The Scavengers: Obsessed by The Assassination
By Richard Warren Lewis
Ralph Schoeneman on Water Bombs
Harriet Van Horne on Broadcasting Extremists

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The Lively Arts:
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by Richard Warren Lewis

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A Rush for Dollars

"It is shocking to me that in the backwash of tragedy, journalistic scavengers such as Mark Lane attempt to impugn the motives of those [Warren Commission] members individually, cast doubt upon the Commission as a whole and question the credibility of the government itself. I think it's time that we pause and reflect on who these individuals are rather than calling for a further investigation of the assassination which ... is neither warranted, justified or desirable."

The phone was ringing as indefatigable Mark Lane entered his 17th-floor quarters in Manhattan's Biltmore Hotel. He carried the new French soft cover edition of Rush to Judgment, the bestselling book he had single-handedly promoted to the top of the best-seller lists. During the previous three months he had logged 285 appearances—on television and radio, in book and department stores and at lectures on college campuses—a relentless hard-sell campaign raising since the heyday of Hadaco.

Not only had his incessant attacks on the conclusions of the Warren Commission agitated the American public, but statements he had made in 14 European countries were largely responsible for the prevalent feeling that President John F. Kennedy had been the victim of a conspiracy. His charges were the same, whether he was speaking in Cleveland or Copenhagen. The president had been shot by at least two assassins. There were five shots fired, not three. The fatal bullet came from the front, from behind a wooden fence on top of a grassy knoll. Autopsy reports were altered. The Commission doctored photographs. Contrary evidence was suppressed to support a preconceived case against Oswald as the lone assassin. Witnesses were harassed. Statements were distorted. Oswald would never have been convicted in a court of law.

A quasi-documentary film produced by Lane, also called Rush to Judgment, was scheduled for release this month. It had been completed at a cost of $60,000 and already recouped two-thirds of that investment in a single airing on BBC television plus much more in European movie theaters. The two-and-a-half-hour production attempted to further discredit the government's case.

Richard Warren Lewis' article is adapted from the Capitol Records album, "The Controversy," produced by Lawrence Schiller.

The Scavengers

(Continued from page 1) taped a debate with William F. Buckley and was busy arranging bookings on the lucrative lecture circuit. His stump shoulders slumped and his nasal Brooklyn voice rasped as he confirmed another engagement on the phone. "I never see my sister and my parents any more," he said, wryly, "I'm just about ready to retire from the field." Small chance. After 15 years of fruitless meditating, he had finally stumbled upon an issue that galvanized the man imagination. His means of profiting on the tragedy in Dallas, however, was far more sophisticated than the fan magazines using Jacqueline Kennedy as a cover girl or the novelty shops hawking plastic busts of the late president or the vendors of picture postcards showing the fatal motorcade route superimposed on an air view of Dealey Plaza.

Lane was offering an easily digested panacea to an incredulous audience still reeling from the week- age of November 22-24, 1963. And he was succeeding with the heary gimmickry of the professional hustler—distortion, innuendo, conjecture, allusion and even sheer fantasy. "There's an old legend about frogs jumping from the mouth of a perfidious man, every time he speaks," observes Professor Wesley J. Liebeler, one of the Warren Commission staffers. "These frogs leap out and you have to run in all directions to grab them. It's just incredible to listen to him. If he talks for five minutes it takes an hour to straighten out the rest."}

Lane was not a lone frog croaking at the en- courage of My Grief, a volume which sells for $2.50 up to $10, depending on the binding. Jones exposes a sinister plot determined to eradicate key figures in the assassination's after- math. So far, he claims, there have been 18 mysteri- ous deaths. "Oswald didn't kill anybody," he adds. "He's too poor a shot. Hell, they wouldn't hire a man like that to be firing a rifle when they're trying to kill the president. They're going to hire the best guns..."

