
My urge to praise [sic] Weisberg.

Kurtz: "If Wrone has an irresistible urge to praise Weisberg and attack other researchers, he should do it once, not repeatedly." He wants a single praise and then be done with it. In other places within his several reports on the manuscript he makes other comments on Weisberg similar in tenor to this. So, here while examining this phrase I shall also take the opportunity to address Weisberg as a factor.

1. The real question.

More fundamental questions lie at the root of this rude and strange comment than merely Weisberg's relationship to the footnoting as a source. The first question really is: Who are my actual sources for information found in the text of the manuscript? The second question is: Who else could I have properly cited in place of Weisberg? To answer them in an understandable manner I must focus on Kurtz's objectivity and this in turn necessarily drives to the issue of his competence in this area. I shall show he is not objectivity and he lacks competency.

After addressing these questions I shall also briefly discuss two distinct points within the sentence: his inaccurate, false, and distasteful depiction of my scholarly critique of writers as an "attack" and his peculiar adherence to an unusual non-scholarly "mono-citation" artifice rather than affirm standard scholarly code, style, and method.

2. Kurtz's omission and it implication.

The most disturbing scholarly flaws underpin Kurtz's focus on Weisberg. Throughout his several comments on Weisberg he does not provide a single instance

where another author was the source of a particular point I made and referenced to him. Throughout his review, too, he does not provide me with a single instance where I said anything that was inappropriate when I instanced Weisberg as a source. Thus, his hasty observations, regretful to conclude, bear the stamp of common or street opinion and do not reflect that ~~one~~ embraced by an adherent of the scholarly method.

As I affirm in my book, the scholarly method must govern any inquiry into the subject of the Kennedy assassination; and, that postulate, I further aver, is in keeping with the high ends and general purposes of the Kansas Press.

3. Kurtz's legitimacy.

Kurtz's unwarranted and unscholarly focus on Weisberg can be seen as obscuring his own fundamental weaknesses as a scholar, raises just criticism of him as a JFK expert, and imposes caution upon his abilities as a peer reviewer. I divide my remarks into two categories, the personal and the scholarly.

At the personal level Kurtz's tone and intensity of comment suggests that he might be jealous anent Weisberg's abilities and proven track record. While that element may be presumptuous of me based on such few pages of commentary at the same time as he expresses himself both here and elsewhere his word choices and phrasing also reveal a tinge of bitterness in his comments about the fact Weisberg first brought to light most of the information and issues in the evidentiary base of the crime. From time to time a third personal element joins perceived jealousy and expressed bitterness, to invade his commentaries, that of the complexity of the subject matter simply being beyond his abilities and he is overwhelmed.

4. His 1982 book and Weisberg.

From the personal I now turn to Kurtz's scholarly base. First I shall demonstrate that Kurtz's own 1982 work emerged in a known Weisberg milieu that I shall show influenced his work. That in turn requires an extensive presentation of Weisberg's qualities as a JFK scholar. This falls into several categories, such correspondence, publications, personal archive openness, work with critics, guidance of graduate students, and scholarly personae. When I complete this brief overview of Weisberg then I shall remark about his impact on the JFK assassination inquiries and why he must be used. That will be followed with a characterization of Kurtz's limitations that preclude accepting his judgment about Weisberg as meretricious.

In 1981 and 2 when Kurtz was researching and writing there is not a scintilla of doubt Weisberg was well known and had a marvelous, powerful, well-respected national reputation.

I

a. Correspondence. Weisberg's power and influence is attested first of all in his extensive correspondence with critics, researchers, the press, documentary film producers, and the general public where his advice was genuinely sought and freely provided. To some not acquainted with either Weisberg's letters or with the role of correspondence in defining a topic this comment might read as a minor thing, but it is not. It is major and profound.

The very quantity is staggering. His extensive files of correspondence, aide memoirs, memoranda, etc., with researchers, critics, press, professors, newspaper reporters, magazine writers, and others, in my files and in the files of Hood College, and elsewhere, number perhaps as many as, fifteen thousand typescript letters by 1982. This

235, 600

does not count general commentary letters to him by the public which he and his wife estimated to be above 20,000, but I believe is much higher. Each of these he replied to.

