

Rt. 8, Frederick, Md. 21701  
1/25/75

Mr. Herb Brubaker  
NBC News  
4001 Nebraska Ave., NW  
Washington, D.C. 20016

Dear Herb,

A one-man publisher can stay pretty busy even if he does not do the other things I try. Thus my delay in thanking you for your letter of the 28th.

While I deal with complex materials and the subject itself is by no means simple, I have never taken anything to NBC that did not lend itself to a "simple, understandable lead." With the latest book, the CIA part could not be easier to understand, simpler to say, or more relevant. It was newsworthy as it could be with the story that broke a month to the day after pub date and was hardly a secret before the Times changes its policy.

If I gave you the impression that NBC has a monopoly on making policy decisions and pretending they are news judgements, I apologize. I gave ABC the only xerox I had, before printing. They sat on it for two months and when they finally rejected it the reason given would disgrace the intelligence of a high-school freshman. When you did not come back to me I wrote CBS, a guy in New York who wanted for my first book a year before I printed it. No response yet. Not even "No!"

AP never mentioned any of the earlier books and I took copies there. UPI didn't even pick up the copy they said they wanted and would. The only way the Post managed to handle the story is when I saw a simply way of by-passing the national desk legitimately. The midnight shift at AP saw a story, people not familiar with policy decisions. Only then did UPI get interested and get its copy. And the farther from Washington the heavier the play. However, it meant almost nothing to me and the book because no book stores had it. (I heard yesterday from a man who had been trying to get a copy for two months. He finally heard of an address I left more than seven years ago and wrote me.) Yet it did accomplish one of the purposes of the book, to inform people. Without this can any form of representative society function? And what other purpose can the media have?

More than a year ago, after your people sat on Hunt's own voice proclaiming him a would-be assassin (THAT was not a TV news story?), I approached Elfin at Newsweek. He did not want me to talk freely on the ground that they were doing their own investigating and he wanted no conflict. So, he asked for a few headlines. I gave him some that have not yet been written and a fair number than since have. Week after week of scoops. No interest. It was all Watergate and CIA. Too many important stories were never written and just about none were when they could and should have been. So many Watergate stories remain secrets! (I had to lay the draft of my book aside in the conclusions for work on the Ray hearing and I have not been able to complete that chapter and read and edit the whole thing. The book holds much that should figure in coming investigations.)

You were not the only one I wrote asking that the letter go upward through channels. God knows what will happen to the country if the major media does not get over its hangups and self-cast concept of being the fourth arm of government.

Let me address this question of simplicity and comprehensibility in headline form so you can see that had anyone ever discussed this with me and not seen the possibilities they were there:

Nixon Staff Has Would-Be Assassin; Alleged King Killer "Framed," Federal Involvement;  
CIA, FBI All Ide -It's Right and Proper: Allen Dulles; Entire Government Feared J. Edgar  
Hoover: Chief Justice Warren; Warren Commissioner Russell Doubted Its Conclusions; TOP  
SECRET Transcript Claims "Terrible Characters" in FBI, CIA - Of "Limited Intelligence."

These are simple enough, comprehensible enough, and I think are newsworthy.

In 1966 I had the only book on a major subject. NBC was not alone in refusing to mention it, as news or otherwise. When friends spoke to friends on Today, I was given the message that I'd be acceptable on other subjects on which I'm an expert. I declined, not looking for personal publicity.

WRC had aired Bill Huie in frightful hoey. They refused to air me when you sent me there and made no response to my inquiry about fairness, with or without doctrine. The difference is that Huie was promoting Look magazine and the official mythology and I destroyed the fabrication and Huie both beyond repair. My book on the King assassination was, by traditional standards, newsworthy. Its and my record since also are. But not net and no major paper have ever mentioned either. For that matter we have established a new legal principle in this case and that is entirely unreported although the Supreme Court is now considering whether to hear a State appeal from it.

I will not hear from your people because they are embarrassed at being less than honest, less than professional and in knowing, as all good reporters do, that they fail to meet reportorial obligations. In the end this always makes a villain of me. It is like the raped woman being charged as an attractive nuisance.

Thanks for trying. Nothing personal.

Sincerely,

Harold Weisberg

# NBC NEWS

A DIVISION OF NATIONAL BROADCASTING COMPANY, INC.

4001 NEBRASKA AVENUE, N.W., WASHINGTON, D. C. 20016, EMERSON 2-4000

28 December 1974

Dear Harold,

I'm sorry no one at NBC had the courtesy to give you a reply. Did you call Peter Jeffries or talk with Don Meany?

Our company is reluctant to "buy" news, even if it's from an investigative reporter. (Frequently those involved in stories themselves will try to sell us so called exclusives.)

Your information is important, but to be frank, I think you need to come up with a simple, understandable lead and sell the story on that basis. Radio and television don't lend themselves to complicated stories. I know this doesn't say much for our media, but what else is new? I read an account of your new book in the Washington Post; at least you got attention from a major newspaper.

I'll pass on your letter to Meany. But in view of the negative response so far, I suggest you contact CBS.

Have a happy New Year.



Herb Brubaker