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12/29/93

Mr. Stephen Ambrose
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Dear Mr. Ambrose,

I begin a book the draft of which is completed quoting those of you who provided pre-publication puffery for Posner's mistitled Case Closed to ask the basis for those comments and whether you did any checking of what Posner says at all. For your convenience I enclose a copy of the back of Posner's dust jacket. The middle blurb is yours. I've highlighted what in particular interests me.

I am aware of your position as a respected historian but I am not aware of any special subject-matter expertise you have on the JFK assassination. Nor do I believe that you have the remotest notion of what that pretty much requires for any such statements as, "This is a model of historical research."

The Posners were here for three days. They had unsupervised, free access to all I have and to the unsupervised use of our copier. There is a partial indication of what he had available to him in his Acknowledgements. What was available to the Posners, aside from my own not inconsiderable work product, is some quarter of a million pages of once-withheld government records, mostly of the FBI. To the best of my knowledge he did not look at any of that mass of information. He did use a file of some selections from them that I duplicated and made into a separate file, by name, so that I could keep all those FOIA records precisely as I got them for archival deposit, which will be at local Hood College.

I got those records by a series of a dozen FOIA lawsuits. Some were precedental and one, the first of two I filed for the results of the FBI's scientific testing in that case, is cited in the legislative history of the 1974 amending of that Act as requiring the change made in its investigatory files exemption. Posner did not look at that case file or at any of the records obtained in the second lawsuit. Yet much of his book is, supposedly, on that very evidence.

The testing of the curbstone on which there was a ballistics impact is an important element in the evidence. I did copy and file under "curbstone" several relevant records relating to that impact and that testing and I do have before and after photographs in the file. The record reporting the digging up of that section of curbstone for testing is quite explicit in stating that the mark of that impact no longer exists. I believe you will agree that so far as is known concrete has no self-healing powers. An FBI Lab summary of the spectrographic analysis of that point of impact, alchemized from a "scar" or "mark" into a "smear," reports the presence of only two of the 11 or 12 components of a bullet, or of about nine or ten of the core metal. That test is fine to parts per million. That

same record holds the handwritten observations of the FBI agent who testified to that testing to the Warren Commission. He says that "smear" could have been caused by an "automobile wheel weight," those that are used to balance tires.

The pictures I refer to Posner also has in my book Post Mortem. The contemporaneous pictures are clear in depicting both the size of the chip the spray from which wounded Jim Tague and that that chipped place was patched. That it was known to have been patched is clear in the FBI report on its being dug up. It is also confirmed by a scientific observation made for a friend of mine by the kind of scientist another FBI agent I deposed said is the kind to use.

Now this is only a small part of one of the important elements of evidence of which Posner did have knowledge from my book, whether or not he looked into the file labelled "curbstone" and read the records I cite above. Among others.

If you doubt my word and do not have my book(s) I'll be glad to send you xeroxes.

This one of innumerable illustrations I can provide and do include in my book I think addresses the kind of "research" you describe as the "model of historical research."

I think from this alone you can understand why I ask what basis you have for making, and repeating often to reporters, this statement. I think also it indicates what I say above is required for meaningful subject-matter expertise today. A reading of the readily available trash that you indicate elsewhere you read is not real qualification.

You describe what Posner wrote about Oswald's personality as "wonderfully well done." That is based on what Posner says that the shrink Renatus Hartogs said of Oswald as a boy. Did you check what Hartogs really said? Or what the Commission lawyers said about what he said and any meaning that could responsibly be given to it?

If you did not, what qualifies you to make the statement I quote about it?

Do you, in fact, know enough about the official evidence to offer any scholarly opinion on any fact of the crime or its investigations?

Do you know enough about the available material, what Posner used, to know whether or not he used the work of others as his own work? He did, sir, and that is the basis of his book, as in time you will see if you do not take my word for it.

When you were interviewed by Rob Zaleski of the Wisconsin Capital Times for the story it published October 11, 1993 you described Posner's book as "absolutely flawless." He also quotes you as saying "this is a wonderful, fabulous book. He has meticulously taken every point and broken it down and examined it thoroughly."

I take one point in Oswald's life, his security clearance in the Marines. Posner goes through a charade of addressing this in terms of the story made up by two reporters who suspected the FBI was listening in on their phones. Instead of using the readily available official information on that Posner interviewed the former assistant district attorney as an unquestionable authority. That man was in fact fired for pulling a hand gun on a man under charges and his lawyer in the district attorney's own office. He

also leaked confidential documents to friends who were well paid for the use they made of them. He is also, even for Dallas, a political extremist. Thus he is to Posner, who reports none of th above, an authority superior to the official investigations and reports on it,

But what is more important as Posner knew from my book Oswald in New Orleans and would have seen the official proof of it if he looked in that file that was open to him, is that in fact Oswald had what the official investigations suppressed, a Crypto and a Top Secret security clearance as a Marine.

This is not suitable information for the supposedly definitive biography of Oswald? Well, it does not appear in the book you describe as "wonderful" and "fabulous" and that takes "every point," your word, "meticulously" and "examined it thoroughly."

Zaleski also quotes you as saying "I'd like to see a law passed where nobody is allowed to write or publish another book on the assassination unless they've taken an exam to prove they understand the facts."

With these few of the many examples to be published do you think you could pass such an examination?

So I ask again what basis you had for making the statements so widely used to sell and popularize a book that to one who knows those facts is an overt and deliberate fraud?

And that reminds me of a letter you wrote to the Literary Supplement of the Times of London, which published it in its October 1, 1993 issue. Referring to one James Bacque you said "The man is a genius at getting his name in the paper. ...The truth is that (he) has managed, knowingly or unknowingly, to perpetrate a gigantic hoax that has done far to much harm."

The title I gave this book is Hoax, with a descriptive subtitle. The publisher prefers a different title to which I've agreed.

I hope you will take the time for a thoughtful response. You wrote a friend of mine, also a scholar and it happens one of the few authentic subject-matter experts in the country, that "I'm always open to new evidence (but apparently not to the old evidence) and have long since learned that my mind is always changing as new evidence comes to light." It is the "old" and always available evidence that you do not know, sir.

And so I wonder why, when you should know that you really do not know anything at all about the evidence, you wrote so ecstatically about a book that you will in time see is an intended commercialization and exploitation of a great tragedy.

In addition to asking you what you think qualified your for such glowing praises for such abook, why you said a single word about it? Who asked you to?

I would prefer not to add to the book that you refused to respond.

Can you see the "far too much mischief" in all of this?

Apologies for my typing. It cannot be any better.

Sincerely,

Harold Weisberg