But in addition to the vast number of letters and memoranda Weisberg sent into the JFK cognoscenti world, to the press, Congressmen and the like, the quality is more impressive, laden as they are with analyses, research facts, perspectives, documentary summaries, often accompanied with copies of key new documents, and the like that provide a magnificent insight into the subject matter replete I should add usually with internal references to sources.

Since 1982, the number of these single spaced, ¹³ 8 point type, letters must have increased by another fifteen thousand, very conservatively estimated and hampered by the hasty time factor imposed upon this time consuming and laborious effort necessary to respond to the peer review from being more thoroughly defined.

The fundamental point about the correspondence must be clearly stated. Weisberg was not only known and respected, but was an intellectual and scholarly force of massive proportions in the evolving JFK conflict. He was a Mississippi in a land of rivulets.

Weisberg was inescapable.

b. Publications. By that time, 1982, he had published seven books on the JFK assassination. His publications are without conjecture and devoid of theory, focus^{ed} on the documentation of the crime and its investigation, and were not only read by the research community, the general public, and the media, but also by leading investigative reporters from major newspapers. Since then he has published two others.

Within them he has brought forward the facts of the criminal aspects of the crime. His work was used shamelessly and without citations for the most part to orient and set forth the facts by Mark Lane, Josiah Thompson, Jim Garrison, Robert Groden, and on and on.

c. Law suits. Weisberg did what no other person did. In twelve suits he sued the government for records and obtained through this arduous battle over a third of a million pages of records. These suits were not what someone who has not experienced the wrath of the federal government imagines. They were hard fought, with complex issues and thick affidavits filed, several by Weisberg were several hundred pages in length and could be published as a book. In the course of one case the FBI admitted in court that Weisberg knew more about the assassination than anyone in the FBI [see attachment labeled FBI]. Can any admission by that wretch of an agency be more telling of Weisberg's knowledge of the subject? Can you locate anyone who has been so recognized by that agency? This is not a passing fancy of a fact, but a reluctantly admitted statement engendered by Weisberg's great legal effort and personal daring in court where he hazarded prosecution and possible incarceration if he failed. [More is in my full archive comment on the report]

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d. Personal archives. He threw open his personal archives based on his massive amount of research notes, government documents, and literature organized in easy to use subject categories, but also the FBI, CIA, and other records he had retrieved from federal squirreling and secrecy. Access was given without stint or restriction to ideology, left or right. Many authors by 1982 had freely used his resources and free photocopying machine.

e. Work with critics. By this time too, 1982, Weisberg had actively assisted dissenters and supporters of the Warren Commission conclusions for over fifteen years. This took among other forms⁵ of orienting the largely lost and often ignorant putative authors to issues, guiding them to records, suggesting approaches to issues, and if desired critically reading manuscripts.

For examples among scores by 1982, I shall cite two published authors. Robert Groden of Zapruder film notoriety stayed at his home for ^{a long series of weekends} ~~several days~~, Weisberg suggested the ^{what Groden did} ~~mechanism~~ Groden used to slow down the film to make a visual impact and for study. That Groden later abandoned objectivity for illusory fame and pecuniary reward is a great tragedy. Howard Roffman's Presumed Guilty was a quintessential instance of the scholarly monograph and his proper mechanism ^{enter} to law school and later an extremely successful legal career with Lucas films. It rooted in long ^{summer} stays with Weisberg, use of his archives, and the assistance from Weisberg in critical reading of the manuscript. There are literally two score others in this time period.

He assisted Wrono through the decades by providing him without charge over two file cabinets of legal documents, FBI and CIA documents, and other data. That is twenty linear feet. And, they're other documents, plus correspondence.

f. Direction of graduate work. Under Weisberg's direct tutelage and assistance he produced at least five doctoral dissertations relating to the JFK assassination, perhaps more. The word choices in the preceding sentence are a valid expression of the fact. He served perhaps twice as many master degree candidates, not to count undergraduate honor theses, high school students, and numerous teachers. To many not acquainted with this process it should be set forth in a little detail.

These green and anxious students showed up at his doorstep often bewildered by the rampant confusion in the subject area, not having located a meaningful archival access, and suffering from misdirection and jealousy from a plethora of dissenters. These young college folk came from some of the top universities in the nation. Their professors while favoring their projects were of no help to them as the students faced the cark and moil of the critic battle and the complexity and controversy of the subject.

