

# Reflections on Gaeton Fonzi's "The Warren Commission, The Truth, and Arlen Specter"

Originally published in *rat haus reality press*, August 21, 2013.

Out of our shared interest in arriving at the historical truth of President John F. Kennedy's assassination, Gaeton Fonzi and I forged a long friendship. My small contributions to Gaeton's *Greater Philadelphia Magazine* 1966 article entitled "[The Warren Commission, The Truth, and Arlen Specter](#)," initiated our relationship.

The Publisher of the *Greater Philadelphia Magazine*, D. Herbert Lipson, introduced the 1 August 1966 issue of that magazine. Lipson pointed out that the 20,000 word article was the longest that the magazine had ever run and "the most startling in both its facts and its implications." Lipson underscored that the article "establishes that the Commission's conclusion that President Kennedy was felled by a single assassin was not supported by the evidence. It was, in fact, contradicted by it."

In his commentary, Lipson, stated that [a series of taped interviews of Arlen Specter conducted by Gaeton Fonzi](#) demonstrated that Specter "is more than just cognizant of the vital discrepancies in the evidence which led to the Warren Commission's conclusions." He addressed the "shocking aspect" of American journalists who had failed to give the *Warren Report* the scrutiny to which the American people were entitled. Lipson concluded by suggesting that Specter "take the lead in insisting that the case be immediately re-opened."

Bernard McCormick and Gaeton Fonzi became friends while working on the staff of the magazine. Bernie McCormick joined the magazine in 1965. He is now editor, publisher, and vice chairman of Gulfstream Capital Holdings. In 2013 he published a "bookazine" ("a relatively new term describing a book in a magazine format"), entitled *The Philadelphia Magazine Story – Making Publishing History* (Sweeney, McCormick and Sons, Inc., Fort Lauderdale, FL 33301). In this book is reproduced an article (pp, 40-46) Gaeton Fonzi wrote in 2008 entitled "[The Last Investigation](#)" in which he references the original *Greater Philadelphia Magazine* article.

In this 2008 article Fonzi told readers that following President Kennedy's assassination, "Being in Philadelphia was the key because it was home of two individuals of pivotal importance in the history of Kennedy assassination research. Arlen Specter and Vince Salandria." He described Specter as "a young and ambitious assistant district attorney, [who] became a junior counsel on the Warren Commission ..." Gaeton described me as "a little-known school board lawyer" and that he and McCormick had "heard about a wild-eyed young

lawyer giving talks to civil groups and writing pieces in local legal journals contending that the Single Bullet Theory was hogwash and that the Warren Commission Report was basically a fraud the U.S. government was fostering on the American People. We thought Salandria was likely some kind of lone nut.”

Fonzi wrote that when he and Bernie McCormick finally met with me they found me to be “a small fellow, soft-spoken and intensely earnest, [and] we were stunned that he could support his sensational assertions with the Warren Commission’s own evidence.” He related that I gave him the Commission’s report and its 26 volumes of hearings and documents which McCormick and he studied in summer 1965.

After having read through the *Warren Report* and *the 26 volumes* that summer, they concluded that the prestigious members of the Commission obviously misrepresented facts. They questioned why the national news media had not seized the story about the lack of evidentiary support for the Commission’s conclusions. They were incredulous about *The New York Times* lavish endorsement of the Commission’s report without “any supporting or contradicting evidence.”

Gaeton believed that all would be cleared up when Arlen Specter, a former Yale Law Debating Team Captain, could be interviewed by him. Gaeton believed that he was the first journalist to interview Specter who had actually read the 26 volumes of evidence in the Commission Hearings and Exhibits. Gaeton knew and admired Specter. He had found him “not only exceptionally articulate, but always forthright and candid.”

Before interviewing Specter, Gaeton came to me and I briefed him on how to conduct the prospective Specter interviews. In the interviews, Gaeton found that Specter “hemmed and hawed and mumbled in his attempt to explain critical points ...” He found Specter to be “evasive and anything but forthright, often stammeringly frustrated in his inability to provide rational explanations.” When he asked Specter about the exit wound from Kennedy in the single bullet theory, “Specter sputtered and backed, danced around a few impossible possibilities ...” When Gaeton asked Specter about the form-fitting custom shirt and the bullet holes in it, “Specter ... sat down at his desk, shook his head and softly said, ‘I don’t remember.’”

Gaeton wrote that he came away from his two long sessions of interviewing Specter “numb with disbelief.” Specter, instead of having reduced, had magnified Gaeton’s concerns about the Commission Report. Gaeton followed up this article with others that “made the Warren Commission appear to be a scandalous cover-up of the crime of the century.”

U.S. Senator Richard Schweiker (R-Pa), a member of the Senate Select Committee on

Intelligence, asked Gaeton to “check out a few things” on the assassination. In 1976, Congress established a House Select Committee to investigate the Kennedy assassination. Gaeton joined the committee’s staff at the behest of Richard Sprague, another former Philadelphia prosecutor, who became the first chief counsel of the Select Committee. When the committee finished its work, Gaeton was even more disillusioned with how the U.S. public was being deceived by the U.S. government.

Gaeton Fonzi died on August 30, 2012. Major papers around the world, including *The New York Times*, carried his obituary.

After it was published, Gaeton sent me a copy of his great book *The Last Investigation* (Thunder’s Mouth Press, 1993, Publishers Group West, Emeryville, CA 94608). In it he inscribed in his clear handwriting: “For Vince You should’ve kept your mouth shut. Now look what you made me do. Love, Gaet.” I disagree with my dear friend’s inscription. I had almost nothing to do with Gaeton’s magnificent investigative work.

Before Gaeton had met me, he had established for himself a sterling reputation as an outstanding and a most significant, honest, and courageous U.S. investigative reporter. He risked his brilliant career seeking to reveal historical truth of the U.S. national security state’s killing of President Kennedy. His decency and honor were starkly different from the corruption of the so-called free press, which hid from the meaning of the killing of Kennedy.

Gaeton did not need me to see that Arlen Specter was, and knew that he was, a fraud. Gaeton did not require me to know that his unwavering honesty would foreclose him from buying into Arlen Specter’s instruction to the U.S. citizenry. Specter was quoted in the *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin* of October 23, 1964, p. 4, as stating: “The people are going to have to rely on the conclusions (that have been drawn) and the stature of the men of the Commission.”