

Dear Richard and Peter,

6/6/93

My apologies to both! Until Dave Wrone phoned me toward the end of the morning I was under the impression that the letter was from Richard. I'd been careless and as soon as I got the last graf I laid the letter aside to think about it without looking at the signature. I just assumed it was from Richard, not having gotten a letter that I recall from Peter.

He asked me when the book would appear. I told him I ~~did~~<sup>do</sup> not know but was trying to encourage its fastest possible publication. He made two suggestions. One is to try to emphasize the important<sup>ce</sup> to high school and college teachers for the appearance not to be later than the other books so that they would be attracted to it and use it before spending money on the others. ~~and~~ The other is to point out what he referred to as my "uniqueness" in the field.

Because I said nothing about that I wondered later whether he had in mind what that could mean to these teachers and the sale for which they could be responsible, directly and indirectly, or in general.

Whichever, or if both, he makes the value of the point I addressed differently for the book, that I am alone among those writing in the field who is entirely factual, has never espoused or advanced any theory, and draw upon knowledge and records not duplicated by any other writers in the field- ever.

If this does not bear tomorrow's postmark it is because I am not seeing clearly enough.

Best to you all,

*Harold*

Dear Dick,

6/6/93

We are in virtually complete agreement. If you'd not forgotten some of what I've told you over a period of time, you'd have remembered this. Also, when Peter and I spoke I called some of it to his attention, asking him to be alert to it as he got additional chapters from Wrone. This, particularly true of the preface, foreword and introduction. I wrote the preface when I decided that I had to point and focus more at the very beginning. I had suggested to Peter that there might be content in the foreword and introduction that should be used elsewhere. Had it not been for the conditions of my life and how I've been feeling, that would have been the first thing I did. (Last month I had 17 days of major interruptions, mostly medical.) The same is essentially true of the repetition. Some was inevitable under the conditions of the writing<sup>Nb</sup> and its speed. I've been only too aware of this. I think I did mention it to Peter, but perhaps I did not. I think that in general repetition after first use is what should be eliminated, with the exception, and my recollection is not clear on this, of a possible few instances of intended repetition. But as you say, sometimes this intended repetition may be self-defeating. In summary, I have no problems at all with any of this. We are in agreement.

It was late yesterday, almost suppertime, before I could get to the mail. Because of a new one of these apparently minor medical nuisances, I highlighted your letter to be certain that in this morning's response I did not miss those matters. Later I'll reread your letter and this, I expect. But in any event, I'll have this to mail in the morning. First a blood vessel in my better eye hemorrhaged and then yesterday there was evidence of an infection. I'm on an optical antibiotic for the latter and the former is healing but there is serious impediment to my use of the eye, mostly from constant watering. So, I respond in the order of appearance in your letter.

You are quite correct in your second graf save for one word, in saying that the book demands much of the reader. I referred to this several times in recent letters- the New York lawyer<sup>lawyer</sup> who phoned to tell me that he had just reread Whitewash for the tenth time and found more in it each time and Wrone's surprised reaction on rereading Post Mortem. I think it is only for getting<sup>all</sup> that is in the books that demands much of the reader. From my extensive letters from readers those who do not get all on one reading are still more than satisfied. I do not recall a single complaint from those who recognized that there was more than they perceived when they reread. I do recall some letters from those who wrote and said they were glad they they decided they had to read slowly. Or, as I think you were saying, this is not a real problem. And your concluding comments in this chapter are some of what you may not recall clearly, what I hoped the potential would be when we spoke of this last July when you and David were here.

What I highlighted on the rest of this page I referred to earlier. This is also true of what carries over onto the top of the second page. Where repetition needs eliminating, it certainly should be eliminated. If I hear from Peter on this I'm sure we'll be in agree-



ment. You then get to what I ask you to give more thought. I begin by returning to your first graf on page one.

You do perceive some of what the intended thrust of all my work is, including very much in this book. But it is not limited to the government and its failures. All the many institutions of our society did fail, including the media. I use JAMA to symboliz~~e~~ the major med~~ia~~. In its field it is major.

No one thing troubled me as much as what you refer to~~s~~ self-quotation. It is that, of course. It also trouble~~d~~ Wrono and McKnight, who are authentic subject experts as well as historians. Both come to agree that it was the right way to do it. The point that I intended to re-emp~~h~~asize is that the truth and the basic fact was readily available and for various reasons was ignored. The result is that the major media failed in its responsibilities, the people were deceived and misled and the essence of represent~~ative~~ <sup>a government</sup> was frustrated. This is, I believe, a great national hazard, when these institutions fail.

