

Transcript of taped conversation between Lawrence Brown and
Harold Weisberg, December 21, 1964:

HW: We start and we stop and it picks it up.

LB: Um-hmm.

HW: Just a little bit louder than that.

LB: Where's the microphone for it?

HW: This is the microphone right here.

LB: Right there. I see.

HW: And it has a start and stop switch on it, which is better for when you use it for dictation. This will play for 3 hours on a side of this tape at the ~~slower~~ slower of the 2 speeds.

LB: Hm-hm.

HW: Uh, let me tell you, let me give you the background on it, Larry. When I went to New York last week, I had decided before then that I ought to have a collaborator because the book - the writing ought to be done right now. The thing that made up my mind was the announcement of Mark Lane's book. I don't know him from Adam, he may be a good guy. I know his intentions are good; I've seen him on television; he's a very reasonable man, but I know very well what his approach is. And it is "I conducted this investigation, this is what I learned," and it's the best way in the world to play into the hands of the people who wanted this whole thing suppressed. To me, the only approach is the same approach we took on committees: What are the facts? So, in order to be on an unassailable basis, I decided to restrict myself to the facts as the Commission states them facts. And that - and I spent 2 solid months wading thru that volume, and you've got to wade because there's so much stuff buried in there. Well, then with the announcement of Lane's book, I figured I'd better do something. When I went to New York, there were 4 people who I would like to have had, any one of the 4, who had experience along these lines who would take this kind of a semi-judicial approach and who were used to handling this kind of material. I didn't know what had happened to any one of the 4 except one. There was Bob and you and Tel Taylor and Steve Raushenbush. I didn't even mention it to Lil. When I came back Lil said the last she heard Steve was in Washington. And then again came the question of a publisher. Now I didn't know where Bob was. I think my entire approach would have been different if I had known that Bob was at Farrar-Strauss. But the last I heard Bob was at the Dept. of Justice, I was sure he'd retired by now, and I figured he was out in Ridgewood living a comfortable life, maybe writing or something. I didn't find out where Bob was until the day after I met Obolensky.

LB: Yeah.

HW: Uh, well, I have some contacts in Washington, one of whom, uh, wanted

to put me in touch with MacMillan. But I've got a friend in New York who is well acquainted in this general field; he produced "Macbeth", for example, that won all the Emmys for NBC a couple years ago. I was going to stay with him anyway, so I called him up and asked him to think about it. He said, "Well, offhand, I can think of 3 places I can send you." First, he mentioned Grove. "Now, remember, Sid, I'm dealing in the field of public domain." I said, "I've had 2 movies stolen from me", and this is the truth. I had "OSS", the Jimmy Cagney movie, stolen from me when I was in OSS; I wrote that before I left and one of these college boys I was working with just took a carbon of my classified history of the OSS.

LB: EH-heh-heh-heh.

HW: Uh, the other one was "Gung-ho". Remember that Movie?

LB: No.

HW: This phrase, gung-ho, I dragged out of the -

LB: I remember -

HW: ^{the} buried in / Marine -

LB: I remember the -

HW: buried in the Marine Corps files, ~~Larry~~ during the war, Larry. Well, so I said, "Sid, I want to deal with the most honorable man you can refer me to." He said, "Well, Ivan Obolensky." I said, "His name is familiar." He said, "Well, he's the son of a Russian prince." But that's not why his name was familiar. When I met Obolensky, his father and I were at OSS together. I never met him, but I knew his name.

LB: Oh.

HW. Uh, so anyway, purely on this basis, on the basis that, in my friend Sid's opinion, Obolensky was the most honorable publisher he knew, I said, "Well, call him up." He said, "You just can't call him up like that." I said, "Look, I've only got a day." He called him up; Obolensky was on a long distance call, so I said, "Tell his secretary that I'll call back." He said, "He won't talk to you." I said, "So he won't talk to me. Then you can call him back afterwards," and he had an appointment. At that point Obolensky came back on the phone, Sid told him briefly what I had done, and they set up an appointment the first minute Obolensky was free, 2:30, and he closed his doors for the rest of the afternoon. And, uh - I've got it documented, Larry. I mean, anything you could ever expect on something like this. I told Obolensky why I wanted a collaborator and he agreed. Uh, and then I - it was a funny thing, but John Ledes was sitting there and he said, "Do you know Larry Brown?" and I said, "Yes, he's one of 4 names I have in my pocket. Let's come back to that." And I went thru what I wanted to do. They agreed with all of that, so then I went back and I said, "Sure, I know Larry Brown from when he was on the Munitions or Railroad Committee." Which was it or was it both?

