

NOTE THIS IS THE
BOOK REVIEW I DID
ON YOUR BOOK (which
took more than half
a year before they published
it). But better late
than never, I say — HAL.

copy to: H. WEISBERG

Castro, notably the soldier-of-fortune types who flocked to Miami to wage their own personal vendetta against Castro. Just to name a few; Frank Sturgis, Gerry Patrick Hemming (see author's interview with Hemming in *Back Channels, Volume 1. No.2 Pg. 22*), Alex Rourke, Mitch Wer Bell, Joaquin Sanjenis, among others. These are not the type of people whom you'd like to invite to dinner, let alone, marry your sister or become real pals with. But these were just the type of people that the CIA, operating out of their JM/WAVE station at the University of Miami, went to bed with, a sort of rouges gallery of the worst and the brave who, for their own purposes, constituted a mutual admiration society.

Deadly Secrets does a great job of tying in the mob and the CIA in their secret war against Castro, probably the best done in the JFK-Mafia literature. In the last part of the book, Turner and Hinkie tie in the late 1970's Johnson-Nixon vendetta against Castro in a war that seemed never to end. They also document the other CIA plans of destabilization in the region, notably in Haiti and Chile. This book is truly a classic concerning one of the deepest and dirtiest chapters of American history, one, that probably ended up getting a president killed along the way.

Case Open: The Omissions, Distortions and Falsifications of Case Closed. Harold Weisberg. (Carroll & Graf, New York, 1994, 178p., \$11.95)

In the late summer of 1993, Gerald Posner, ex-Wall Street lawyer and now "historian", thrust himself upon the world scene with his book, *Case Closed*, which offered what, he said, was conclusive proof that none other than one Lee Harvey Oswald had assassinated President Kennedy in November, 1963.

Hailed widely as the definitive and final version of history, Posner was accorded mountains of praise that any writer would've cut an eye tooth to obtain. Posner's literary output made him the instant darling of the media, and historians, academics and writers all but tripped over each other to give their new glamour boy unprecedented claim for a book on the assassination.

In fact, Posner's book was a virtual restatement of the Warren Report which had also concluded nearly thirty years earlier that Oswald was the lone malevolent force that carried out the infamous deed which has come to be known as "the crime of the century."

For those unfamiliar with Posner's work his conclusion of "no conspiracy" differed from the Warren Commission only in that he had now supplied the "motive" and also in that Posner had used what Random House (Posner's publisher) said were the "latest advances" in the sciences of computer technology and photographic enhancement. Boiled down, the "motive" is simply that Oswald wanted "his place in the sun." A Hollywood gossip columnist, Liz Smith, may have aptly paraphrased Posner's own thoughts when she wrote: "(Oswald had) just a desire to get even and be noticed." (*San Francisco Chronicle* 10/25/93).

On the first of these claims- the "madman" hypothesis of Oswald as a lunatic, "groomed" for his eventual mission in

life- ex-lawyer Posner, now historian turned part-time "psychiatrist" gives us his proof. He uses the testimony of a psychiatrist (Hartogs) who examined Oswald when he was a boyhood truant and then enlarges on the theme of "madman" by quoting selectively from some of the 200 boasted interviews he conducted. These elicit statements making Oswald into a deranged lunatic ready to snap at any moment. "Psychiatric enhancement", you might call it, all part of Posner's repertoire of new age sciences.

But it is Posner's use of computer technology and photographic enhancement that probably drew the most praise from the hosts of Posner's admirers and these elements more than any other factors are, finally, what drew assassination writer, Harold Weisberg into the fray.

Case Open is Weisberg's eighth book on the JFK case (his ninth, *Never Again* is due out later this year). Although only 176 pages in length (which is relatively short in comparison to other bulkier books on the subject) it is, nevertheless, a total rebuttal of Posner's "proofs" and an indictment of the man, his methodology and his manipulations. In fact, Weisberg's book represents only 20 to 25% of a larger book (the full manuscript is available for researchers and scholars at the University of Wisconsin). Weisberg rushed the book to print as he did not wish to wait for his longer work to appear later and he wanted to "get the word out" on Posner. Thus, the shortened version.

But, make no mistake about the shorter volume- by itself, it stands as a powerful attack on Posner's misguided and mistitled product and Weisberg's analytical method in shattering Posnerian "proofs" is a wonder to behold.

Weisberg's compulsion to join in really started even before Posner's book appeared. The fact is that Posner had befriended Weisberg and spent three days at Weisberg's home going over his massive collection of official U.S. government documents on the JFK case (reputed to be the world's largest private collection). Weisberg was deceived into believing that Posner had an entirely different book in mind that what turned out to be Posner's final product.

Perhaps, more importantly, when Posner's work did appear not a single journalist, historian or media personality called him to ask his opinion of the book! This could not simply be due to total ignorance of Weisberg's previous works because even his detractors (who never seem to have read his books, anyway) acknowledge that he is the most knowledgeable person on the JFK case. He's been dubbed the "dean of assassination literature" and even the FBI in an open court (when Weisberg sued the U.S. for release of its files) officially stated that no one in the world knew more about the assassination than he did!

