

# Mort Sahl interview

PAUL EBERLE

FP: When will the age of enlightenment come?

MS: When Bill Cosby gives Dick Gregory a job. We're most enlightened about SOME negroes, aren't we— and oddly enough, it's always the ones who are not impassioned. There is no leadership in the black community. All gone. All over the country. Carmichael. Cleaver. All gone, aren't they? There are no militants left. It's a joke.

FP: The ones who are still around are being jailed and busted. The Black Panther thing really is a development that has come into its own in the last couple of years. What's been your reaction to that?

MS: What, to the Panthers? You know, I look upon... The cause as far as I can see, is humanity... It's not fragmented. That may be hard for the other people in the struggle to see. I don't look upon causes as separate. I consider... I was on the Steve Allen show the other night. Somebody said that the Jewish people had a common bond or pledge, and I don't think so. I think that what's involved here is that any man that's in agony and is struggling in his agony is my brother anywhere in the world. And anybody who is comfortable is my enemy. I think that we live in that kind of an era and will for some time to come. And the cause is humanity. That's what it's all about.

FP: Are you doing any gigs around Los Angeles?

MS: I'll be doing all the weekends in November at Donte's.

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FP: Yeah. Well, let's rap down what's happened to you since then, by way of introduction.

MS: I continued to be in steady touch with the case. Because few people are aware that the case in New Orleans goes on. And I've heard some criticism of Garrison's methods. You may have

heard that. It's not that unusual these days. I've heard criticisms of Garrison's methods and of his staff. As Garrison said to me recently, he said, "I don't know how this came about, this condition, but it seems to me that five of us have surrounded the United States Government!" And he said, "I'm very honored to be one of those five, to be included in that."

I had probably one of the most touching moments of my life in New Orleans recently. I was hav-

ing dinner with Garrison, and he presented me with a plaque at dinner, very unceremoniously, and it says on it, "To Mort Sahl, the best friend John Kennedy ever had." It's on the date of what would have been the President's fifty-second birthday. It's signed Jim Garrison, Andy Shambrough, who's assistant district attorney, Jim Alcock, who's one of the prosecutors, during the trial along with Shambrough, and Louis Ivon, the chief investigator at the district attorney's office. I was very moved and honored to be remembered that way. The investigation goes on. Clay Shaw was just a preamble. There was a small trial recently of Shaw. Thirty-seven days. You may have read about it in the papers but I doubt it very much if you live in the Continental United States. But that was only a preamble. He's now going to be tried for perjury.

So he will be tried. Also Gervitch, private detective down there, has to be tried having to do with the theft of files. And during the trial, Tom Bethel, who was the archivist for Garrison, passed along information, is charged with theft, his trial will come up, for passing along the files to Shaw's attorneys, who are too numerous to mention on this tape. So there will be several trials, and the investigation will go on, and as I was about to say earlier, some people have been critical of us and they have said that our methods are outlandish. I've always really quoted Garrison: "You may not be satisfied with us as investigators, but we're the only investigators you have. You're just going to have to put up with our ways." Because there is no investigation at the present into Kennedy's death except Jim Garrison's. And I guess we're a little bit like Lyndon Johnson in that sense; he used to say, "I'm the only president you have." We are the only investigators you have. And in much the same sense as senator Richard Nixon who is now our president, once pulled Alger Hiss out of the Federal Government not on charges of espionage but on charges of perjury, perhaps Clay Shaw will go down in flames on charges of perjury and not on charges of conspiracy to kill the president.

FP: I understand that Mark Lane called the jurors after the trial there, after they acquitted Shaw and found that the jurors unanimously agreed that Garrison had demolished and destroyed the credibility of the Warren Commission report.

MS: I'm giving you here a copy

of the transcript that will help you to document that on your own time, and I can tell you a couple of things that happened at the trial. The Warren Report was definitely demolished once and for all in a court of law. It did not stand up. The thesis about

Oswald, the thesis about single bullet wounds, and we found out for the first time by admission of one of the pathologists, Lieutenant Colonel Pierre Fink, working under Commander Humes of the Navy, that there was no autopsy performed on the president. That it was forbidden. In fact, there's grave implications here of the Joint Chiefs of Staff as well as the Central Intelligence Agency.

FP: I believe Garrison has made the allegation that Kennedy's death was ordered by the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

MS: The government killed the president. It obviously did not have the same aims that the president had. These days that's not a popular notion, that President Kennedy had any virtue, at least I can't find any liberals who agree with it. They don't even remember him. But you can't go by them; they were never a measure. Garrison doesn't intend to take one step backward. He's running for office now.