- HW: Both? That's what I thought. And I said, "He was 2 floors above me in the Senate Office Building." I said, "The man who taught me how to think the way I'm thinking is the other man on my list, and he was an associate and a friend of Larry's." That was Bob. Small world.
- LB: Yeah.
- HW: Altho it even got to be a smaller world. Did you know Jim McInerney who was chief of the, uh, Lands, and then the Civil Division of the Dept. of Justice?
- LB: I don't think I ever knew him.
- HW: Well, Jim, it turned out he was a good friend of mine and he turned out to be a good friend of Ledes.
- LB: Uh ...
- HW: You - I take it you haven't seen Ivan or spoken to him since that day.
- LB: On the phone.
- HW: Yes, when I was there.
- LB: No.
- W: Okay.
- LB: Yes.
- HW: Well,
- LB: He wants me to see him after I talk to you.
- HW: Yes. Okay. So we worked out a deal and I asked him what he thought would be fair for you, and he said, and I said I thought this would be good enough so we could improve that a little bit, and we did. I may be highly optimistic, Larry, but I think this is going to attract a fantastic amount of attention, and a fair chance of winning some prizes. Among the things I had him add was we split prizes 50-50, not only the cash, but any honors that might be attached to it, and so forth. In other words, I wanted it worth your while to do the kind of a job I know you can do because I presume you're busy up there. But I think it's important to get this thing done as fast as possible.
- LB: I agree with you entirely. I think it's very -
- HW: So the only - the only - as you see, Larry, we're in - we've had a rough financial time, thanks to these damned helicopters. We were making money out of chickens in a way you can't imagine. I got \$1.75 for 12 oz. and I had eggs that were so good that they would go by train carried by hand from Washington to the home of the general - of the general assembly and they paid me a \$1 a dozen for them. This is the kind of product we had.

But in any event, we are here without - with no income, uh, since January. I said, "Well, there are some things I would like you to do." He said, "What are they?" I said, "I would like you to take over the typing of my tapes; I have all of this stuff on tapes," and I said, "So my wife will be free to work on other things with me." He said, "You get them typed and I'll pay for ~~xxxx~~ it." time lately, and I haven't found a good typist until this afternoon I got 10 pages. So I said, "Well, in order to do that, I'll have to have more tape machines." He said, "Rent 'em." I said, "That ~~xxxx~~ won't be satisfactory," and I said, "when you see the one I got you're gonna want it." I described what this would do and he said, yes, he wanted it. So he advanced the money to buy two, one of which I will owe him for because I'm going to keep the second so that

LB: Yes.

HW: in the future I can use one to dictate with and Lil can use one to transcribe with. It comes with a foot control -

LB: Yes. What do they cost?

HW: Uh, it lists for \$200. Uh, I actually got it for \$115. Uh, and that is with the microphone but without this which is a battery eliminator; it works on 6 batteries. You don't have to have this; it's completely portable. All I -

LB: ~~xxxx~~ I see; you can use that -

HW: This eliminates the batteries.

LB: Yes.

HW: You can use this in your office or at your home -

LB: Yes.

HW: In the long run it's a lot cheaper than batteries; but I don't have to worry about the batteries going dead. And then it has a foot control that you can start and stop it with.

LB: Um-hm. I -

HW: Well, you stop to think that you can operate a slide projector with it

LB: Yes.

HW: and have your tape, uh, giving your spiel for you and movies the same way, and at the higher speed its frequency response is from 50 to 10,000. It's a good quality machine.

LB: Unintelligible.

HW: Oh, on research, Larry -

LB: Yes.

