

Mr. Haynes Johnson, newsroom
The Washington Post
1150 15 St., NW
Washington, D.C. 20071

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Dear Mr. Johnson,

"Camelot" as you use it in today's Outlook piece is a fiction, attractive to those who use it, whether from its attractiveness or from their lack of knowledge, but it is not based on fact. I have what I believe is substantial evidence that despite - really contrary to its widespread use most Americans do not think of JFK as Arthur or of his administration as Camelot.

Although it has never been easy for those who read about my work to write me, those citing it with a single exception not giving my address, I've gotten at least 20,000 unsolicited letters from strangers interested in the assassination. They include expressions of emotion and respect and approval but I can't recall a single letter reflecting this Camelot nonsense.

During the late 1960s and early 1970s I made innumerable collegiate appearances and I can't recall a single Camelot belief in any of the many expressed reactions to the man, to his Presidency or to his assassination.

I hear from people who were infants or small children when he was assassinated, from those who had not been born, but never in any Camelot sense.

You get close to it in the last third of your article, rather in part of that third, where you quote Bradlee. Bradlee as quoted refers only to JFK's "promise." The people saw more than mere promise. They ^{and see} saw a President they came to love and respect, one they believed had a genuine interest in them and their lives.

How many presidents do you remember of whom this can be said?

They believed he did not lie to them. How often did he? How does this compare with the records of other presidents of your lifetime?

Do you and the Bradlees really regard what he did beginning in October, 1962 and what he then continued with ~~was~~ mere "promise?" I believe the people had and have a better gut understanding despite the extensive revisionism of which I regret very much you are now part.

Arguably it is not unfair to judge a president's personal conduct by standards we do not apply to ourselves, ^{but} it remains a fact that wise or not there was no harm to the nation from JFK's. Or Cleveland's or FDR's or Eisenhower's or that of others in high position. I think that because there was no harm from it, it is wrong to judge him by it when there is so much by which he can be judged. (I have some personal knowledge of it from one of his woman friends whose guest I was and with whom I had long conversations about him and them.)

One of the many problems those of you who write such articles face is the dependability of your sources. I am disappointed in your ^{re}prises of and endorsements of two wretchedly

bad ones, ^{by} Reeves and Beschloss. The disappointment comes from your failure to use your critical faculties. Both are biased and dishonest. If you had as clear a recollection of your own book "The Bay of Pigs" as I think I have you should have perceived that Beschloss lied and knew he was lying. From your having lived through what he writes about and having written about some of it you ^{also} should have spotted his selectiveness and his omissions.

You say that JFK "sanctioned CIA plots to kill Castro" at the beginning and toward the end refer to "the United States plot to assassinate" him. False! and if you want the proof I'll be glad to send it to you from the CIA records I have.

Perhaps your source was Helms' House Select Committee on Assassinations testimony. It and much of his other testimony was self-service and false, not infrequently perjurious. It is a CIA fiction that it engages in such projects only with presidential authority. The CIA's own records in this matter leave it without question that neither JFK nor Robert even had knowledge of the plots before they were exposed. In the one in which Giancana was involved knowledge was restricted to only six high officials of the CIA itself.

Aside from referring to JFK as an assassin when he wasn't and encouraging your trusting readers to rush out and get two books obviously designed to destroy his reputation and his record - and their faith in and love of the man - what evaluation of that President and his administration do you give your readers? I recall Nothing of substance.

Is Willy Smith really relevant? Id Camelot?

In a sense lost in your article, if not in your thinking, Camelot is because so often beginning in October 1962 JFK was Merlin and he did remember the future." His public record is clear on this, in his speeches, like at American University, and in his accomplishments, like the first of the efforts to defuse the world, the limited test-ban agreement. You should be able to remember some if you try.

Going back to FDR in our recent history, how many have we had in high office, particularly as presidents, the people have or feel they have any reason to love and respect, leaders they had ^{or have} any reason to believe cared for them and their welfare? Can you think of one not only more than - other than JFK of whom this is true?

Particularly because of the current national distress that increases daily I am so sorry that by fictions, untruths and irrelevancies you have undertaken to destroy some of the love and respect the people had for a man who did care for them and their future and who did have real accomplishments, not only "promise."

Sincerely,

Harold Weisberg
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