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"Stanford Scholar Criticizes Pulitzer Board" is the headline of a San Francisco Chronicle story I was sent some time after it appeared in the April 21, 1994 issue.

Professor David Kennedy is quoted as complaining because, "I was outraged because we made a good-faith recommendation of books we thought were worthy" of the 1993 history award.

One of the three books that panel recommended was Gerald Posner's knowingly mis-titled Case Closed: Lee Harvey Oswald and the Assassination of JFK, Random House, 8/93; Anchor, 8/94)

Kennedy said he regarded the "no-award decision" as "an insult not only to the authors but to the very distinguished historians who constituted the panel."

I wrote Kennedy June 9 asking him what checking he had done of Posner's book and, "Did any of you prestigious eminences ask yourselves if you were in a position to evaluate that book? By other than taking his word?" I also told him to count his blessings.

He has not replied.
Before writing Kennedy my butchered in haste but solid Case Open: The Omissions, Distortions and Falsifications of Case Closed" appeared. In it, without a peep of protest from Posner, Random House or any lawyer speaking for either of them I refer to Posner as a shyster, a plagiarizer, as I liar who has trouble telling the truth by accident and as a man who was capable of all the dishonesty required by his formula book, to take the side opposite that of Oliver Stone's successful movie (for which I originated the criticism because he described it as non-fiction), and I referred to his book as the most deliberately dishonest on the subject despite the stiff competition for that distinction.

In Posner's reprint he make no effort to refute, even to deny, these rather strong criticisms of him and his book that almost got the history Pulitzer.

My point is how truly scandalous it would have been if so gross and deliberate ~~and~~ a fraud (as which I also describe in in Case Open) had actually been awarded the ~~Pulitzer~~

Pulitzer and how the Pulitzers would have been debased.

I suggest that it is past time for some system to be devised so that books that require both critical faculties and subject-matter expertise are examined by panels with those qualifications. Having a PhD in history, for example, is not qualification for considering books like those on the political assassinations.

The swamps of academe ooze with professors who are either blind and ignorant conspiracy theorists or as blind, unthinking and ignorant in their support of the official account of the assassination.

The subject matter itself was of enormous importance but there should be no regard for what I also applied to Posner, literary whoring.

I use this strong language not only because Posner and Random House were mute when they read it in my Case Open but to emphasize the great danger to the prestige and importance of Pulitzer awards that can be so easily cheapened by literary prostitution the panels are not qualified to evaluate or are too busy to check out.

(I have had a high regard for the Pulitzers since when I was a very young reporter on the Wilmington, Delaware Morning News doing storm relief work with radio amateurs in those days of relatively primitive communication I made the winning of that years Pulitzer for local reporting by filling in what was incomprehensible and then getting it out. And I apologize for my typing, I'm 84, unwell, must keep my legs elevated and the mills we called them then to the side, and I cannot use a computer. If you question my credentials for making this criticism, I filed more than a dozen successful FOIA lawsuits by which I recused from official oblivion about a third of a million previously-suppressed pages and in one of those lawsuits the Department of Justice told that court that I know more about the JFK assassination and its investigations than anyone working for the FBI. I am alone in not writing theories of either extreme, the lone man in the middle."

Sincerely,

Harold Weisberg
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