- HW: On research - you can take that with you, say, to the Library of Congress and sit
- LB: Oh, yes.
- HW: there and just talk
- LB: Oh, yeh, yeh, yeh.
- HW: Yes; that's exactly it.
- LB: I think I'll have to get one of those myself.
- HW: Well, when you do let me buy one for you because I'll save you a lot of money. Uh, the discount houses sell them for \$150 stripped.
- LB: Um-hm.
- HW: And I got this in Washington for \$115.
- LB: In order to work with a stenographer, you have to get two of them, don't you?
- HW: Either that, or you have to have -
- LB: Or can you play
- HW; Not use them at the same time.
- LB: Or can you play this tape on another machine?
- HW: Oh, yes. If you do that, you have to have a machine that works at these speeds.
- LB: Well, is this speed $7\frac{1}{2}$?
- HW: Uh, - no, it doesn't have $7\frac{1}{2}$. It has $1-7/8$ and $3-3/4$. Now if you play
- LW: Oh.
- HW: this at $3-3/4$, you can - you can use any machine.
- LB° Yes.
- HW: But I use $1-7/8$ because your tape lasts twice as long.
- LB: the tape lasts longer, yes.
- HW: Yes. With half-mil. milar, this will go for 3 hours on a side.
- LB: But this is not primarily a musical - uh, uh -
- HW: On the contrary, it's frequently not used -
- LB: Commenting in background.
- HW: not used - not reproduced here, but it's frequency response is from 50

to 10,000 cycles. And that's better than most, uh, household apparatus will reproduce.

LB: Um-hum.

HW: Well, so in any event, he agreed and in - as a matter of fact, he gave me the money and that's what I bought these tape recorders with and he agreed to pay for the secretary. Well, I got two. One of them in 9-1/2 hours did 6-1/2 pages ~~of~~ with 29 mistakes on the first page. and I haven't checked her work yet; I just got it back today. In 10 hours she did not quite 9-1/4 pages; so when I found that out, my wife - my sister-in-law was here this morning; she's got 8 days off - said, "I wish I'd thought to ask Belle". I said, "Call her up". So my sister-in-law came up from Kensington and she'd never used a machine like this before either, but in three hours she got 10 pages done and that included learning how to use the machine.

LB: Well, now, when you use this to type from, you use the foot control to

HW; Yes.

LB: make it run.

HW: And it has an earphone if you want to use it. You don't have to use the foot control but it's so much easier; you just start it and stop it at your convenience.

LB: ~~It~~ Yes.

HW: I'll get one and show it to you -

LB: Never mind. No, I understand it -

HW: I've got it right here. Plug it in where it's marked "Remote" and that's what operates it.

LB:

~~LB: HW:~~ The rest of it is the . You know, Larry, never in my life have I ever been in such complete agreement with people who I'd never met before. Their minds work fast and well.

LB: They're nice people.

HW: They're nice people. They said, "Well, now, what do you want to do?" and I said, "I want to stick entirely to the Commission's I don't want to call names, I above all don't want to condemn Earl Warren," I said, "I want to take the approach that the job has to be done. This is essentially it. what the Commission said, analyze their facts and say this is what the Commission's facts in their own Report shows; this means the Commission's Report is completely false from beginning to end and now it has to be done over again and it's my own idea there should be a Congressional investigation with NONE of it secret. Because if you have a partisan proceeding, Larry, the only chance you have of scrutiny is by the press being present and the public. You can't hide the stuff. So they agreed with all of this. That's why I say, I was so surprised, so pleasantly surprised, to find such a complete meeting of the minds.

LB: Now you say you've dictated a great deal of material -

HW: Lil's still working on it.

LB: Have you got any examples of it?

HW: Yes, but it'll take/^{you}too long - it'll take too long -

LB: Can I just look it over to get a feel of it?

HW: Sure. Sure. I don't know what this is -

LB: Okay.

HW: This is the last of the page that one of the women did and then my sister-in-law picked up. I haven't read this stuff. One thing I have learned - that's going backwards -

LB: Undecipherable comment.

HW: That's going backwards - at the bottom here. I have learned that using one of these machines is a lot different than typewriter. You repeat yourself over and over again without realizing it -

LB: Yes.

HW: ... that's double-spaced. She just continued it double-spaced.

LB: ... to be concerned with the positions of people who saw Oswald

HW: so.

LB: um-hm.

HW: That is one of the most fascinating parts about the whole thing. There was a false Oswald. ... piece it all together before you see it, but there was a false Oswald.

LB: When you say a "false Oswald", do you mean a man who looks like him or a man who deliberately, uh -

HW: represented himself

LB: represented himself to be -

HW: That's it. I know his name, I know where he comes from, who he was with and what he was doing.