Weisberg helped them define the subject of their proposed work, directed them to appropriate files, explained and showed them to analyze documents at which they were lost although they were products of good liberal arts graduate schools. He suggested procedures to follow, read drafts [he could read and annotate, have almost total recall of the contents of a dissertation of several hundred pages in two days], discussed research questions and problems with them and in every respect was their graduate advisor, helper, and invaluable guide through the wilderness of the academic process.

I have personally met several of these individuals in Weisberg's home while they studied and researched. I have also read much of the correspondence, aide memoirs, and analyses that he provided these young people as he assisted them into the world of scholarship. Some of his students won honors. There is no question here on his significant and absolutely vital work with them on their theses; it cannot be gainsaid.

He had more Ph.D. students and masters students than most college professors do in their lifetime--and they were fine theses. One of his undergraduates honors theses advisee published his paper as a book; a master degree received an international award as outstanding,

g. Public opinion, the press, and Congress. In the course of the evolving JFK controversy Weisberg not only maintained sound relationships with the press but provided them access to his files, gave them information, and sometimes criticism. And, as significant, the press maintained a relationship with him.

Examples would take a book to relate and describe the impact. A few must suffice. On one occasion two reporters from the New York Times spent a week working in his archives, interviewing him, and being assisted in formatting the subject matter. He gave prolonged and fruitful assistance to the 1967 producers of CBS' documentary; that they and he could not alter the corruption of the final series is a question of corporate reactionary politics. His files are thick with correspondence, memoirs, and copies of documents provided the national press, who had almost universal respect for him, his knowledge, and self-effacing advice.

He worked with several members of Congress and several committees. The director of the Schweiker Committee Abzug Committee that investigated portions of the JFK cover-up. He assisted, corresponded with and was considered responsible and important by Senators Russell and Mathias. Some Congressmen and women, their aides and assistants, telephoned him on the issue, came to his home, and corresponded.

Summed up, there are two sub points to be addressed here. First, the role and importance of Weisberg was inescapable to any serious scholar working on a book. In addition to the reality, there is an additional and important observation to be made. Kurtz raised a caution about the Press' negative reaction to my book if my "reliance" on Weisberg continued in full form. That observation seems to be contrary to the historical reality of a positive relationship to him and must from the documentary record be seen as

an impulsive and invalid comment on his part. It is the exact opposite of what can be expected to occur.

h. Scholarly personae. From the time he began his inquiries until 1982 (and of course to the present, but we are here concerned with the Kurtz milieu while writing his book) Weisberg possessed a distinct scholarly personae that could stand as an exemplar for historians and critics. He did not seek wealth; he sought the good and the life of meaning. To that end he turned down numerous occasions to profit by the corruption of the assassination. He lived in poverty, never took a vacation. He effaced himself.

He sought neither laudatory comment nor even recognition from the authors, documentary film producers, and reporters that he assisted. The most stunning fact I have witnessed over the years is how several historians whom he provided with the documents, insights, mechanisms to achieve significant publications, and provided long discussions on the approach to the subject, did not mention him in their works at all, or acknowledge his invaluable archival support. They took all credit for "their" insights and research when in fact Weisberg provided the heart of their books. One won national honors for his book. But to Weisberg this did not loom as even a minor problem; the subject was primary and the issues must be advanced.

II

a. Responsible critics respect Weisberg, recognize his knowledge, and know that he has brought forth the basic facts of the assassination. This is a central to an evaluation of Weisberg's historical role in the assassination controversy. I realize it strikes the novitiate student of the assassination as a judgment somehow skewed or provided under hyperbolic tension or even strained to achieve effect. But it is the fact, based on both my

reading of most of the books on the assassination that includes my intimate connection with the evolving history of the subject as well as on the opinion several other responsible students of the presidential murder.

b. Beginning in the early 1990s illness and restricted physical activity intruded upon the work of Weisberg and forced him to contemplate the problems of the JFK assassination from a different perspective. He had read the material released by the FBI and CIA in his files and now decided to utilize it in examining the corruption of the subject inflicted upon the public by authors both right and left.

