

Court gives Weisberg access to FBI papers on JFK shooting

By **ROLLEE ATKINSON**
Staff Writer

A final chapter may never be written revealing the true facts in the assassination of John F. Kennedy, a local author and critic of the federal investigation into the 1963 shooting in Dallas has concluded.

Even as a select Congressional committee collects evidence which has warranted a re-opening of the case and as tens of thousands of FBI documents are being released on the previously secretive FBI investigation, author Harold Weisberg doubts the truth will ever be known.

"But who killed John Kennedy or why is no longer the important issue here," said Weisberg, author of several books on the Kennedy killing and the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr.

"What is more important is how our federal institutions performed in supporting a cover-up of the facts and to seek ways to avoid it happening again," he said. The author charged the FBI, CIA, National Security Administration and others with censoring and manipulating facts of the case.

Monday, Weisberg won a round in federal district court against the FBI and gained free access to documents he has been seeking since 1968.

Weisberg charged the FBI with "news management" and "stonewalling" while denying him access to the FBI records over the last decade.

Later in the day, Weisberg held a news conference at the National Press Building to brief newsmen on what to expect and not expect in a new avalanche of FBI documents to be released on Wednesday.

"Don't expect any new revelations about the assassination," Weisberg told an audience of media representatives. He went on to offer his assistance in sifting through the massive release of FBI documents. "You might find some interesting points on how the FBI operates, but that will be about all."

Earlier, in court before Judge Gerhard A. Gesell, Weisberg's lawyer Jim Lesar said his client had been the target of "obscene tactics" at the hand of the FBI while they violated the Freedom of Information act.

"If anyone else had done what they did to me," Weisberg said from his

home on Monday night, "the FBI would have gone all out to seek criminal charges." He charged the FBI with harassment and tactics aimed to label him as a "conspiracy theorist and

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kook."

The court ruled in Weisberg's behalf and agreed the FBI had failed to make available documents pertinent to Weisberg's investigation of the FBI's handling of the Kennedy shooting.

Weisberg had filed over 25 separate claims since 1968 under the Freedom of Information act seeking FBI records. Law requires the agency in question to respond within 10 days. However, Weisberg's requests had gone 10 years without a reply, his lawyer contended.

Weisberg's motion in court Monday was filed against Attorney General Griffin Bell and his top aide, Benjamin Civiletti. In a separate letter to Bell, the local author called for the dismissal of persons responsible for withholding public information from him and the public.

Judge Gesell ruled that Weisberg's claims were in the best interest of the general public and that the documents should be made available free of charge. Gesell also ordered the FBI to reimburse Weisberg for some of his past expenses in copy fees for records.

In December, the FBI released 40,000 pages of Kennedy investigation related material. At the time, news reporters complained the massive pile of documents were incomprehensible. The

papers, stacked in one pile, were over 10 feet tall.

"That was the FBI's way of managing the news," said Weisberg. "They knew reporters wouldn't be able to wade through all that — so, in effect, they dictated how the story would be handled."

A similar barrage of FBI documents will be released Wednesday, as the FBI continues to clean its closet of past assassination investigation documents.

"These are just central office documents," explained Weisberg, "the most important stuff never leaves the field offices where it's easier to control."

While federal agencies worked to thwart the efforts of the local insistent critic of the Warren Commission and other official versions of the political shootings in Dallas and Memphis, Weisberg said they also "worked to characterize anyone who questioned these versions as 'nuts'."

Telling of the cover-up practiced by the Justice Department and others, Weisberg contends "the door to the Justice Department in D. C. was always kept locked until recently."

"The inscription above the door reads: 'A place of justice is a hallowed place.' Now," Weisberg said, "I know why the door was locked — to keep justice out."

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Critic to Get Free FBI Set Of JFK Files

By George Lardner Jr.

Washington Post Staff Writer

U.S. District Court Judge Gerhard Gesell refused yesterday to delay the FBI's impending release of thousands of additional documents bearing on the assassination of President Kennedy, but agreed that author-critic Harold Weisberg should get a free set "with all reasonable dispatch."

The FBI plans to make public on Wednesday some 40,000 pages of headquarters documents on the 1963 assassination at a cost of 10 cents a page for those who want their own copies. The bureau released an initial 40,000 pages last month on a similar basis.

An outspoken critic of the Warren Commission and author of six books on the JFK murder, Weisberg noted that he has had freedom-of-information requests for such documents pending for years and that he had asked for a waiver of fees in mid-November. He filed for a federal court injunction in late December, arguing that he was entitled to a free set at least by the time the final batch was made public.

Charging that such voluminous FBI releases amounted to "media events" that effectively camouflage unjustifiable deletions and paper over "a very careful job of sifting and concealing," Weisberg said the Justice Department and the FBI had completely ignored his request for a waiver of the fees, which he said he could not afford.

Announcing his decision from the bench after an hour-long hearing, Gesell was sharply critical of the government's delay in responding to Weisberg's request for more than 50 days. The Justice Department offered him a reduced rate of 6 cents a page last week, but Gesell said "it is apparent no consideration whatever" was given to Weisberg's claims of poor health and indigency.

"The equities are very substantially and overwhelmingly in plaintiff's favor," Gesell said. He said that the records would not be coming to light now were it not for earlier freedom-of-information litigation by Weisberg. This led to a congressional change in the law, opening the door to FBI investigatory records.

The judge, however, declined to hold up the Wednesday release, on grounds that the disclosure of the documents was the "pre-eminent consideration." Weisberg's lawyer, James H. Lesar, said later that he understood the FBI would mail Weisberg copies of the forthcoming 40,000 pages the same day.

Wednesday Release For JFK Documents Scheduled by FBI

United Press International

Another half ton of FBI documents on the 1963 assassination of President Kennedy will be made public Wednesday, with the file on the slaying "open-ended" and a congressional investigation still under way.

The first installment in the massive 200-volume FBI assassination file, costing \$138,000 to compile, was released last month. The 40,000 pages exploded no time bombs but revealed the incredible efforts expended by an army of FBI agents in running down every tip and rumor on the Nov. 22, 1963, murder.

The second installment, 58,000 pages, will cover the continuing investigations from September, 1964—where the first installment left off—up to recent times. An FBI spokesman, who has seen all the material, said the documents to be released Wednesday will contain nothing dramatically new.