

Mr. Howard Goodman, newsroom
The Philadelphia Inquirer
400 N. Broad St.,
Philadelphia, PA

Harold Welsberg
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Dear Mr. Goodman,

When I was given a copy of your March 9 article on Norman Mailer at Penn one of the quotes gave me the formula for the book I'd decided to do with the working title Mailer's Whitewash: Of the JFK Assassination. (Please forgive my typing. I'm 82, unwell and limited in what I can do. It cannot be any better.)

I would like your permission to use a few short quotes, what he said about history and novels being alike, both fiction and history being lies.

Your story does not say how Mailer came to spend four days at Penn. Of course he was promoting his book Oswald's Tale but I wonder how he came to incur the extra trouble and costs of doing it at Penn where there are so many universities where he lives. If you know and can tell me.

What gave me the formula for the book is his saying that the JFK assassination evidence, which he does not use, is "impenetrable." That is what I'll build to.

I am alone among those writing on the assassination is not pretending to solve the case with theories and in restricting myself to the official evidence. What is anything but "impenetrable" is the official evidence I'll use. I enclose a copy of the catalogue page on my eighth book due this month.

By a long series of FOIA lawsuits some of which were precedential and one of which led to the 1974 amending of the Act's investigatory files exemption I obtained about a third of a million once-withheld pages. Some years ago when Mailer indicated an interest in the assassination I offered him access to all I had. That was not exceptional. I believe the Act makes all who use it surrogate for the people and I have always made it all available, along with our copier, to all writing in the files. Most of whom I know will write what I do not agree with. It is all decided to a fine small local college where along with all my work it will be a free public archive. Not only do I not believe that theorizing is an acceptable substitute for fact, I began doing no theorizing in my first book, which was the first on the Warren Report and the assassination. It dates to 1965. Besides, with this documentary treasure, who needs theories? Other than the Mailers who will not do the work required to learn what the official evidence is and means.

In thinking of writing you earlier today I was reminded of my own childhood in Philadelphia and how different a city it was in so different a world. I wonder if the Inquirer has ever done such a story

I contributed a little to it in the early 1950s when I was on the Wilmington Morning News. The old Ledger, probably well before your time, had a Sunday feature section which also printed features I wrote then. Last time I was in your building, ^{used} when I was the Washington correspondent for Click, which the Annenbergs owned.

A few of the things that came to mind on how different ~~it~~ then was are the gas street lamps, the enormous outhouse in the first school I went to, on Susquehanna Ave. between 20 and ~~21~~ 21 Sts., that when I was eight my mother considered it safe enough for me to walk alone about a mile to the public library on as I recall Berks slightly to the west of Broad, and shagging flies that went over the Broad Street wall of old Baker Field and bounced down into the P & R north Philly terminal across Broad from ~~it~~. A boy who handed a ball in at any ticket window got in free, even batting-practise balls.

The north side of Baker Field was Lehigh Avenue. It was also the south side of where the old As then played, old Shibe Park. I think its western side was 22 Street.

In those days when there were no night games and few autos, the trolleys used to line up on Lehigh pointing both ways (it was double-tracked) beginning about the time ^{game} ended. These lines extended for blocks and blocks and what a mess it became if a game went into overtime!

I was born three blocks south of Shibe Park. That was a half of a block north of The Womens' Homeopathic Hospital.

In those days ambulances were horse-drawn and ~~except for~~ the ones I remember, from Hankenau, all were black and close to identical with the wagons from which bread, ice and milk were delivered daily. With in most instances the horses knowing when to start and when to stop.

Our closest firehouse was an altered corner house at 22 and York. 'y what I sight to see the sparks flying from their hooves as they charged drawing the pumpers in which steam was generated by ~~fires~~. And how the steam from the top of their tanks used to get close to horizontal when they really sped.

The most exciting sight in those days before even radio was a runaway horse.

I ramble but if it has not been done I think it could be fun doing it and fun reading it.

I'll appreciate permission and anything you can think of that I might use.

By the way, there is much about Arlen Specter in NEVER AGAIN! I've not been told ~~the~~ the pub date and have no idea what copies, if any, the publisher will distribute.

Sincerely,

Harold Weisberg
Harold Weisberg