Without going into detail by detail on how Weisberg demonstrates that Posner misapplied computer technology there is the fact that even when Posner employs this science he palms it off as his own work (the "Failure Analysis" group in Menlo Park, California developed a "prosecution brief" case for the ballistics evidence in a mock trial of Oswald held in San Francisco in 1992 under the auspices of the American Bar Association). Besides this, Posner *forgets* to inform his readers that at the ABA meeting, a "defense brief" was also presented pointing out the errors in the prosecution side.

Not that Weisberg did not have strong reservations about both the prosecution and the defense applications of their science to bolster their cases- he *did*, but even with these, Weisberg shows how Posner can't even maintain his position and Posner's so called "proofs" fall like the proverbial house of cards.

And so, finally, what of the alleged "photographic enhancement" Posner claims he utilized? Again, to paraphrase a Clint Eastwood line used in a fictional movie on a presidential assassination, *In The Line of Fire*: "That's *not* the way it happened, Mr. Posner. Unlike the "magic bullet" which Posner proudly champions, no such "magic" of "enhancement" ever took place! (it is interesting to note that of the 35 photos appearing in Posner's centerpiece *none* are enhanced. Photographs yes, enhancement, no).

From a "house of cards" we move to a "house of mirrors", and, in the last analysis, as Weisberg shows, Posner's book is truly a failure of analysis and ultimately a failure of nerve to tell the truth about what really happened on November 22, 1963. Thanks to Weisberg we can keep the "book" very much "open" on Gerald Posner!

Reviewed by Hal Verb

Bull's Eye. James Adams (Times Books, New York, 1992, 317p., \$23.00). **Arms and the Man.** William Lowther (Presidio Press, Novato, Ca, 1991, 298p., \$24.95). **Wilderness of Mirrors.** Dale Grant (Prentice-Hall Canada, 1991, 209p., \$26.95).

The rather enigmatic life and world of supergun inventor Gerald Bull comes under the microscope in these three offerings which sprang to life within scant months of each other. To fully understand and appreciate the total picture of this puzzling individual, all three should be read for their individual strengths and merits, for each presents slightly different information while basically remaining true to the central facts and theme.

Gunned down outside his apartment in Brussels in late March of 1990 by assassins unknown, Bull experienced a rollercoaster career which can only be described as a brilliant mind somehow gone awry under pressure, egotism, ambition and betrayal.

Canadian-born, he became the youngest person ever to receive a doctorate from the University of Toronto in early May 1951 after just turning 23. Indeed, he began his studies at Toronto as a young (16) and gifted talent in a new four-year honors program in aeronautics culminating with a Bachelor of Applied Science degree in 1948.

Bull began his road to scientific infamy "full of joy and energy and the sort of pranks you might expect from a high-school student." It was to end via assassins' bullets almost 46 years later, cutting down a man no longer viewed as a joyful, likable prankster, but more an embittered monster.

Bull's career was marked by brilliance in the area of artillery projectiles and propulsion systems. Initially interested in a joint U.S.-Canadian project to develop a huge gun capable of firing satellites into orbit, his emphasis switched to of-

fensive military applications with the cancellation of the venture prior to fruition.

His work, however, had attracted the attention of several U.S. government officials and with CIA involvement, Bull was tasked with helping develop a new gun (eventually the G5 howitzer) for South Africa. Work was of the extreme clandestine nature due to a U.S. arms embargo on South Africa at the time and when the project became public Bull was the prime scapegoat. Not even South African statements that his plans were unworkable and that they themselves had developed the gun based upon modifications could save him from a four-month jail sentence.

Disillusioned by the collapse of his satellite gun funding and now feeling outright betrayed, Bull mentally and philosophically became derailed and, in some respects, took to a classic path of revenge.

Turning to a world populated by suspect arms merchants, the embittered Bull established himself as a "freelancer" from a home base in Belgium. Selling his services to the proverbial highest bidder, his client list soon took on a frightening patina, given his expertise, with the likes of China, Iran and Iraq numbered amongst his customers. For some it was "basic" weaponry and specialized systems, such as Iran and China, but for others his objectives had a much more chilling goal.

Obsessed throughout his career by his early research in developing a powerful cannon (a variation of his satellite-launching gun) he contracted with Iraq and Saddam Hussein for a "supergun" capable of delivering projectiles up to 2500 miles away. Project Babylon was to encompass two guns- Baby Babylon and Big Babylon-with the latter weighing 2100 tons and featuring a 500-foot long barrel capable of handling projectiles three feet wide propelled by a three-stage rocket.

Somewhat prophetically Bull's supergun project, as with his earlier similar venture, never reached closure. Bull's assassination eliminated the expertise and a scant two weeks later the British government sidetracked a shipment of material destined for Iraq which amounted to a substantial portion of the weapon itself.

Evidence, and perhaps logic, point the finger of executioner at Israel and the Mossad. Yet, while a strong case can be built for this premise, the list of possible assassins runs the entire gamut from the U.S. and Britain to Iraq and even disgruntled arms merchants. The question has yet to be satisfactorily resolved and may not be for some time to come.

Reviewed by Michael Ryan

The Catcher Was Was A Spy: The Mysterious Life of Moe Berg. Nicholas Dawidoff. (Pantheon, New York, 1994, 453pg.)

Like most baseball fans, I was disheartened by the baseball strike which ultimately caused the cancellation of not only what had been one of the most exciting baseball seasons in years, but the league championships and the world series as well. Accustomed to attending, watching, and listening to games regularly, the work stoppage suddenly created a base-