

4/30/70

Mr. Merrill Mazuer
WIS-TV
190 N. State St.,
Chicago, Ill. 60601

Dear Mr. Mazuer,

This letter is in response to your this afternoon's request that I give you in writing something you can put in the hands of station management. With Skolnick involved, this is not less than prudent. For this reason I will give you more detail than I ordinarily would, with the request that none of the names be used without permission.

My primary interest is unselfish, not the airing of a claim for damages against Skolnick for his thievery. Such a claim belongs elsewhere. To prevent the further damage his inconceivable irresponsibility can yet cause, I am impelled to haste. Thus I inflict my own bad typing on you, to get this to you faster. You realize I cannot honorably commit this to another station until I have your answer.

His is an utterly spurious suit. It meets not a single requirement of a very good law, the "Freedom of Information" Act, which he pretends to invoke. He has, as I told you, never asked the National Archives for anything - ever. My source, Mr. Marion Johnson, the man in charge of this particular archive. The law requires a request and thereafter conformity with regulations that vary with the different agencies. Before the law can, under any circumstances, be invoked against the Archives, there is a carefully-specified series of steps, ending with an appeal procedure. Unless each of these legal requirements is met or waived by the government, no suit has any standing. Skolnick, the legal researcher, has met not one, beginning with any request for any material.

If he ever thought of it, he could not begin to and still accomplish his self-seeking ends, for there was no time. Therefore, he debased the courts he pretends to long to cleanse, prostituted the law he would like it believed he loves, and in the course of so doing, defamed agents of the Secret Service and falsely accused the National Archives. I am apologist for neither. The subtitle of my second book says the Secret Service engaged in a "coverup". I have been fighting with the Archives for years, and during this time have been carefully and properly laying the required basis for suits that will not, automatically, be thrown out of court for obvious legal deficiencies. With the ability and willingness of government to stall, this has been tedious. However, there can be harmful, indeed, disastrous consequences when one of the early cases filed under this law is bound to be adversely regarded by the court. This law is very much to the interest of all elements of the media, as well as to the general public. Any citizen can use it. Moreover, when this case is, as inevitably it must be, thrown out of court, the resultant headlines will be very harmful to the search for truth in the assassination of the President as well as the insistence that government comply with and live within the law.

Skolnick's frivolity disguised as a suit is an abuse of the law and the courts, a cheap publicity-play based on theft and hippodromed by the most uninhibited imagination. If and when it is thrown out of court, he will pose as a martyr and reap an added harvest. In this connection, I call your attention to a recent Supreme Court decision, involving a Chicago case, that of William Allen, in which Justice Black said, "Our court palladiums of liberty as they are, cannot be treated disrespectfully with impunity". Yet this man with the avowed purpose of cleansing the courts files what he has to know is a fake action, a spurious suit in which he seeks to render libel immune and promote himself. No serious, legitimate purpose is remotely within possibility.

The suit I will file as soon as it is physically possible seeks two things: the dismissal of this imposition on the court with prejudice and an injunction against any improper use of materials not Skolnick's property. This, I think, is as impersonal as the victim of a theft can be.

When we spoke, there is one point I didn't raise, think I should have, and do not now in any threatening manner, for if you do not agree, there the matter will end. I believe that under the fairness doctrine you do owe me the possibility of fair response.

Now for the accounting of fact. Because you expressed an awareness of his ignorance of any substantial knowledge of anything relating to the assassination, I ignore that. However, your station management should know of it, so I cite a single one of the many immediately available. The alleged assassination rifle was purchased from a Chicago company, Klein's Sporting Goods. Skolnick claims no record could be found and he says he is suing for it. The fact is it was immediately located, is one of the central points of the claimed evidence against Oswald, was widely published, including in facsimile and in the Warren Report itself (p. 120), and Mr. Waldman, of that company, was interviewed by both the Secret Service and the FBI prior to his extensive and published testimony before the Commission.

About two years ago, when I entered the premises of another Chicago station to make an announced broadcast, I was handed a letter left there for me by a man who to this day is a total stranger. It was my first tip on the threat against the President that caused the cancellation of his scheduled 11/2/63 appearance in Chicago. It was information on the arrest of one Thomas Vallee as a threat against the President. Since then, with some difficulty, I have been seeking to carry this investigation forward and, to a large degree, have. In the course of this investigation, I employed others as my representatives, not for pay, but because it was possible for them to do for me what I could not because I was removed from the scene or because of a lack of love borne me by the Archives, which delays responding to my requests. The Vallee story is mine under both the common law and the copyright law. While government papers in themselves are not subject to private copyright, the special uses to which they are put by a writer are and the compilation he makes is copyrightable as an anthology. This work is incorporated in a book copyrighted in two parts, some time ago, long before Skolnick smelled ink and air time. Both are titled COUP D'ETAT and identified by roman numerals, I and II.

