

Rt. 12, Frederick, Md. 21701
2/14/76

Mr. Ben Bradlee
Executive Editor
The Washington Post
1150 15 St., NW
Washington, D.C. 20004

Dear Mr. Bradlee,

This requires no response. I do, as you close asking, understabd. Perhaps more than you can recall after all these years. But I do not remember what I wrote 12/14/75. If whatever the offer was had an appeal to you you would have referred to it.

Lane and what he represents, however, are a different matter. It is part of the problem you and others in your position can't cope with and is that to which I have dedicated all these painful years can, I must.

Threats and Lane go together as pimps and whores. I did hear of his threats. On the first occasion I wrote one of his flunkies that if I heard of another I'd write him. I heard of another and I spelled out in writing, I think certified mail, much more than I said to whichever of your reporters asked me. I made this explicit: that he had threatened suit; that I know his threats are self-serving, but I wanted to give him more than adequate basis for suit; and followed with a modest denunciation that, were it not true would be libelous. I have, in the ensuing months, heard nothing from Mark Lane.

He will not sue you. I doubt he'll threaten again. And I wish the whore would sue me, as I asked and gave basis for - if I erred.

On your other comments I can give you neither assurance nor relief. And if you and the ~~Wash~~ Post want to cop out officially as you have in fact on one of the turning points in history, that is for you and the Post to deal and live with. It is a different concept of the function and responsibilities of the press than I would prefer. And practise. I am probably the country's smallest and certainly least financed or profitable publishers. Although I am without resources people do not sue me. If I sue them, I charge them, and it is unreported in the major media, which has problems living with itself.

I feel my obligations and while I can move I will try to meet them. Today I can't and don't-drive to Washington. When my last book went to press - and you suppressed any mention of it - I went to the hospital. There were no side benefits for my phlebitis and ~~now~~ there now are ^{actual} ~~actual~~ complications. But I have three current FOIA suits, two against the FBI, and others I'll be filing. There has been perjury in these suits. I proved it in court. In response the judge threatened me and ~~by~~ pro bono lawyer. When we accepted his challenge he backed off, meanwhile rewriting the law - unreported.

If on appeal, now pending, the perjurers are upheld, there will be no personal loss for me. If I can be active another 20 years I have that much writing I can now do. But the law was passed for what you represent. It is tragic that those like ~~me~~ have to try, with ailence ~~from~~ you, to give it viability - for you.

If with your experience and all the competent staff upon which you can draw after 12 years can't tell sheep from goats I sorrow for you. And if as the editor of a ~~paper~~ paper making the pretensions of the Post you "have decided to get out" that is your business as with mere mortals it would be a question to what in mortals is called a conscience. But may I ask, intending no impoliteness, when were you not out?

If when you refer to getting "hopelessly clobbered by one side or the other" you are referring to me, you err. Going back to 1966, when you gave orders to Geoffrey Wolff, your book review editor, that amounted to reviewing all books but mine in syndication - and you did - you then heard nothing from me.

In fact, beginning when I first put suppressed FBI evidence in your hands I can't remember a single demand I've made of you. On the other hand, without income or subsidy, I have spent all the time they wanted with countless of your reporters. For this I've neither asked nor received anything, unless you consider what is ordinarily newsworthy and is suppressed a reward. Yet with what over the years the Post has printed about me you talk to me about being clobbered?

You tell me that you "deal with any of the assassinations or the assassination inquiries..." Brrrree when p on either! And what of an official nature is there that you can honestly tell me is an "assassination inquiry?"

You tell me "I will try as best I can to report developments?"

There is a place at which the buck stops.

I gave Barry Sussman a copy of my Post Mortem. He gave it to then overworked George Hardner. You report "developments?" Then I ask you to take the few moments required to look in the index under "Burkley, George," and tell yourself (you do not have to answer me or to me) there is no "development" or what by normal news standards is not news in this tiny part.

When with this and similar experiences I knew that the content would be unreported I held a press conference and said what might be - that I ~~would~~ charged perjury and its subornation and challenged all named to appear before any duly constituted Congressional committee with them and ~~be~~ subject to the penalties of perjury, AP and UPI - you get both - reported it. But you didn't. I then knew I had a debate with David Belin scheduled for the following Wednesday at Vanderbilt University. With this prelude, and with Belin having a copy of Post Mortem - from me - I laid out the case against him and this "new evidence" people like you ask for and never look at - he two and a half days later joined my decade-old demand for a full, open Congressional investigation (he didn't put it that way), you reported his sanctimony but not what caused it. (I was then fresh from the hospital and had to be helped onto the plane back, unable to wear shoes, my feet were that swollen.)

You report "developments?" You reported Belin's self-serving propaganda, no more, and the Post knew better. As it also did not report the wire copy cited above.

When the Post (not alone) was not interested, I turned over to Newsday proof that Hoover had penetrated the extremist group that caused the violence that led to King's return to Memphis where he was killed. You got the Newsday service. You did not use this story.

I can't give you absolution. I can and I do sympathize with your problem, going back to when you declined Kenny O'Donnell's invitation to the autopsy and instead opted the wake. As I have written, I could not have witnessed that autopsy. But had ~~you~~ you then been the reporter and accepted the invitation, as I have also written, you would have found a military barricade and the "White House invitation worthless. This is not personal criticism. I would not have been able to see that cutting up. But the fact is all of subsequent history turned on your choice because, as a reporter, I have no doubt you would have reported. (Years ago I mentioned this to Larry Stern. When I got a snide rejoinder I did not tell you. He works for you, I don't.)

You have not, just not, "decided to get out." You and the Post have always been ~~then~~ ^{then}. When you both change the country may be healthier.

Sympathetically,
Harold Weisberg

The Washington Post

1150 15TH STREET, N. W.
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20071
(202) 223-6000

BENJAMIN C. BRADLEE
EXECUTIVE EDITOR
(202) 223-7510

February 12, 1976

Dear Mr. Weisberg:

Excuse me for taking so bloody long to answer your letter of December 14. This strike is doing nothing for promptness or civility.

My examination of your offer was interrupted by a letter from Mark Lane aggressively threatening a libel suit because you had characterized him so succinctly.

An increasing problem for me every time I deal with any of the assassinations, or the assassination inquiries, is that I get immediately and hopelessly clobbered by one side or another.

To such a point that I have decided to get out of this, to volunteer nothing. I will try as best I can to report developments, but I am not going to stage debates.

I hope you understand.

Sincerely,

Ben Bradlee

Mr. Harold Weisberg
Cog d'Or Press
Route 12
Frederick, Md. 21701