And that crazy Lundberg has j~~u~~st recently underscored what I emphasize throughout. I knew about that in about November but it was just a couple of weeks ago that I was able to get a verbatim transcript. I'll use it in a short epilogue.

I think you may recall that I've said from before I beg~~an~~ to write that I intended a thorough documentation for the historical record. This is one of the reasons I did wind up deciding to use these lengthy sel~~l~~quotations. But it was not to self-quote. It was to be ~~overwhelming~~ in documenting that failure, most of all JAMA's, in the greatest propaganda campaign ~~against~~ in support of the official ~~with~~ mythology and in its attack on all criticism-based on deliberate ignorance of the fact. Lundberg was ~~not~~ only aware of his ignorance, he later flaunted it, saying <sup>also</sup> that he'd trust his life to Humes' ~~truthfulness~~. After I'd written almost all of the book. And Humes and Boswell both knew of my work and had copies of Whitewash. Boswell did comment on it. And I do make the point that honesty and normal journalistic standards required consultat~~ion~~ with the available information. As I'll be adding in the epilogus, Lundberg said his only role was that of journalist. If you'd like I think that when I am less distract<sup>ed</sup>, I can add to these reasons.

You conclude by asking if the same result can be obtained by <sup>merely</sup> citing these self-quotations <sup>from</sup> in my earlier books. I think not. For almost all who I hope will have this book, certainly most who will have access to it, my earlier books do not exist <sup>unavailable</sup> save in the Dell reprints of the first two. And I do not cite those editions. <sup>All</sup> my later writing is in terms of the original editions. <sup>I</sup> would have been an enormous effort and a great delay if I had had to look all those things up in the Dell editions. Moreover, virtually none except the most dedicated and persevering readers interested in the subject matter even know that Pops Mortem exists.

Or, I believe that citation will not make reader consultation with the earlier books possible. In addition, I want very much for that not to be ~~nee~~ necessary. I want this indictment to be self-sustaining. I think that in addition to this being important to perfecting

the historical record it is what most serious readers will want <sup>✓H</sup> and will give them not only a much better understanding, it will give them a higher opinion of the book and that is one of the major ways in which books come to be sold, reader approval conveyed ~~the~~ to those who know nothing at all about the book and are persuaded to get it.

I hope you will think about this and come to agree with me on it. At the same time, I do not argue that all those quotations absolutely must be as long as I made them. That is what I thought at the time but as the book developed, maybe quotations that full are not necessary. My belief, however, is that at least for the most part they make a better, a more informative and more persuasive book, <sup>They</sup> and <sup>if only cited</sup> eliminate the great frustration serious readers would feel in not having access to the information <sup>ru</sup> quoted. I think also that although it adds to the length of a long book, it will please serious reviewers and reporters who in most instances have to wonder what a citation or a footnote really means and whether it would sustain what is written if they had it before them.

With my citations of Whitewash there is an additional point: without questions Humes and Boswell had it and knew what it says and they nonetheless told Lundberg and Breo what they told them, <sup>it</sup> and is ~~was~~ used in JAM as the given word from above. In this sense I intended those quotations as a major charge in the indictment.

There is also what I believe is an additional benefit in not taking Peter's time to make what would be time-consuming changes, (That he is more familiar with the literature than you is not, I fear an ~~asset~~ asset. What he is familiar with is ~~the~~ the crap of commercializers, unscrupulous exploiters, ego-trippers who are subject-matter ignoramuses, the handmaidens of official miscreants.) Aside from, I think, making a more powerful book and to virtually all readers a much more informative book, it can speed production up by saving Peter's time. I do believe this can be very important for a ~~number~~ number of reasons, perhaps most of all for sales time to the anniversary, <sup>and</sup> because there will be an outpouring of the most awful trash that reviewers, ~~and~~ reporters and from what I hear regularly, serious readers <sup>will</sup> recognize <sup>and</sup> that the rest is trash.

I believe that if review copies are accompanied with a few words about me and my work they may well prefer reviewing this book to the others whose authors may not be unknown to them. If this leads to only one major review or one of two news stories, would not that alone justify any costs in rushing the book out so that it is on sale before the anniversary?

From my own experience in the field and from I hear by phone and read in letters I do believe this is important in terms of sales. Moreover, if the junk that will try to saturate the market does, may it not also discourage serious readers? Will they not say, as so many newspapers editors did when so much of it crossed their desks, more of that crap again, and usually without even reading it they threw it away,

Afterthought: <sup>do not</sup> ~~do not~~ the lengthy quotations add credibility to a very strong statement



of what is <sup>of</sup> controversial, and do they not tend to forestall criticisms of it?