The man who acted as my agent in Chicago (now a resident of Pittsburgh, Pa.) is Russell Runze, a former radio reporter. I gave him such copies of my evidence as he needed for this purpose and at my request and for me he searched and caused to be searched certain Chicago records. The material I sent him is certain FBI reports and other data, including a letter to me from one of two men on the west coast, both of whom helped me by making inquiries for me at the Archives, thus masking my interest. Because this man wants no

public identification, I cut his name from the copy of the letter I sent Trunzo. This letter Skolnick has used. Skolnick has used no material from the Archives, no material like FBI reports, that is not mine. He didn't even duplicate my work, would not have had the sanction of law. He used my copies. This is also true of the records Trunzo got for me. Both kinds of records are in this book. In each case, marks were added, for special purposes, none sinister. The man who got the Chicago records for me and gave them to Trunzo for me put a question mark on one. That question mark is faithfully reproduced on the copy attached to Skolnick's suit. The man whose name I cut from the letter the Archives wrote him when he made inquiry for me is named Jim Schmitt. He works with a friend and associate of mine. They pool the data they collect on their own. Hoch has a stamp he uses to identify it. It consists of the letters "C.D.", representing "Commission Document", the manner of reference to files of the Warren Commission, followed by a space in which the number is written in, then the word "PAGE", where again the number is added. In each case where I sent Trunzo the copy of the records these two men (the second is named Paul Hoch) got for me, Skolnick used them, blithely unaware they are not part of the Archives file. As an example, his "Appendix H", the almost illegible copy of an FBI report that is the only one of many carbons we could locate, has a retyped copy attached. At the end, sure enough, Skolnick includes as part of the original government file in his own retyping of it, "C.D./460 PAGE 2*". (I warrant he has no idea what the asterisk means. It also has meaning.)

His "Appendix I" is amusing, if anything is so sordid and dangerous an affair can so be considered. Having misunderstood something I told him, Trunzo wrote at the top of what I sent him a note indicating this had been declassified or "released", the way Skolnick misused it, within the past six months. This is the seventh page of an FBI report. In order to pretend this was his own major discovery, Skolnick physically removed the top of this report, which contained the printed identification of the FBI and other added Warren-Commission notations, and incorporated Trunzo's innocent error in his "suit". I think those with a genuine interest in the integrity of the courts and the law in Chicago would find interest in seeing both versions on the screen.

In short, of all 300 cubic feet of Warren-Commission material, Skolnick used nothing that he didn't get from me, by deceit and subterfuge, by deliberate misrepresentation. Of all the pages in the FBI reports from which I drew what I used in this book, he used not one I hadn't. This is not only not coincidental, but he got it from Trunzo as described above.

When Trunzo lived in Chicago he worked in the building that also houses Columbia College, where Skolnick teaches. Trunzo has a friend there, one Bert Gall, who is also a friend of Skolnick's. During his work for me, Trunzo discussed it with Gall, who remembered it, some of it being rather sensational, as you now know. One of the names involved is that of Sgt. Daniel Groth. If I go into all the details, this will get more cumbersome. There is nothing Skolnick has used from this document that I didn't, and there is nothing he said of Groth that has any association with reality that I didn't. Groth was much in the news when Trunzo visited Chicago 2/7/70. Gall introduced him to Skolnick, who expressed an interest in putting his class to work "investigating" the assassination. While Trunzo was appalled at Skolnick's ignorance of both the subject and the literature, he also knew Skolnick's reputation. He discussed some of my material with him.

Unknown to Trunzo, in Pittsburgh (361-5104), the March edition of the Chicago Journalism Review appeared, with an article forecasting indictments in the Hampton case. Is there a more likely candidate than Groth? So, Skolnick phoned Trunzo telling him his class had run out of work (3/14), and promising that if he had this Valle material he could carry the investigation forward for us, using the members of his class to do the work. With the injunction this was my material, part of a completed book I was seeking to get printed, and the added warning I wanted no use of it, Trunzo did send it to Skolnick as he asked, as I recall by special delivery. As a condition, Skolnick promised to call me. He emphasized to Trunzo material relating to Abe Bolden. Trunzo then phoned me to tell me to expect the call. I stayed up late for three nights, but there was no such call. When all of this came to pass, I got in touch with Trunzo, it being obvious Skolnick had stolen my work. He says he has sent me some of his records, but they appear to have strayed in the mail. Prior to that, and so I would know, he read me over the phone what he had sent. With Trunzo's permission, I have this and another taped conversation in which he sets all the foregoing, quotations from his records, his correspondence with Skolnick (including a chiding one alleging breach of trust that Skolnick has not answered). If Trunzo sent copies rather than the originals, and if the copies he sent do not arrive through some mischance, he will make new copies. After speaking to you for the first time today I wrote and asked this of him. This is the letter I told you I wanted to take to the post office (we live in the country where there is but a single, a.m. collection).

