

He gave ample evidence of his sophisticated approach to matters of honesty during that evening's reading from his upcoming volume. The audience was particularly awed by Mailer's attempt to explain away one of the major mysteries of Oswald's 1959 trip to the Soviet Union: *How did Ozzie pay for it?* Plane fare alone cost at least \$1500, yet Oswald's bank account contained a paltry \$203.

Mailer hilariously suggested — without offering proof, or even an argument — that Oswald earned the funds working the streets as a homosexual prostitute. Presumably he kept the money in his mattress rather than his bank account (but *why?*) without his barracks-mates ever noticing. Of course, there's absolutely *no* evidence Oswald ever did anything of this nature. El Toro Marine Base certainly offered few opportunities for a would-be street hustler, there being no public streets nearby. For Oswald to earn so much so rapidly (at that era's rates), his head must have been bobbing up and down faster than one of those "drinking bird" bar toys.

If the rest of Mailer's book can achieve this level of surreal silliness, he should read it aloud on Comedy Central in between the *Monty Python* reruns.

Mailer's close partner in this Minsk mess is Lawrence Schiller, who has skulked around the famed writer for more than two decades. In Peter Manso's 1985 biography of Norman Mailer, Schiller's own words damn him as the sort of self-obsessive wheeler-dealer anyone even glancingly familiar with Hollywood has met and hated. Although he almost never actually writes anything, Schiller somehow regularly gets involved with high-profile book projects, such as Mailer's 1973 coffee-table book on Marilyn Monroe.

Schiller was the business agent of Jack Ruby. He first had a go at the Warren Commission critics back in 1967, when, as the "photographic expert" hired by CBS, he "authenticated" the negative of the famous backyard photograph showing Lee Harvey Oswald and the rifle. Oddly, the Warren Commission said they could find no negative. Jack White's video presentation on this matter has utterly convinced me that the image is a forgery — and I speak as a professional illustrator who has used an airbrush to alter many a photo.

At this same time, Richard Warren Lewis and Lawrence Schiller, posing as objective journalists, visited the assassination critics; their true intention was to write an attack book called *The Scavengers and Critics of the Warren Commission*. Mark Lane, in his *A Citizen's Dissent*, paints an amusing picture of Schiller as a man obsessed with money and Lane's allegedly "mod" outfit (actually a conservative suit). In a magazine article, Schiller and Lewis smeared Lane by noting his conviction for "breaching the peace in Jackson, Mississippi." The S&L team never mentioned that the arrest occurred because Lane and the leader of the NAACP deliberately stood together in the segregated Jackson airport. Did Schiller ever have the guts to challenge segregation laws?

In their 1967 book, S&L got numerous spellings, dates and facts wrong — for example, they grossly overestimated the speed of the "magic bullet." Worse, they damned the critics as monetarily motivated — which, coming from Schiller, was a major hoot. (Remember: Jack Ruby's business agent.) The aforementioned book by Manso portrayed Schiller — at least in *my* reading — as a man so in lust with money he would ravish a quarter if he could find an orifice.

by Howard Zinn

From the opening pages, an account of "The European invasion of the Indian settlements in the Americas," there is a reversal of perspective, a reshuffling of heroes and villains. The book bears the same relation to traditional text as a photographic negative does to a print: the areas of darkness and light have been reversed. The open-minded will profit from professor Zinn's account, and historians may well view it as a step toward a coherent new version of American history." -Eric Foner, New York Times book Review.

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Yet only now are we getting the full story of Schiller's actions during that period. Newly released FBI documents in the possession of writer-investigator James DiEugenio prove — beyond all doubt — that Lawrence Schiller was an FBI informant. (We don't know if he was a *paid* informant, though it's hard to imagine him working for free.) To put it bluntly: Lawrence Schiller, Norman Mailer's research partner, has a history as a spy. Perhaps Mailer and Schiller will try to cobble together a rationalization for this spying; there's *always* a rationalization. But I doubt that they will convince any activist of that era who recalls the damage wrought by FBI harassment and infiltration. When you think of that damage, that backstabbing, that double-dealing, that covert tattling, think of Schiller. And think of Mailer, whose involvement with the left during the 1970s deserves a major reassessment. *Did FBI-guy Schiller get useful info from Norman Mailer?*

It gets worse. While spying for the FBI on the Garrison case, Schiller contacted homosexual acquaintances of the defendant, Clay Shaw. These sources (two in San Francisco, three in New Orleans) all confirmed that Shaw used pseudonyms, including the name Clay Bertrand. Schiller and the FBI knew that Garrison was correct concerning a key disputed point in his case. Yet they never made their knowledge public.

Perhaps the most interesting comment on Schiller's honesty came, oddly enough, from Mailer himself, who once told a columnist (*New York Daily News*, April 5, 1984): "When it comes to lying, Larry Schiller makes Baron von Munchausen look like George Washington."

So why has Mailer made this man his partner?