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George C. Thomason, a Glendale, California, swim- ming pool engineer. Thomason has grossed thousands selling transcripts of 13 radio broadcasts and a bro- chure called "The Quest For Truth." Their contents: Kennedy was not present in the Dallas motorcade and therefore not shot; Kennedy was impersonated by the Secret Service framed the whole thing," he says. "He claims it was a fabrication, that the shadows beneath Oswald's nose are inconsist- ent with those cast by a rifle extended in his left hand. To justify this charge, he journeyed to Los Angeles' 'shard row and paid several alcoholics to impersonate Oswald, while he snapped similar photographs. Penn Jones recently published a book, "The Best Answer," which insists that the bullet found on Governor Connally's stretcher, purported to have passed through the bodies of both the president and the governor, was planted.
The significance of the lawyer's myriad theories is the unsettling way they have had on public opinion. Lane likes to take most of the credit for stirring the pot. Although Edward Jay Epstein, a former Cornell University graduate student, wrote his master's thesis on the Warren Commission's methods and conclusions, and the thesis became a book called *Liquor*, one of the earliest critical studies of the Commission. "Six weeks following the publication of my book," Lane says, "a poll taken by Louis Harris showed that only one out of three Americans believed and accepted the conclusions of the Warren Commission.

Before he emerged as the leading assassination gadfly, Lane had made a career of championing controversial causes and underdogs, himself included. The owl-eyed, 39-year-old critic, however, never quite reached the pinnacle he has ascended since offering posthumous counsel to Oswald.

As an aggressive young attorney, he specialized in cases involving narcotic violations, alleged police graft and brutality, the rights of low-income tenants and civil liberties.

In 1961, Lane was arrested and convicted of breaching the peace in Jackson, Mississippi, where he attempted to use segregated facilities at the municipal airport. A year later, Lane was labeled a sex pervert and fined $415 for ignoring 19 Manhattan traffic tickets dating back to 1959. That overnight triggered the wrong kind of headlines.

He won no sympathy while picking the Board of Higher Education's pockets in an effort to rescind an order banning Communists from speaking. Lane was Lane, who was formally rebuked by a legislative committee for his unwarranted accusations.

He gained headlines in the legislature with an attack on Speaker Joseph F. Carlois, charging him with a conflict of interest after the passage of a $100-million bond shelter bill. An Assembly vote overwhelmingly exonerated Carlois. The lone dissenter was Lane, who was formally rebuked by a legislative committee for his unwarranted accusations.

Late in 1962, Lane announced that he would not seek re-election. Instead, he said, he would write a book and try to make a contribution to peace. He soon discovered the ideal subject. Observing telecasts of the assassination and subsequent shooting of Oswald, he became disturbed over what he termed the destruction of Oswald's rights during imprisonment. Within a month, the left-wing National Guardian printed Lane's 10,000-word, unsolicited defense brief for the assassin. An Oklahoma housewife mailed the article to Mrs. Margarette Oswald, who quickly retained Lane as the attorney for the deceased.

On December 31, 1963, armed with a borrowed tape recorder he was unable to operate and an unfamiliar Polaroid camera, Lane made the first of his eight fact-finding missions to Dallas. "I spent my New Year's Eve reading in a small hotel room," he wrote, like a latter-day Daniel, in my present (set) rather inopportune simulated 'private eye.'

What little insight he gained in his early investigations—mainly conversations with peripheral figures—metamorphosed into passionate talks he delivered at coffee houses and cocktail parties on both coasts. Before long, his questionable theories were expanded into a haranguing, three-hour-and-40-minute lecture titled "Who Killed Kennedy?" It was delivered for paying customers at theaters and college auditoriums and garnished with slides, enlarged photographs and the memorable vision of Lane brandishing a 6.5-caliber Mannlicher-Carcano carbine, a copy of the weapon he decided Oswald could never have accurately fired.

The seeds of doubt were more readily planted in Europe, where scavengers such as expatriate Thomas Buchanan, author of a book bearing a title identical to Lane's lecture, had already fertilized the way. Lane published some of his basic techniques before sympathetic audiences in London and Paris. "There is no doubt in my mind that the Supreme Court would have reversed any conviction against Oswald," he said.

To finance Lane on the stump, a volunteer Citizens Committee of Inquiry, chaired by Lane, was established on lower Park Avenue in Manhattan. Eventually, branches were added on 40 American college campuses as well as in London and Copenhagen. The Committee coordinated his appearances at lectures and debates. One such confrontation with attorney Melvin Belli, at the Manhattan Center, attracted nearly 4,000 customers who paid up to five dollars a seat.