FP: This month?

MS: Yes, that's right, in November, and he will win. All kinds of opponents have arrived, and they all have financing, and they all have campaign organizations. Suddenly, they're all taking him on. They're all looking for justice. But the people down there are a little less sophisticated than they are in New York and Los Angeles, and they can tell the difference between a populist leader and a pawn of the Central Intelligence Agency. And you'll see good results down there.

FP: In the eyes of a great many people, we're rapidly getting into a society that is totally manipulated and dominated by the intelligence agencies.

MS: Well, of course in the Green Beret case recently you saw the CIA now admits it won't testify. We knew that in New Orleans a couple of years ago. We also have FBI agents down there who refuse to testify—people who in effect say that they are above the law. And those are the fellows that are always talking about elections based on law and order.

Very big for law and order. Well, we've had murder in the streets in this country—the street corners have become shooting galleries in the last couple of years—and we're asked to believe that no trials can take place. To review the record: every time a leader who is interested in ending the war—and I want the audience to re-

member that Martin Luther King was more than a Negro leader, it wasn't just civil rights, he was really an anti-war leader—just as much as Dr. Spock is—they meet sudden deaths by young men whose mothers didn't love them and who are well-traveled. All the young men have that in common. James Earl Ray, Sirhan Sirhan, and Lee Oswald travel a lot. There's another document available for a dime from the archives which is a list here of classified documents pertaining to the Kennedy assassination. It's three pages in which you can see all the things you can't see. You can see the titles of them. This document was classified by the CIA in various cities that Oswald travelled to. I don't know how much you make, I know how much I make, and I know Os-

wald didn't make that much at the School Book Depository. But you'll see that Oswald went to Montreal, he went to Mexico, he went to Los Angeles, he went to New Orleans, he went to Houston. He got around a lot. He travelled all the time. Sirhan travelled a lot, too, and he was an unskilled worker. James Earl Ray, we are told, went to London, he went to Portugal. He had a lot of money in his account, too. All these fellows travel a lot. And, of course, their mothers didn't love them, or they read comic books which establish violence, if we're to go by what people like Gore Vidal say... and they decide to kill someone who just by the way is opposed to the war and the war machine. I think that we have conclusive evidence at this time that the FBI did not return the man who was apprehended at the London airport in the case of Martin Luther King's murder. They tried another man. Not only that, but as you recall the state prosecutor got up there in Memphis and said it would be in the interests of justice not to have a trial. I never knew it was in the interest of justice not to have a trial.

FP: Not have a trial!

MS: Everybody went along with it. And then of course Judge Battle died, mysteriously, a mysterious death. He passed along. Although they said the strain of the trial took its toll only after it was over. But of course there was no trial. Fifteen minutes. Ray asked for an appeal. He asked to change his appeal. And nobody would listen. Percy Foreman looked the other way, and on national television Percy Foreman, his attorney said "I'm not dedicated like Jim Garrison, not looking to make any waves." So the intelligence community, in answer to your original assertion here, the intelligence community has grown very sophisticated, very elaborate, because the liberals have never put up a fight to challenge it. It's grown

due to their indifference. That's what fertilized the egg. And it's all over the place. They're everywhere. They're in religious organizations, speaking with the mouth of the church and not the heart of the church, they're in police departments, they're on quarterlies and monthlies, they're in publications, usually left of center, and etc. And they're everywhere. In other words, the Fascists in this country don't trust genuine Fascism. They think it has to be subsidized. They don't think that anyone on campus would really speak up and be a genuine maniac. They think they have to subsidize people on the right.

FP: Maybe so. A great many people all over this country, although they don't say much, feel that it's impossible to believe that King and the Kennedy's, and Malcolm X were just killed by some lone malcontent, some lone, discontented neurotic. A lone discontented neurotic might go and kill the guy who took away his girlfriend or ripped off his portable stereo, but it seems a little bit implausible that he would go and zap Bobby Kennedy.

