

May 4, 1972

Mr. Benjamin C. Bradlee
Executive Editor, The Washington Post
1150 15th Street, NW
Washington, D. C. 20005

Dear Mr. Bradlee:

You may think the purpose of my infrequent letters is to nag you. In time, I think you will come to understand it really isn't.

Today's story plugging Gerold Frank's fictional rehash of the official mythology about the King assassination (a relatively small part is the book) makes me wonder about your instructions to Geoffrey Wolff not to review any of the books on the political assassinations because they required specialists The Post did not have and thus, as I then wrote Wolff, my work is the only one not reviewed in The Post despite the fact that it was the first, whereas those which followed were with some prominence reviewed by syndication.

I do think you are genuinely concerned about the quality of what The Post does and it is to that that I here limit myself.

Uncritically, you quote Frank as saying, "There was no conspiracy. Who on earth would have made a deal with Ray? ..." Could anything more clearly reflect what Mr. Casey did not note, the preconception of Ray's guilt, the preconception that Ray fired the shot?

As to the concluding paragraph, this is pure flackery: "'I'm afraid of fantasy,' he said, 'I have a horror of fantasy. I'm in love with reality...'" I think your own staff expert on the King assassination, if he has read Frank's book as I presume he has, can tell you that it in fact abounds in fantasy, in undiluted imagination presented as fact, in impossibilities, and in deliberate, conscious misrepresentation on the most basic evidence. Let me cite a few simple points on which you can readily satisfy yourself (and on each I also have Frank's voice on tape):

Ray sitting in the bedroom with an entirely unloaded rifle to commit an assassination he planned to commit from elsewhere, the bathroom;
traps back and forth between the two rooms;
in the last moment inserting by hand a single bullet in a clip-fed pump gun (which is entirely enclosed by the mechanism except for the hole through which the empty shell is ejected);
meanwhile, keeping the loaded clip in his pocket!

(I believe I have shown Paul Valentine my duplicate of the rifle allegedly used in the assassination; but if he has no recollection, any gun shop can tell you this is the sickest kind of fantasy, or

I will be happy to bring it to you with deactivated bullets, and I think it gets to the crux of the book, the man and the assassination)

insisting in his book that an entire bullet was recovered when it was not and he knew it was not; hiding, as did the prosecution, the existence of the second and larger wound which is in the autopsy as he knew (and then insisting, when I confronted him with this, that the two wounds were but one enlarged by surgery).

I could go on and on, but we neither have the time and I don't think you yet have the interest. I merely raise the question, is this the kind of reporting you want in The Washington Post? Is this the kind of editorial policy you really want? Do you really want your paper to push transparent, commercialized, official mythology while it totally suppresses the same newsworthy things Frank suppressed, such as confiscation of court records by the American government, repeated lying by the now acting Attorney General, by his subordinates, and even the unheard of or almost unheard of, a summary judgment in this case against the Department of Justice?

Sincerely,

Harold Weisberg