The Committee sold over 1,000 recordings, at $5.95 an album, containing Lane's evasive testimony before the Warren Commission. It also purportedly paid him $60-a-week during a particularly desperate five-week period. "I had closed down my law offices," Lane recalls. "My commitment was to investigating the case and writing a book about it. We were practically facing starvation at that point. For a year, the only time we had a steak was at Tad's Steak House in New York, which sold them for $1.25. Once my wife and I were in London and we didn't havefare to get us to a social engagement. We walked through the London fog for about 45 minutes."

The release of the Warren Report in September, 1964, and its 20 volumes of testimony and exhibits—led, two months afterwards, furnished Lane with a wealth of new targets which he assailed in talks at 83 colleges and universities. Additional ammunition, however tenuous, was provided by a team of investigators the Citizens Committee dispatched to Dallas to interview witnesses Lane felt the Commission had overlooked.

A British publisher finally agreed to print his book after an earlier decision to reject it by 15 publishers in the United States. *Rash to Judgment* sold out its first overseas edition, inspiring Lane to prepare a film version of the book. For his director, he selected Emile de Antonio, who once produced a documentary on the late Senator Joseph McCarthy.

The activities of Lane and de Antonio in Dallas read like a bad detective story. Lane decided to use a pseudonym, Robert Blake, in his filmed and tape-recorded interviews. Many participants in the film were led to believe that it was being produced for educational television. He has proudly stated, "I violated the law when I called people in Dallas. I did tape recordings over the phone without informing people. I could have been sent to jail."

The success of the book in England convinced Holt, Rinehart and Winston—ironically the same house which publishes Lane's arch-enemy, Edgar Hoover—to print *Judgment* in the United States. Lane experienced some frustration. (Continued on page 4)
Alleged assassin Oswald denies guilt as he is led away by Dallas police.

(Continued from page 5) moments, however, after learning that Viking Press planned to publish Epstein's master's thesis months in advance of his own book.

His anxieties prompted a bizarre skirmish at Epstein's Ithaca, New York, apartment, late one night in December, 1963. A stranger, who identified himself as English journalist Victor Benedict, burst through the front door and tried to steal Epstein's recently acquired FBI reports. He rummaged through drawers until Epstein threatened to call the police. Benedict was later identified as Ralph Scheneman, head of the London branch of Lane's Citizen's Committee of Inquiry.

"Epstein's book suffers from one weakness," Lane says today. "The statements which are attributed to the Commission members cannot be verified because Mr. Epstein refused to use a tape recorder. I offered him a hidden tape recorder, but he said he thought that would be unethical. The absence of accuracy raises serious questions." Epstein denies any such offer from Lane.

The American publication of Rusk to Judgment in August, 1966, provoked a wide disparity of sentiments. "It will live as a classic for every serious amateur detective in America," wrote Norman Mailer. "He takes bits of evidence and magnifies them beyond their deserts," said senior Commission counsel Joseph Ball. "He exaggerates unimportant details."

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government has been written by money-seekers who were not there in Dallas. You have a group of people here who have attempted to capitalize on the death of the president. I'm sure that someone, a couple thousand years ago, probably wrote a book doubting that it was Brutus who killed Caesar."

Some 225,000 hard-cover copies of Mark Lane's compendium of doubts were already in circulation. Nearly a million paperback versions awaited release. "Rusk to Judgment has not just recorded history," trumpeted the newspaper advertisements. "It has made history." Never noted before his megalomania, Lane went on step further. "I think," he said, "that my book has affected history. I don't think the Warren Report will survive the next six weeks."

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The Great Debate

"I've got three seniors at the U.C.L.A. Law School who have gone through Lane's book and prepared a series of memorandum describing the discrepancies they found. Close to 90 per cent of Lane's footnotes don't check out. There's either a distortion involved or a flat misrepresentation. He twists evidence out of context and often was himself as his own expert witness."