If I did not early on make a clear statement of the reason for using these lengthy quotations, <sup>to let them stand</sup> if you agree, as I hope you will, that should be added at perhaps the point of the first lengthy quotation.

After a break for breakfast and a fast trip through the Post, the antibiotic inter-feres with vision enough for me not to try to read and correct what I've <sup>w</sup>ritten. So, hoping I've said what I intended, I conclude where I began: we are in virtually complete agreement. The "virtually" is because I feel strongly that using the lengthy quotations makes it a much better, much less questionable book by those with an interest in questioning it, a much better record for history and for serious readers as well as for buffs, a more useful and informative book. <sup>I</sup> If you disagree, I'll be disappointed but I'll accept it.

And I do appreciate some of your comments.

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260 FIFTH AVENUE  
NEW YORK, NEW YORK 10001  
(212) 889-9624

June 3, 1993

Harold Weisberg  
7627 Old Receiver Road  
Frederick, MD 21702

Dear Harold:

Your book, I think, is an important document. It adds several new dimensions to the common phrase "in fact" as in fact it meticulously pursues truths that have for thirty years been buried or distorted or denied or obfuscated in government departments, agencies, bureaus, and offices. Authority, it shows us, has consorted with irresponsibility, and the effects on American justice have been often as disastrous as the disservice to the American public has been vast.

Your book demands much of the reader; it requires patience, close attention, concentration. At the same time, though, it offers some compelling narrative, suspense, irony, and revelation. The thorough-going investigative technique is always admirable, and sometimes, it seems to me (as in Chapter 24), more than brilliant.

I have problems mostly with the preface, the foreword, and the introduction. First of all, I don't think the book needs all three. Both the preface and the foreword cover similar ground. Both pull the reader in too many directions, being at various times apologia, defense, argument, testament, critique, acknowledgement, overview. Both lack clarity of focus; they want a clearly discernible controlling principle that orders all their elements. They are also lengthy, and thus defeat their purpose. I think a preface of about twenty to thirty manuscript pages that clearly states your objectives and illuminates the experience that brought you to them would more readily engage the reader than do the discursive seventy-seven pages that now precede the first chapter. So much for the forest.

The trees are another matter. As you unremittingly catalogue and tirelessly argue the astonishing sequence of officialdom's failures and bureaucratic errors in and surrounding the autopsy, in addition to remarkably detailed evidence you offer clarity, insight, pointedness, and wit. The details are fascinating, and their accretion is argumentatively as well as rhetorically effective. At times, though, it is not always accretion; it is repetition, and sometimes, I feel, unnecessary repetition, which undermines the power of your exposition rather than reinforcing its significance. Apparent, too, is a tendency to repeat, sometimes verbatim, important points for emphasis; the result can be redundancy or indeed the loss of emphasis in over-emphasis. Obviously, editing in light of such principles would not involve deletion of huge chunks of text. Nor would it gut your prose. It would be extensive not so much in

terms of its volume as in its very careful examination of the text for what instances of repetition could justifiably be deleted throughout.

To speak to your specific concerns: Repetition that seems to the editor obviously unintended or clearly unnecessary will be edited out. Where questions arise as to authorial intent you will be consulted. If, in your opinion, the editor errs in judgment you will have the opportunity to correct and advise. No cuts will be made solely on the basis of cost.

Finally, regarding the self-quotation, which figures heavily in the composition of chapters 14, 15, 19, 20, and 30: My acknowledgement of the necessity for some of the information in the quoted material to provide a complete and comprehensive case does not make me any the more fond of the quotation itself. I'd like to see less extraction. I'd like to see essential information incorporated into the text. Could such material possibly be set as text and the chapter title asterisked for reference to a footnote indicating that much of the information in said chapter was previously published (or: appeared in slightly different form) in Whitewash?

As I am currently working against imminent deadlines on four fall titles (or is it five?) and have another major (mammoth!) project demanding my attention after that, I shall not personally be doing the editing. I shall of course consult with the editor, who will in fact be more familiar with the literature on the Kennedy assassination than I.

Most of the material in your book was new to me, and much of it therefore engrossing. Engaged as I was by the matter itself, however, I find that in retrospect what impresses me more is the method applied to the matter and what impresses me most is the mind that so deftly masters both.

Best regards,



Peter Skutches