

HAROLD WEISBERG

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6/9/94

Prof. David M. Kennedy, chair
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Dear Professor Kennedy,

I've been sent a copy of the S.F. Chronicle's April 21 story quoting you as "outraged" because your "good faith" Palitzer history recommendations were overruled. You refer to the panel as of "very distinguished historians." One of your recommendations was the knowingly and admittedly mis-titled Case Closed, by Gerald Posner. (Please excuse my typing. I'm 61 and it cannot be any better.)

Did any of you prestigious eminences ask yourselves if you were in a position to evaluate that book? By other than taking his word?

Count your blessings, professor! Your students would have laughed you out of class if they learned the truth, which is now available to them. That is in the rushed, unedited and small part of what I wrote published as Case Open by Carroll & Graf. The full manuscript is being retyped and will be available for historians in the future.

Copies have been available for about seven weeks now. I have not heard a word from Posner, Random House or any lawyer of theirs.

In a field in which the competition is strong Posner's ^{is} the most dishonest of some pretty terrible books. Deliberately dishonest, I add. He knew what he was doing. Those boasted-of interview, other than as puffery, served only to circumvent the official evidence of which he knew and that disproves his fraud of a book. Some of those he claims he interviewed deny he did. One he said he interviewed over two days denies to me he was interviewed by Posner at all! And then the cribbing!

Books like that cannot be evaluated by authentic experts unless they are also subject experts as none of you was in a position to be. Particularly not from the available literature on both sides.

Please feel free to share this with the other members of your panel. I'll be glad to answer any questions any of you may have.

It is on Posner's vaunted scholarship that all of you would have enticed pointed and accurate criticism from any informed students. What you can check on this in your own library is what he quotes that disreputable shrink Hartogs, who used his women patients for free sex until the court assessed a heavy charge, as attesting to. If you read the pages of his Warren Commission testimony between those Posner quotes you'll find that under pointed question ¹⁹⁶⁴ he swore to the exact opposite! And that is the basis for Posner's shrinkery, Oswald as the born assassin waiting his historic or moment.

Sincerely,


Harold Weisberg

Stanford Scholar Criticizes Pulitzer Board

Decision not to award prize in history called 'outrage'

S.F. Chron 4/21/94
By Bill Workman

Chronicle Peninsula Bureau

The decision of the Pulitzer Prize board not to make an award this year in the history category has been sharply criticized by a Stanford University professor who served on the panel whose book nominations were ignored.

"I was outraged because we made a good-faith recommendation on the books we thought were worthy," said David Kennedy, chairman of Stanford's history department and a 1981 Pulitzer nominee.

Three books were nominated by the three-member history prize jury, including "Crime and Punishment in American History" by Stanford law Professor Lawrence Friedman.

The others were: "Case Closed: Lee Harvey Oswald and the Assassination of JFK," by Gerald Posner, and "William Faulkner and Southern History," by Joel Williamson.

Friedman, who is a visiting professor this semester at University of Chicago Law School, joined Kennedy in lashing the Pulitzer board.

The no-award decision, he said, was "an insult not only to the authors but also to the very distinguished historians who constituted the panel."

In announcing the Pulitzer awards last week, officials at Columbia University said that for only the third time in the 77-year history of the coveted prizes, there would be no winner for history.

At the time, Pulitzer board member John L. Dotson told the Los Angeles Times that each of the history finalists was "flawed in certain ways."

However, Kennedy said the board has yet to explain its rationale to the jury. He said he had no idea why the 19-member board, composed mostly of prominent newspaper publishers and editors, concluded that none of the finalists was deserving of the history prize.

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Kennedy did not say which book he would have chosen among the three. But he said he was not only baffled by the board's refusal to award a prize but also by what he said were the awkward rules imposed on the nominating process.

Pulitzer juries, he said, are barred from ranking their nominations. They also are told that they can recommend either three books or none.

"It's very curious. It doesn't allow for anything in between," he said. "The effect is the jury gets to give only some of its opinion, and not the best advice it could."

The other history jury members were Michael Kammen, professor of American history and culture at Cornell University, and Pauline Maier, American history professor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Kennedy said he and the other jurors have decided that despite their frustration, they do not intend to make a formal protest.