—Prof. Wesley J. Liebeler, assistant counsel, President's Commission on the Assassination of President Kennedy

Had the Warren Commission possessed the foresight to continue functioning after September, 1964, even in a skeleton form, the increasing groundswell of conjecture concerning its findings might have been stymied long ago. To help remedy that failure, outspoken Jim Liebeler has become one of the few Commission staffers willing to tackle skeptics like Mark Lane face-to-face.

He has also been brave enough to admit that sloppiness in certain phases of what was billed as the
largest, most thorough murder investigation in history has unintentionally provided the scavengers juicy morsels on which to feed.

Many of Lane's 5,000 citations and references in Rush to Judgment—roughly one-quarter charge that the Commission neglected critical evidence—and the Commission's protestations to the contrary are being deemed by the Kennedy Memorial Library. Liebler—who added to the Commission's annulus by drastically redefining the Commission's methods has evolved into today's Great Debate.

Recently, Lane secluded himself in a Manhattan hotel room, preparing for an upcoming discussion. He had removed his styled English Mod jacket and rolled up his shirt sleeves. Occasionally, he referred to yellowing news clippings to refresh his memory. He rarely did not need them. Lane has repeated his charges and countercharges to often that he can stop in the middle of a sentence and resume his comments, verbatim, from the beginning.

"The strongest piece of evidence the Commission has relating Oswald to the assassination," he said, "would be the discovery of a rifle on the sixth floor of the Depository Building. If it could be proved that 1) Oswald purchased the weapon and 2) that it is the same rifle used to shoot Kennedy, the case would be overwhelming." Lane consistently attacks the least convincing conclusions as to the person or persons who acted as the government's commitment to the national interest and in the hearts and minds of the American people and the world that Oswald was the assassin. "We found no evidence indicating a conspiracy, foreign or domestic."

Lieberman is a member of the Commission. He has added his own inaccuracies to the debates. "The source of the shots in Dealey Plaza, a triangular-shaped echo chamber, was an area of wide distribution. The bullet could not have been the bullet in question."

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The Housewives’ Underground

"For almost three years now, there has been an unorganized, quiet network of housewives, editors and students who have the 26 volumes of evidence in their homes, go over the material, clip newspapers and correspond with one another. They have played a very important role in developing the body of dissenting information. I am part of the network," Mark Lane, author, Rush to Judgment

The key stations on the bustling network, surprisingly, are operated by three housewives, all of them would-be Margaret Rutherford's. They possess little in common besides an obsession for refuting the 10 months of diligent probing, the examination of thousands of witnesses and the millions of words collected by the Warren Commission.

Mrs. Shirley Harris Martin, a blue-eyed mother of four, functions as the Midwestern salt of the underground. The chain-link fence guarding her brick city by heart now. I could have sat around ticky-tacky like no one who did go down (to Dallas]. I know the rumors were that Oswald was going to be pinned for his psychological backslide. "I worry about the Kennedys."

Mrs. Field first compiled 30 bulging scrapbooks and numerous 50-pound file boxes of clippings and transcripts. Working with a glue-pot and overrated cardboard posters, she then constructed over 100 "propaganda"-detailed charts listing the names and movements of witnesses to the killings of Kennedy and Officer Tippit.

"The American people have been tragically deceived," says Mrs. Field. "One of the most heinous crimes in modern history remains unsolved." She maintains that the Commission pursued a preconceived scenario and categorically dismisses its ballistics evidence, maintaining that the Commission pursued a preconceived scenario and categorically dismisses its ballistics evidence, drifts, that shadows cast in the photograph were counterfeit, murder weapon in his left hand and a pistol on his hip, immediately looked suspicious to her. To prove that shadows cast in the photograph were counterfeit, Mrs. Martin's revealed graphic details of an entrance wound over Kennedy's left temple—evidence which, if true, would support the existence of a second assassin. The priest denies ever meeting Mrs. Martin or having any knowledge of such a wound. "His face was covered with blood, but I saw no wounds," he says. "I did not know where he had been shot and I had no thought of looking for anything like that." The graying Agatha Christie fan, nevertheless, conveyed her frequently misleading reports to fellow investigators and anyone she thought would listen. "When the case first started," Mrs. Martin recalls, "I was sending out 100 letters a week. I even sent one to a newspaper in Kuala Lumpur. She spent up to $250 a month telephoning buffs like Mrs. Joseph A. Field Jr., her West Coast counterpart in Beverly Hills, California.