MS: They've developed considerable expertise in this area. By the time they got to Bob Kennedy it was all over. There was

a funeral, and the California Legislature rammed through a bill to make his autopsy secret, and it was restricted and no one could examine it, and boom! he was relegated to being a casualty of World War II. It was like he never existed. We live in a country where we elected a Gene McCarthy in state after state and only got Richard Nixon, a man who couldn't be elected to any office, a man who couldn't hold any office! Incredible. But the people have managed to curb their instincts. They know this is not right. And they know that these organizations are very sacrosanct...in other words there was a point in this country at which the military and civilian came into extreme friction. And there was a moment for the military to strike and take control of the country or else they would have had to retire to the back because there was a president who was finally challenging them. That point was during the Cuban dilemma, and it's an irony of history that with all that going on Khrushchev is out of office and President Kennedy is removed violently from office. but Fidel Castro is still down there with

the confidence of his people when the entire earth was moved on its axis because of that island. That was really what took place. The military took control of the government in this country at that time from what we can see in this case. That's the scenario. And there's plenty of documentation. General Earl Wheeler, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff is finishing his eighth year; I think he's limited by law to a term of two years. You may have seen him in the newsreels recently. The Vietnamese war died down; it wasn't doing too well; he went over there to kind of try to drum it up and get it going again so it could make a comeback, but of course all of us are sophisticated enough to know that the war isn't even the issue because the Warfare State has to go on. And it needs the coalescence of the military and the industrial. America's the country that's colonized, not Vietnam. If they get out of Vietnam, they'll have to go to Santo Domingo or somewhere else or they'll have to close down all those factories. As Garrison has said to me very often as he pointed in the direction of Cape Kennedy, where a person who works in the cafeteria jerking orange juice and lime makes a thousand a month, and he said to me, "Do you really think they're going to let me bring all that down without protest?" (Laughter)

FP: Garrison said that?

MS: Yes, he's developed a rich, black humor. Jim is an artist. Jim is a playwright for one thing. He's a great writer. If I had it with me—I have a book, the foreword of which he wrote, called CRIME, LAW and CORRECTION, which is sheer poetry. As he has said to me often, "No lawyer presenting the minutiae of evidence has ever moved people the way an artist can." He really believes in presenting things emotionally. I think that after all those critics of the Warren report with all that detail when he came along and made a speech at the Century Plaza, that's when people were crying. He could really move people to tears. He talked just re-

cently while campaigning for reelection down in New Orleans. He went into the tenth district which is largely colored in New Orleans, and he said "Regardless of what you may hear, I will not take one step backward in my prosecution of the people that murdered the President." He said, "I'm referring to the best friend you people ever had, Jack Kennedy." And the people broke into cheers. Those people were not sophisticated as we are in Los Angeles. Here we've already figured out a way to abandon anyone who isn't popular and work out a rationale that it's his fault.

FP: You know, that seems to be a natural penchant of the people.



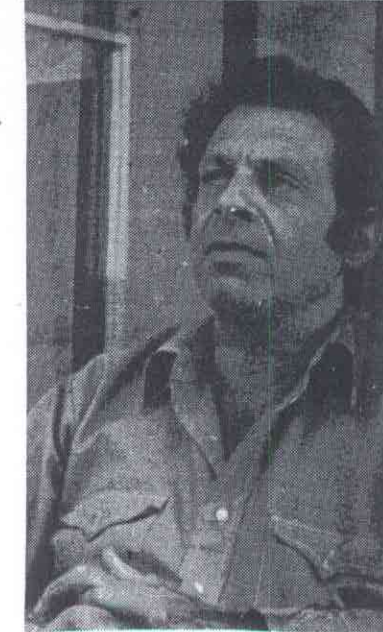
Photos by Paul Eberle.

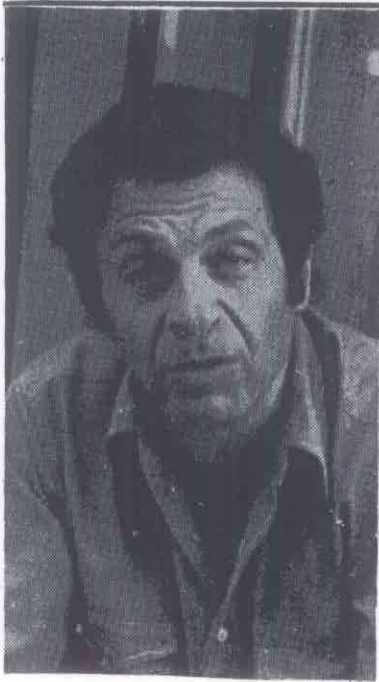
MS: You find me a liberal tonight, and he'll tell you, the worst thing in America is Eugene McCarthy, but he'll tell you that George Wallace is an impassioned man, that Barry Goldwater had a lot of soundness to his views or at the very least was sincere, that Richard Nixon is working out better than he expected—in other words, the liberal will reserve his scorn for his candidate? Won't he? Well, he'll say, he's a genuinely impassioned man.

(To be continued next week.)



Photo by Paul Eberle





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