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November 20, 1966

Mr. J. R. Wiggins,
Editor, The Washington Post
Washington, D. C.

Dear Mr. Wiggins:

So gross are the factual errors in Merriman Smith's (self) "expose" that a UPI subscriber sent me a copy when it was distributed November 6 for release the 13th. You used it the 20th. On the 12th I challenged Mr. Smith to debate me in the National Press Club on his story, my book, WHITEWASH, the work of the Commission, or any combination of his choosing. He declined on the 16th.

The most casual examination of even the Report of the President's Commission proves the falsity of the charge of error Mr. Smith, from the profundity of his ignorance or the depth of his venom, attributes to me. He is the one man in the world who does not know exactly where he was when he learned the President was assassinated, as his article proves - yet he won the Pulitzer Prize for his assassination reporting!

Mr. Smith's alleged reason for declining to face me before his peers is that "platform debating is a little out of my line". I have never done it. I have since challenged him to a confrontation in his Pulitzer Prize field, writing, on the simple subject of his story, in any publication he can arrange. I have gone further and guaranteed him the last word, offering to submit to him in advance my criticism of his piece so he can use his space to answer me. Can I be more fair?

Had you looked at WHITEWASH, of which I gave you enough copies, or been courteous enough to phone me, you could have avoided this intended damage to my book and to me. But what better should I expect of writers and editors who think there is something strange and repugnant in a love for living things like waterfowl but that it is normal and civilized to love weapons of destruction?

At what point is the press going to realize that it can defend no one and nothing by continued falsehood and slanders, that the only possible defense of anyone or anything in this case is the truth as total and untainted as man can make it, that the unrelieved misinformation it spreads makes any defense less possible, and that a President may not be assassinated and the government leave unanswered a single responsible question it is within the capacity of man to answer?

Yours truly,

Harold Weisberg