The wife of a stock broker, Mrs. Field employs a thinly-disguised pseudonym (Marjorie Eschanips) to conceal her activities. "Of all the dripmy women in Tulsa, I was the only one who did go down (to Dallas). I know the city by heart now. I could see it around ticky-tacky like everyone else. But if some of us don't work as hard as we can, the same thing might happen again in another city, with Robert Kennedy the victim this time. I worry about the Kennedys."

It was Mrs. Martin who introduced Lane to Mrs. Marguerite Oswald by mailing the assassin's mother a picture of the black book which contains an undated, unsigned confession published in the National Guardian. "The rumors were that Oswald was going to be pinned for his psychological backslide. I saw this material, took closer notice of Mrs. Meagher’s furnishings. Edward Jay Epstein, one of Mrs. Meagher’s passions is monitoring radio broadcasts. Recently, she heard attorney Louis Nizer—a staunch advocate of the Commission’s findings—mis- takefully refer to the first identification of the murder weapon, proving to be Bulletin of the Warren Report. Mrs. Meagher immediately contacted Lane. Within 48 hours, he was ridiculing Nizer’s error in one of his speeches. Mrs. Meagher considered herself an unsung heroine, certainly not a scavenger. "I haven’t gotten a nickel from my book," she says. "Nobody else realizes the time and the money that I’ve spent." Her Hem-

The Lunatic Fringe

"The news media in September of 1964 castrated the Warren Report. And now there are about 15 of us who are going around the country screaming that they may have been poison in that capsule."

—Penn Jones Jr.
Even an influential Commission counsel was seeking payments for his inside observations, citing the whopping sums received by others...
Since the publication of the Warren Report, Weisberg has been harried by debunking its authoritative conclusions. Their own best evidence proves they are wrong in everything they say,” he says. “The thing that struck me most about the Report was that it was a monstrous evasion. Oswald couldn’t possibly have killed anybody. He was not cereano nos grato to the FBI. They had a bird in the hand and they didn’t feel like beating the bushes. Nobody has yet shown me an error of fact in any of my work.”

Errors and misinterpretation of facts abound both in Whitewash and its successor, Whitewash II, particularly in Weisberg’s careless analysis of available photographic evidence. Typical are his opinions regarding one version of the motion picture film of the assassination with its report of the Warren Commission. In the Warren Commission’s investigation, D. C. Police frames have been painstakingly edited from Dallas newsreel. Weisberg assumes that anything contradictory to the official findings is suspect. He suggests that members of the Commission were misled into viewing the edited version in merely a cursory manner. Yet the missing frames, which add nothing to the body of evidence, have been painstakingly witnessed by every member of the Commission and its staff, in slow-motion, fast-motion and stop-action.

Weisberg is also afflicted by an increasing paranoia regarding competing scavengers. “I’m only one with conclusions in my book,” he wails. “Others have used my conclusions in their radio and television appearances. Mark Lane is converting his grassy knoll into a property in a very irresponsible way. I have it in my book. I was the first.”

He seeks solace from his imagined adversaries among the grassy knoll. He束res to the Coq d’Or Farm. “My wild goose comes when I call them,” he says. “I’ve built their faith in me to the point where they bring their young the day after the young are hatched. The federal agents see it and don’t believe it can happen. They eat right from my hand.” And incredibly enough, there are people who are doing the same thing.

Penn Jones Jr., editor of "Midlothian Mirror.

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(Continued from page 8) pockets of his windshield, the 53-year-old editor scurried towards his white frame house in West Avenue F two blocks away. There was a day’s growth of gray stubble on his elfish face and a pot of bourbon stuck in his hip pocket. “Don’t think that Big Daddy walks around like this all the time,” he said, after removing his shoes and socks and tele- soping himself into an overstuffed armchair. “This is just my Neiman-Mareus country editor’s outfit.” He proceeded to pour out equal amounts of bourbon and assassination theory.

“Well, of course, I loved John Kennedy,” he began, pointing towards a bust of the president. “I had driven by the assassination site not more than 20 min- utes before and thought: ‘My God, this would be a

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