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## A Brief Sketch of Harold Weisberg

By Mike Stanke

The interval of 1960-1975, were frenzied years in the United States. Assassinations of major political figures, increased racial tensions and riots, gut wrenching conflicts over the Viet Nam War, political tales of disillusionment in Watergate, Church Committee revelations of assassination assignments of the CIA, and a variety of many other gloomy events gave this era more villains and few heroes. Politics, more than any other segment of society, took the heaviest critical blow. By the mid 1970's, there remained little of the 1950's pseudo confidence in the American government. Luckily, our nation was blessed with a small number of people that tried to keep the United States and its citizens on a straight and trustworthy road. One such person was, and still is, a true American hero. His name is Harold Weisberg.

To astute students of mid-twentieth century American history, the name Harold Weisberg conjures up the title, "Grandfather of the Assassinations Writers." It is a title well-deserved. This so called nickname was earned by his tenacious spirit in researching that was developed well before the 1960's. Mr. Weisberg had already established a distinguished career in World War II. Prior to the U.S. entry into that conflict, he collected and delivered important data to agents of the British Ministry of Economic Warfare. These earlier writings were well received by correspondents, congressmen, cabinet officers, and the White House.

During World War II, Weisberg worked with allied cartels dealing with economic and political warfare issues. Also, he was absorbed in the analysis of data collected by the OSS, a predecessor of the CIA. He was "...not a spook for the organization," as he emphatically has stated many times. His investigative work in WWII was widely recognized as laying the foundation for

taking over Nazi property and proper use of foreign funds. Mr. Weisberg's work greatly assisted the Justice and Treasury Departments, which used his information to legally attack the Nazi government.

At the beginning of the war, Harold Weisberg was often consulted by congressional committees, including the War Preparedness Committee headed by then Senator Harry S. Truman. He also worked as a newspaper and magazine writer during the 1940's and 1950's.

During the early Kennedy years, his "Geese for Peace" got the Peace Corps its first good publicity break. Mr. Weisberg maintained that many underdeveloped nations needed basic training and information on improving their quality of life. Harold pointed out that the geese he was raising at his farm were a good example of what could be used in supporting the agricultural plans of many third power nations.

Harold's involvement with the JFK assassination began on a late autumn day in 1963. He was listening to a local radio station while working on his farm. He had entered a contest that asked listeners to describe the unusual circumstances they were involved in while listening to this particular radio program. To his surprise he heard that his response was the winner; he broke into a smile. Before his next thought could be formed, a news break interrupted the broadcast, "Flash from Dallas, Texas; shots were fired at the presidential motorcade..." In one swift moment, Harold was removed from a momentary feeling of country happiness, to a wasteland that was more forbidding than T.S. Elliot ever imagined. On November 22, 1963, Harold Weisberg had two roads before him; he chose the one less traveled.

In less than three weeks, Lyndon Johnson had created an executive investigation committee to look into the

JFK assassination. Within fifteen months, Harold's varied and massive amount of experience and investigative training would soon come to great use. When the *Warren Commission Report* (900 + pages) was officially delivered to President Johnson on September 24, 1963, Mr. Weisberg went to work.

Using government documents, he proved that the Warren Commission was nothing more than a whitewash. His first book, which was titled, *Whitewash: The Report on the Warren Commission*, blasted the Commission's research methods, its blind following of the FBI's report, its outright lying, distorting and/or ignoring of critical information. Because of these major deficiencies, most of the Warren Commission's findings were rejected by Mr. Weisberg.

*Whitewash I* was completed in early 1965, less than five months after the commission published its findings. Eventually, his book had to be self-published. When an author has his work self-published, it usually means it is of questionable quality and/or not of interest to the public. However, in Weisberg's case, this was not true.

Publisher after publisher stated that his book was well written and extremely saleable. Here are some examples of publishers' comments. "I am afraid, for a myriad of reasons, that I must simply echo what I am sure has been written to you by other publishers in the main that you have written a valid and in my opinion high potential saleable book (15,000 +) but it is nonetheless not something that we wish to publish. What can I say: I think you're a damned good writer who has written a damned good book and I sincerely wish you best of luck elsewhere."

Another publisher replied, "I have read your material, *The Report on the Warren Commission*, with tremendous interest. You have obviously put in a lot of work and the result is a highly readable and convincing document. However, for reasons too numerous to go into, we have decided not to go for it. I want to thank you for coming in with it and for the opportunity to speak to you. Certainly one day soon you must find a publisher with the enthusiasm and courage necessary."

Still another publisher responded, *Personally, I think the book could have a very big sale in this country if properly presented. In Europe, where everyone believes there was a conspiracy, there is every reason to expect the book would be a best seller.*

Almost, every publisher (103 publishers were contacted) had nothing but praise for his book, *Whitewash: the Report on the Warren Commission*. Yet not a single publisher decided to take on the book. Several newspapers initially had great interest in serializing it, yet none of them did. One paper said Weisberg's book was incredibly interesting, but would not serialize it "because they just didn't believe it." However, not one person ever cited a single significant error. Never has a book received so much acclaim and yet not received any type of publication. The question that begs asking is-why?

