is out to ruin your reputation. Because you did receive the letter I wrote you February 10 and because he did not make any use of it, you know that this is not true.

You should count your blessings, ungrateful egomaniac that you are. Ask yourself what your situation would be if those who know of his story also knew that two months before you started shooting you knew that the best you could say for "On the Trail of the Assassins" is that it is utterly undependable and tells self-serving lies.

You had plenty of time to do a different script if your intention was the one you so prominently proclaimed. Instead, you ignored the clear and proven warning I gave you. And it is you who made news of your "Oliver Stone's Project for 1991."

News does not consist of reporting what some egomaniac says about important and controversial matters and nothing else about those matters or about what he has said about them.

If your reputation suffers, as I believe it should and that decency and honesty require, you did it to yourself.

In calling me a thief and writing the kind of dishonesty and untruths represented by your letter to the Post and your lawyers' letters, you encourage me to defend myself and my own reputation and to try even harder to see to it that the record for history holds the truth.

Understand that on a personal level I don't give a damn about you. I

hold you in more contempt than those many miscreants in official positions, particularly in the FBI, CIA and Department of Justice and those on the Warren Commission, most of whom were under pressures and could have lost their jobs and only one of whom commercialized and exploited this terrible tragedy as you have.

Nobody held a gun to your head to keep you from making a decent and reasonable effort to check out Garrison's self-idolizing fictions.

Nobody kept you from inquiring further about what I wrote you. Not that an honest man required any more, any principled man, any man seeking, as you so often stated, to serve history and take the truth to the people.

That you see yourself hanging from the yardarm is Oliver's own Twist. No Fagin!

You put yourself there. You alone.

And if rescue is impossible, you alone are responsible for that.

Your own moving finger has written imperishably on the wall, helped by Sklar's. (Did you ask him if they'd checked Garrison out?)

You alone picked your fictional experts and when they proved so eloquently that they were anything but experts, anything but dependable, you continue to use them as your experts. You can't pin that on anyone else.

You alone again, Oh Great One!

Squirm, wriggle, twist and protest as you will, the Post did not do it to you, I didn't and nobody could have done to you what you have done to yourself.

I don't think it will comfort you to know that I have not begun to say what can be said about that "trail" Garrison was never on, despite his title.

He kept sending me messages that I would get one of the first 20 copies and I got not fewer than that many unsolicited explanations of why it never came. I've been severely handicapped and seriously ill for years and had other things that interested me more. I never dreamed that he'd birth so ugly a monster, although I did expect a wretched bastard, so I did not even bother to buy a copy. But a college professor did ask me to annotate and comment on it for the historical record and that I did do.

I have not had to buy a single newspaper or magazine to keep up with what you say in your self-promotions that you now can't retract. From a successful Hollywood writer who has been a friend since he heard me speak when he was an undergraduate (and not by any means him alone out there) to retired lawyers, again among others, on the east coast, I am sent clippings. I can't remember a single one for which you are not responsible.

So, as nobody made you seek more fame and more riches by more dishonesty and abandonment of decency, nobody made you say the things you said about your project.

Remember "Mirror, mirror on the wall"?

Does it say, "Oliver, fall"?

Whether or not you believe it, I do regret very much that the man who made "Platoon" now creates a literary whoredom that makes real-life whores look respectable.

You and Garrison are self-created, authentic American tragedies.

I'm sorry for both of you.

Harold Weisberg