

Mr. Steve Bell
ABC News
1124 Connecticut Ave., NW
Washington, D.C.

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Dear Steve,

You asked how I manage to do what I do, and I said, ^{sp}spontaneously, the question never having been asked before, "haphazardly." Within a year I'd been able to bring some changes to pass, first in court and then administratively. Judge Gesell held that I meet the conditions for a waiver of charges under FOIA, said that if it were not for me and my persistence against considerable odds we'd not know the Freedom of Information Act as we do, and ordered that the JFK records of the general releases be given to me without cost and promptly. Administratively, the Department of Justice gave this broader application, rightly so, that I be provided with all JFK and King assassination records without charge. Not only do I meet the requirements but along with all my other work all these records are becoming a permanent, free, public archive at a university.

You may remember that you were able to ask me that penetrating question only because after three refusals I dropped the work I'd gone to Dallas to do to appear on Good Morning America. My lawyer persuaded me that I should seek to use the opportunity to introduce some balance. This meant to defend the FBI against baseless charges made by James Earl Ray and his lawyer, ^{the}Mark Lane.

The same FBI has now undertaken to "stop" me and my writing, the word it used in 1967 records I've obtained, by revoking the administrative waiver of charges. It also refuses to process any of my requests until I provide assurances that I will pay open-ended search and copying costs. This means that even those proper requests it has not acted on in a dozen years -under a 10-day Act - it even now will not search for compliance.

When as it known my only regular income is modest Social Security I cannot do that.

It thus knows that by this means it can "stop" me.

I doubt that it has taken this step on its own and that it means a drastic reduction in what will be disclosed on anyone under FOIA, even without legislative amending.

In a sense this is a break for me if it holds up because it will reduce the entirely public work that for years has taken up most of my time and limited resources.

But it will not be good for the Act and for the right of the people to know. It will be a serious hindrance in completing the available record on the most subversive of crimes in a society such as ours. I wish you had been able to see what I have been able to accomplish since that broadcast. Part of what the Department of Justice is now supposedly re-investigating is what I obtained knowledge of in my continuing litigation. The FBI merely did not report it.

It doesn't love me for this and all the other things I've rescued from oblivion, or for my part in the 1974 amending of the Act, which opened its files for all you now know about, or for two recent appeals court decisions that strengthen the Act and restrict the false representations the FBI can get away with.

As you know, I do not seek personal publicity, and I now do not for personal purposes. However, in order to undo the wrong now done, which most of all is not to me, I do need help and I seek it, if you can be of assistance.

It is a serious enough matter if any federal agency determines to stop anyone's writing and work. When that work deals with the functioning and non-functioning of the federal agency, particularly in time of great crisis and thereafter, perhaps it is more serious. But the real thing I suggest is what this work is and has been, what it is tangibly and what it can mean. This is what is being stopped, not me personally.

As of now there are about 60 file cabinets of material. Most is once-suppressed official records, most what even a Presidential Commission did not get. For all of the five years in which I obtained most of these records I was ill, beginning with pneumonia and then more serious and permanent ailments. I cannot qualify for commercial medical insurance because of the number of conditions that can require surgery. Until two years ago I did not have even Social Security as regular income. I had none. That one man, with what might be called intellectual resources only, could do what I have done, particularly under the conditions and limitations I faced, and put together an unparalleled archive of this magnitude, is not, I think, an everyday occurrence. Having done what I have done I'm giving it all away so that it can forever be available to all.

Access and use does not await my death and the transfer of the records to the university. They are being used now, by scholars and by the press.

When I have come to what I regarded as newsworthy items that were not too complicated I have given them away, even what I had what for me is expensive litigation. I've even held press conferences at my own expense to give these records away and usually with other pertinent records available. I paid for the xeroxing, too.

This will not stop me, of course. It will merely prevent, if not overturned, my acquisition of more and important records to make available to others. I am after many of them, matters under now frustrated administrative appeal.

I don't know what if anything you can do, but if you can think of something, thanks.

Sincerely,

Harold Weisberg