I don't know. But I feel that financial worries may be one key to the mysteries of Mailer, whose legendary tax problems bring Willie Nelson to mind. For many years, Mailer dodged (and for all I know may still be dodging) the IRS. In Manso's biography, we find the following quotes from Mailer's sixth wife: "All the while Norman was writing *The Executioner's Song* he was in serious financial trouble, and we were borrowing money every month." "After going through all the records and the bills, I realized what idiocies had been committed by his financial people." "The nut was \$1000 a day, a staggering figure." "So it's a given — owing number of dollars a year — and he's got to work like crazy to pay for it." In the late '70s, the debt to his publisher alone was \$300,000. Mailer even resorted to borrowing a further \$90,000 from his own mother.

Has this scramble after bucks ever affected the accuracy of Mailer's reportage? To answer that question, one need only turn

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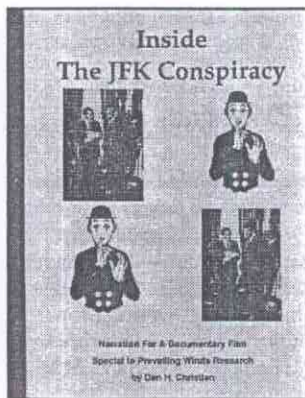
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Posner even seems to have misquoted his own editor, Robert Loomis of Random House. The author of *Case Closed* has frequently recounted the story of his book's genesis, which was on this wise: In 1992, Random House hired him to write a book that would establish a conspiracy once and for all; Posner started investigating, found no evidence of a plot to kill JFK, and reported these findings to his publisher, who told him to go with what he found. 'Tis a pretty tale, and utter bullshit. Well before *Case Closed*, researcher Walt Brown sent a JFK assassination manuscript to Random House, and got a vehement rejection notice — signed by editor Loomis — stating in no uncertain terms that Random House would *never* publish any book critical of the Warren Commission's basic findings.

If Loomis wants to maintain such an attitude, that's his privilege, of course. But how can Gerald Posner claim that Loomis originally tasked him to produce a work open to the idea of conspiracy?

During the 1993-94 year's media orgasms over *Case Closed*, the public frequently heard glowing remarks about Posner's background. For example, we heard that he was a Wall Street lawyer, which was comforting. All America instinctively trusts Wall Street lawyers. We also heard that he had acted as the attorney for an organization called CANDLES, which represents victims of Dr. Josef Mengele's horrifying experiments at Auschwitz. CANDLES is run by a feisty and courageous woman named Eva Kor, an Auschwitz survivor now living in Terre Haute, Indiana. When I called her last February, she insisted that Gerald Posner *never* was a lawyer for her organization. She considers him untrustworthy and expresses contempt for anyone who conjures up a false association with her

group in order to bask in unearned moral authority. Posner, in her view, is "a real son of a...gun." (She's too ladylike to swear, but she's cute when she's tempted.)

As for Posner's much-vaunted computer analysis, which "proved" that the bullets came from the back: Despite the impression you might have gleaned from *Case Closed* and its media cheerleaders, that analysis was *not* done at Posner's behest. A computer firm called Failure Analysis did the work for a 1992 mock trial of Lee Harvey Oswald, staged by the American Bar Association. In fact, Failure Analysis did *two* computer analyses — one for the prosecution and one for the defense.² The president of Failure Analysis, Robert McCarthy, found the defense position more convincing.

Dr. Gary Aguilar had a few enlightening words on *l'affaire* Posner in a letter he sent to the *Federal Bar News and Journal* (March/April 1994). A few excerpts:

"Posner dismissed Rose Cheramie's remarkable clairvoyance that President Kennedy was to be killed in Dallas [memorably dramatized in the Stone film] by claiming that the witness to Cheramie's statements, Dr. Victor Weiss, reported that Cheramie only mentioned this after Oswald's death. This is flatly untrue, which Posner must know from the work of the 1978 House Select Committee on Assassinations (HSCA) which reported that, according to Dr. Weiss, 'Dr. Bowers allegedly told Weiss that the patient, Rose Cheramie, had stated *before the assassination* that President Kennedy was going to be killed.' Moreover, Posner certainly neglected to mention another unassailable, HSCA-cited witness, Louisiana state police lieutenant Francis Fruge. He reported Cheramie made the prediction directly to him two days before Kennedy's murder.

"Posner cited the testimony of Renatus Hartogs, the psychiatrist who examined Oswald as a teenage truant, arguing that Hartogs' findings suggested a violent potential. The Warren Commission dismissed Hartogs' testimony when an examination of his original report revealed the opposite conclusion ..."

Aguilar concludes: "While one is naturally loath to question the good faith of any author, especially one nominated for a Pulitzer Prize, Posner seems to be begging even Warren Commission loyalists to question his."

Normie and Larry (An Outing)

Posner's volume was only the first blow in a projected one-two-three attempt to knock out the conspiracists. Expect two more volleys in the near future. The next big Oswald-did-it book will come from Norman Mailer, by way of — you guessed it — Random House. And you thought *Case Closed* got big-time publicity...

Mailer, previously considered a friend to the assassination research community, has visited Russia to put together *Oswald In Minsk*. A depressed gathering of researchers got an awful earful of this work when Mailer gave the opening address at the 1993 Assassination Symposium on Kennedy (ASK) in Dallas. During this speech, Mailer thus assessed Oliver Stone: "He is a brute, but he has the honesty of a brute."

Yeah, well, that works both ways: Norman Mailer is a sophisticate, and he has the, er, honesty of a sophisticate.