SP(SH,RB,LRS),JW,HIL

May 6, 1971

Mr. John Barkham
27 East 65th Street
New York, New York 10021

Dear Mr. Barkham:

The toreador ought anticipate a horn, not a kiss.

Your letter of the 30th has just reached me. I was away and leave again in the morning. However, because I consider the functions we each serve vital in any concept of a freely functioning representative society, I have selected your letter from a rather large stack for immediate, if hasty, response.

No free society can work without free access to fact, especially on important national concerns. The manner in which the institutions of society operate in time of great crisis is, I hope, one you can agree is important. Whether or not the protections of the law and the Constitution can be denied the individual, to me at least, is another. Whether the adversary system of justice can be subverted, whether the canons of the bar can be violated both freely and with impunity, I do regard as a serious matter. Whether there can be justice in criminal cases with the prosecution dominated by political and personal considerations, by a dubious concept of "national interest", while the "defense" is ridden with irreconcilable conflicts of interest, has in this case alone become a pressing national problem.

Need I mention that I address these among other issues in FRAME-UP, as one would never gather from your "review", which, I repeat, leaves the book entirely unrecognizable.

No writer has expectation of automatic approval of his work, nor has he the right to anticipate it. He does, however, have the right to, and society requires, fair review of it, most of all with non-fiction and above all when the work involves the national integrity and the sanctity of the basic institutions of society.

You have a perfect right to believe the world is flat. You are dishonest if you so tell your readers without probative proof.

After reading your letter, in which you fail to address a single one of the challenges I addressed to you - and each is specific - I see no reason to retract or regret a single one of the accusations I made, including of dishonesty and dishonesty of intent. Your letter, in fact, is in itself dishonest. I don't know whether it was intended for me, for the Post, or for the syndicate, but that self-serving conclusion is a fine illustration, "... I stand by my (emphasis added) view that your book and other such books 'make it more

than ever regrettable that a full trial was never staged.'" (There is no "other such" book.)

This, sir, is not your view but that of the book and author you maligned, and then pretended otherwise in the concluding sentence of the "review".

If you think you are justified in taking offense at my language, why not take another look at what you said about me and my work, in not a single case supported by any evidence, any fair or honest, contextual quotation, any citation of serious or relevant error.

Begin with your opening sentence, ridiculing me for saying (and I think also proving, as even Ray admitted) that there had been a conspiracy. Then your second paragraph, "official findings have pinned the guilt on individuals," your way of hiding that no court of law found either Oswald or Ray to be a murderer. FRAME-UP, beyond challenge, told you a) that the Department of Justice and the FBI officially alleged precisely this, conspiracy, in an indictment; and b) that, with Ray on ice for the rest of his life and protected by the prohibition against double-jeopardy, the government still has prosecutive interest in the case. Against non-conspirators? FRAME-UP told you that Stephens was put away for his "protection", by public authority. Protection from non-conspirators? And this is without regard to the existing evidence of a conspiracy that you never address, do not and cannot refute. Blindly, you don't want to believe it. I am therefore some kind of nut or irresponsible because you refuse to confront fact you cannot challenge, and you have a license to misrepresent me and my work.

You accuse me of abusing you. And in a context that, if I want to "advance" my "cause", this is unwise. For shame! As I will not tailor either my writing or my beliefs for acceptability (can a writer with self-respect or honesty?), so also will I not kiss the asses of sycophants to curry their favor. Most of all not on that which is the subject of my books.

You do not address or accept any of my direct challenges to your work or your integrity. The closest you come to it is in claiming for yourself "sobered, measured terms". This is like saying murder is kinder if it is by smothering in a pillow rather than from a bullet.

What you have done to your large readership and to all the editors of the journals to which you are syndicated is to try and discredit the sole work that questions the official mythology on the King assassination, that addresses the dependability of the FBI and other organs of society, especially the courts and the lawyers, does so without any complaint from any one of these to date (and as you know if you really read the book, I wrote everyone in advance and said what I expected to say), to the end that readers be discouraged from learning for themselves and editors be discouraged from publishing anything new that may come to light.

Do you suppose it is your representation of me and FRAME-UP that impelled Percy Foreman to flee the make-up room of a New York TV station when he learned he was about to confront me? Is your representation what caused me to win my suit against the federal government for the suppressed evidence? John Mitchell and J. Edgar Hoover just fell over in irrational terror?

You claim to 20 years of daily reviewing (do you do anything else, like eat?)

Let me, then, give you another challenge and another measure of the devotion with which I applied myself to the writer's obligations: Show me how many cases you can cite, after 20 years, of a writer suing the Department of Justice and the FBI for what they suppressed, one case of the federal confiscation and suppressions of the court records of the public trial of an American, or any misuse of what I got by this suit. And then ask yourself if yours is an honest review when, with all that self-serving rubbish for which you had space, you found none for any of this. Or the fact that I did, in court, win a summary judgment, which is about as common as Jewish mayors of Cairo.

The fact is that you persist in your dishonesty, one case that comes to mind without rereading my letter is your failure to apologize for your invention that I "fell back on vague allegations about 'a fat man' and 'a short, slight man'." You did fabricate this, I did so accuse you, and you are silent.

If you can show me anything unjustified in what I wrote, unlike you, I will apologize. Unless and until you do, it is you who owe the apologies, to your readers, to your syndicate, to the editors, and to me. I don't think you are man enough for it. Nor do I think you are man enough to face me on your work or mine, in any forum, your own syndicate or in person before any of your peers of your selection.

Neither a free society nor a free book press can long survive the John Barkhams. If it is any comfort to you, you are not alone.

Sincerely,

Harold Weisberg

cc: Joseph Rabinovich