Almost the moment Skolnick got my material he arranged to broadcast it as his own. Prior to that he apparently spoke to another friend of mine who insists on anonymity. Pursuant to this conversation, that friend also phoned me to tell me the same thing, that Skolnick was willing to use his class to carry my investigations forward. The call to me then promised also was never made. Thereafter Skolnick used my name in a number of ways, as telling people he had an appointment to meet me when he had never spoken to or written me. As you can imagine, nothing was farther from his mind. But in this field, as the senior in age, date and quantity of publication and in other respects, I am well known. I am the only one of the original authors still working in the field. When two of his associates, both of whom have so informed me, learned that Skolnick intended using this material in public, in a broadcast, they tried to talk him out of it. In his first broadcast, on WRSV 3/20/70, Skolnick used his Columbia College class to ask prepared questions of their maestro. Immediately after that late-night broadcast, at 2 a.m. my time, a friend phoned me to express shock at the misuse of my name alone on it. Early the next morning I wrote WRSV. It and a later letter remain unanswered. However, Skolnick knew of this and immediately, so a Mr. Webber at that station told me by phone, in some mysterious manner that tape disappeared.

Notwithstanding his knowledge that I knew and was indignant, Skolnick did not communicate with me and instead made some kind of deal with WCFL, as a consequence of which they seem to have helped him with his "suit" and had an "exclusive" on it. When I raised hell at WCFL and they got worried about using my material before it enjoyed any immunity that court use can bestow, they spoke to him and he phoned me. It is an incredible conversation, perhaps the most evasive and deceptive in my experience. By this time having a certain opinion of Skolnick, for my own protection I taped it. I have no intention of using it, but if you'd like, you may hear it. Now in the course of the work I do I have become somewhat of an expert on semantics. If Skolnick is an amateur, he is non-stop and just about instinctive in resorting to the flimsiest such devices. He began by saying since he wasn't mad at me, why was I mad at him. You have never heard a man as unperturbed at being called a crook. And at that late date, when I confronted him with the proof he had never sought anything

of the Archives, he had the gall to pretend he had obtained these documents through a member of his class!

In my desire to inform you fully and my haste to get this in the mail, I have not had a chance to sit down and outline what I should tell you. I hope I have not bored you with what is not essential and that I have not overlooked anything that is. I assure you that step by careful step I can and will prove that this poseur, consumed as he is by a sick ego and an insatiable craving for publicity, at whatever cost, whatever hurt to others and to decency - even those who favor him, this man whose declared purpose in life is to cleanse the courts and see to it that the law is respected and upheld, is both a crook and a man who abuses and imposes on the law and the courts, seeking to convert both to ulterior, selfish and entirely improper purposes. I think it would be a kind of real-life Perry Mason to show the pages of the xerox edition of the book, the originals of the various documents, and the direct theft by Skolnick, including what is not on the government copies and what he removed in an amateurish way to build himself bigger. You will see that this is true of every document he used in this matter. I would like to air at the same time a general understanding of this new and excellent law, under which citizens can obtain from their government those papers to which they are properly entitled.

This casts me in a novel role, but not for the first time. In this case I would be defending the Secret Service and the Archives against fabricated, false, emlicious and libellous charges all contrived to publicize Skolnick and put him in a position to claim credit for anything that thereafter happened to Groth. There is suppression of what cannot be legally suppressed. Skolnick has done nothing about it, is doing nothing about it, and cannot by that fiction called a "suit". Were he an agent of the government, as he is so fond of calling others, including on your station, he could no more ideally fill that role than in what he has in this case done. He has made a martyr of Groth, who had no difficulty refuting the invented charges against him. When his suit is thrown out of court, as it will be, and can be any day now (one of my reasons for haste), there will be large headlines saying "Warren Report Validated" or "No Suppression". Neither is true, but will the headline writers know it? Or the electronic people? When you consider the enormous labor that has gone into the effort to bring out the truth, you can understand the hurt to many people, of whom I am one. More important, to me, is the harm to the cause of truth and to the effort to make society, especially the government, function as they should in a country with our principles. I am also seriously concerned about the probable adverse effect on serious legitimate suits, including one of my own that should soon be heard in federal court in Washington.

For your confidential information, and bearing directly on these made-up charges called a suit, in the course of my own work on Vallee I asked Tom Kelley, then an inspector and now Assistant Director of the Secret Service, their liaison with the Warren Commission. He told me they never gave the Warren Commission anything on Vallee because he had been arrested and accounted for prior to the assassination. In short, there is no Secret Service information at the Archives for the Archives to suppress relating to Vallee. Kelley's word, which I take on this anyway, is supported by my own extensive search.

I spare you further characterizations of this "suit". However, as a major source of information in Chicago, I would like to impress upon you my belief, that when a man imposes upon public trust as Skolnick has, palming himself off as the upholder of the law and decency and honesty in the courts and for no legitimate purpose, only for self-indulgence and publicity (at best) is so dishonest and so abused and debases both the law and the courts, this is something about which your citizens should be informed, particularly because it can be so overwhelmingly proven in so dramatic a way.

Sincerely, Harold Weisberg