Accordingly, in the last decade he has written twenty-five manuscript books on JFK assassination authors to leave as a guide for historians of the future. One of them totals a quarter of million words and another on Newman, Oswald the CIA is two volumes. These examine the factual errors and corruption of evidence practiced by these writers. He critically examines both supporters and dissenters. Weisberg stands almost alone in the center. Some of these manuscript books (yet to be edited of course) are excellent, fully publishable in their own right and an invaluable antidote to the irrational strain that has almost conquered our history of the assassination.

b. Kurtz and the Weisberg milieu.

Any scholar--lay, academic, and professional--writing in 1982 on the assassination could not have escaped the impact and importance of Weisberg's achievements.

c. Crime of the Century & Weisberg.

Now I turn to an examination of Kurtz and his use of Weisberg where I note several factors are especially pertinent.

When Crime of the Century first appeared I immediately observed upon reading it that he did not cite Weisberg in the notes and in the bibliography he only partially listed his books. Given the importance and pervasiveness of Weisberg in the continuing struggle with the JFK crisis as I have just set forth above it seemed to me at the time to be impossible for a scholar not to have had knowledge of his work or its fruit if plucked by others.

Subsequent close examination of the volume exposed immediate reasons why this omission occurred. In the first place and most apparent to me was the singular fact that Weisberg had debunked as nonsense many of the conjectures that appeared in the Kurtz book, which is rife with them.

In addition to avoiding the scholarly dissent from his conjectural points I also discovered that Kurtz had utilized information that Weisberg had brought forward for the first time. But Kurtz did not footnote the source of the information to him, the person who had brought it forward. That omission always handicaps a reader for he would not have access to those sources to check for authenticity and accuracy and to gain further enlightenment. Other information appeared in Kurtz referenced to other authors who had lifted without attribution the facts from Weisberg.

Others noted the same thing. Attorney Lesar's review in the Journal of American History (Sept. 1983, 869), was by a person with subject matter knowledge of the crime and its investigation. He aptly wrote,

... Kurtz relies heavily on the work of Harold Weisberg and offers little information that Weisberg has not previously revealed.

The book lacks scholarship. *rest of quote*

From my conversations with other responsible dissenters I could put together a list of at least seven other objective subject matter specialists--attorneys, professors, school teachers, researchers--who could provide extensive and even more incisive comments on Kurtz's reliance on Weisberg's information.

In addition to the above comments another observation is in order. Because of Kurtz's factual errors few dissenters cite him and for the simple reason no objective subject matter critic can rely on the information he presents.

d. The irresistible urge.

In citing Weisberg I did not succumb to what Kurtz curiously phrases as "the irresistible urge" to praise him. My use was to reference to information or data or points that appeared in the content of his books and he first brought forth through his research and dedication to scholarship. This is the scholarly method.

e. Praise.

This is nonsense, based on an imperfect understanding of the assassination that distorts his perspective and warps his judgment. History requires that the citation goes to the person who first developed and published the information. This I do. If he calls that praise he is wrong.

f. Mono-citation.

The belief that I cite Weisberg repeatedly and that is found distasteful or somehow wrong, without specifying how that is, is mistaken. He suggests do it once, not repeatedly. I cite according to the standards of history, to indicate sources. Scholars have long established the rule to orient readers to sources. A single or mono citation is simply insufficient to accomplish this purpose; I follow history not the whims of Kurtz.

4. Conclusion on Kurtz and Weisberg.

1. The evidence demonstrates that Kurtz himself extensively relied on Weisberg and found nothing wrong about it at all. So, how can this be a deficiency on my part?

2. Weisberg must be cited as he is the originator of much of what we know about the assassination.

3. It is a canard to say reliance on Weisberg would somehow damage the book's reception among the establishment, especially the press. The contrary is so.

4. Kurtz has an imperfect understanding of the subject matter that continually manifests itself. He has forsaken one of the cardinal rules of scholarship taught in the graduate seminars on the Urbana, Illinois, campus. That is: Silence is golden. When you do not know do not expose your ignorance by speaking out.

5. Nevertheless, I believe a single page on Weisberg ought to be inserted somewhere in the manuscript to explain his credentials, position, and central importance. Perhaps this should be on a page just before the index.