First and foremost, the media of the middle 1960's simply did not have the will or the courage to challenge the government. One must remember the times. To challenge the FBI, CIA or the President, and the highly esteemed blue ribbon Warren Commission was too much a political and economic risk for almost any organization. With hindsight, many publishers now believe their fears were not always legitimate, but at the time they felt consciously that to challenge the findings and the governmental sources was taboo. The early 1960's was not a time when the media had Woodwards and Bernsteins doing publicly acclaimed investigative journalistic studies. Rather, it was a time when most Americans viewed out institutions with blind reverence, or at least viewed them through rose-tinted glasses. Any other view would be considered unpatriotic and, therefore, would have negative economic implications to persons or publishers.

Also, from a pragmatic stand point, the Warren Commission was massive. Few, if any of the media had the time or energy to do any meaningful assessment of the methods and final results of the commission. In short, Harold Weisberg's book was..." a book that could not be printed."

Since his first book, Harold soon became known as "the grandfather of all the JFK assassination researchers."

It is a title well-deserved, for he has maintained an objectivity in his research that many other assassination authors have not. But besides the thousands of hours he has spent on his work, he has also spent thousands of his own dollars in the pursuit of the truth. The argumentative issues of the JFK assassination have never been one where money was a first consideration for Mr. Weisberg. His actions proved that he was more concerned that citizens of our country know the truth, than distort the truth and fill his pockets with silver coins. Had money been his major concern, Harold had, and still has, scores of opportunities to lend his name to other authors and producers that dealt, less than honestly, with the Kennedy assassination. However, he has steadfastly maintained his principles.

Several people, myself included, have suggested his life story would make an interesting autobiography. However, Harold has never wanted any part of it. "I don't have enough ego, and I prefer to use my time on much more important items of substance. You have to remember, at my age, priority becomes extremely important; everything I decide to do takes time away from something else. I just don't consider my life story as important as the governmental issues I address in the JFK assassination."

Although eighty year old Harold Weisberg is not in the best of health (he has a number of maladies) his mind is still extremely sharp. He often says "...my mind isn't what it used to be..." However, after talking with him on many occasions, Harold can still quickly bring up events, people, and intricate details of the past with apparent ease. To put it bluntly, his mind is better than any other person's in the field, both now and in the past.

Besides having a quick mind filled with a vast amount of knowledge, Mr. Weisberg does not pull his punches when he discusses issues or people in the JFK assassination field. The late Jim Garrison, for example, received a mixed but straight forward appraisal. Weisberg, who worked with Garrison, smiled when he started talking about the "jolly green giant." "As a person, Jim was friendly and warm. He just had

a way with people. He, at times, could be the most personable man I ever knew. But his investigation quickly turned into a farce. He tried to do too much with too little evidence. Sylvia Meager warned me about him, but I didn't listen. Long before the trial of Clay Shaw, it was obvious Garrison had no case. I told him he didn't have a case and, if he took his case to court, he would not only lose, but would deserve to lose. I gave him some suggestions to follow; if he wouldn't follow them, then I was going to leave. Well, Garrison didn't take them, so I left. Sylvia was absolutely right about him."

Other authors that printed lies and knew they printed lies, were blasted by Harold. "It is obvious that some of the so called experts wanted only to make money on this tragic event in our history. Even worse, they muddied the waters of the honest writers, making it difficult (if not impossible) for the common citizen to know what is factual and what is pure unadulterated bullshit."

To this day, Harold Weisberg has held several JFK assassination researchers in very high esteem. Sylvia Meagher, Howard Roffman, and Professor David Wrono are a few people that over the years have earned the respect of "The Grandfather." "People like Sylvia, Howard and David represent the honest hard working research writers that are concerned in finding the truth."

Presently, Harold Weisberg is living in Frederick, Maryland with his wife, Lillian.

Harold has just finished his last book on the Kennedy assassination, *Never Again*. It will be a thirty year overview of the JFK murder and should be released before the end of the year. He now spends his days answering mail, giving radio interviews, talking to people and, together with his wife, filling out orders for his books. Harold also accommodates serious researchers by allowing them to dig through his mammoth collection of information located in his basement. Over the last thirty years, Mr. Weisberg has obtained thousands of documents dealing with the JFK and Martin Luther King assassinations. Large metal filing cabinets circle the outer walls of 75% of his basement. Even more filing cabinets

line the center of the room. It is a mind boggling sight to behold.

Although some might think that obtaining government documents is a relatively easy task, especially when the Freedom of Information Act of 1967 was passed, this is not always true. Much of the critical material that Weisberg finally obtained did not come easily. He often put up with exasperating governmental tactics that tried to discourage any would be researcher.

It is from his determined spirit that he published for the American peo-

ple the *Whitewash Series, Oswald in New Orleans, Post Mortem*, and the soon to be released, *Never Again*. Those who have carefully studied his works know that he has definitively proved that John Kennedy's murder was never properly investigated by the government, and that the government KNEW it was not properly investigated. And, it is because of this improperly investigated tragic event that there are now so many questions with so few solid answers.

I asked Harold what he feels most

proud of in the last thirty years? After a brief hesitation, because he does not like to glorify himself, he replied, "...my files of documents that will be available to the American public." Harold will donate his materials to Hunter's College, the same college to which Sylvia Meagher has already left her treasure of information.

Michael Stanke lives in Wisconsin and is the author of *The Annotative Bibliography of the JFK Assassination*.

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