

my reference to LBJ's effort to rewrite part of our history, using Fortas as his agent, in this letter to Yardley, dates to the first wave of books critical of the office's solution to the JFK assassination. Fortas, from the FBI's own records, was uneasy and opposed to what LBJ wanted - for J. Edgar Hoover to write a book critical of the critics.

Fortas did go to the FBI on it. The people he dealt with there perceived his lack of enthusiasm for the idea, and they evolved a different approach that Fortas jumped at to get the thing over with.

The FBI got a friendly reporter, Sid Epstein, then of the Washington Star, to write a letter to Hoover, in return for which he would get an exclusive response that would make news. The FBI drafted the letter for Epstein and he used the letter it gave him to write it.

The FBI then used this letter as the peg on which to hang a four-page press release that got international attention.

I have these records in the subject file under the Star and Epstein and perhaps under Fortas.

The last time I saw Fortas was at the memorial for Cliff Durr, who had refused to accept reappointment to the FCC by Truman because of Truman's misnamed "security" ploy, exposed for what it really was by Carl Bernstein in his book on his parents. Durr, if you do not recall, returned to Alabama instead and practiced civil-rights law, not a way to get rich. I ~~like~~ believe he then represented Joas Parks when she refused to take a back seat on a Birmingham bus.

We all of us have flaws, including those of us who try not to.

I get the impression from the Prettyman review of the Kalman book that she lacked balance if not also fairness in her account of the life of a fine man to whom the country is greatly indebted for the truly fine things he did by exaggerated reference to those things for which he is subject to criticism.

Compare, for example, with the public and press treatment of both Nixon as a person and of his books after he was the first president to resign to avoid impeachment.

We mistreat our liberals this way, not our conservatives.

There is another item in today's Book World that is minor but you may find interesting. It relates to Richard Abshire, under "Chandler in Dallas". Under the name of "Anderson" Abshire agreed to be the ghost writer for the despicable Ricky White who seeks wealth from the complete fabrication, that his ^{father} was one of JFK's assassins. The Post did not mention this but it got considerable attention elsewhere. Well, it is not a complete fabrication. Some of it is cribbed from a novel, some from a cheap novel pretended to be non-fiction and some from a potboiler that pretended to be a book reviewing three books. I understand that White and Abshire have parted ways, but initially he went for White's palpable, untenable concoction.

Sincerely,



Harold Weisberg