

# FBI blocking Weisberg's access to its files on Kennedy, King assassinations

By NANCY F. LORIE

A local writer who has been credited with being a major force behind the Freedom of Information Act and has been called "the last of a dying breed of investigative reporters," is now tangled with the FBI over obtaining copies of its files on the assassinations of John F. Kennedy and Dr. Martin Luther King. In 1970, a federal judge ruled that

Taken into consideration in the ruling was the fact Weisberg's only regular income is Social Security benefits. The judge in the case also recognized "the unique role" Weisberg has played in the Freedom of Information Act and "the benefit to the general public."

Now, the author of seven books on the assassinations and an outspoken critic of the Warren Commission, Weisberg is reading room of people in a court in Washington, D. C. is nearly impossible for the 67-year-old Weisberg who is afflicted with circulatory problems, diabetes and other ailments. (See Jack Anderson's Washington Kerry Go-Round, Page A-6.)

Seated in the dining room of his hotel in the week, Weisberg (left) and the author of the book "The Assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr." (right) discuss the case.

## FBI blocking Weisberg's access

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ly embarrassing to the FBI. They've done such wretched rotten stuff it's unbelievable. All this talk about the new FBI and the old — I can't see how there's a damn bit of difference.

The basement of the Weisberg home is lined with file cabinets — so many cabinets that it looks like a reference room of a large library. The files are all neatly labeled and organized, and Weisberg often has visitors who use them in their own work.

How did he become so involved with studying the Kennedy and King killings? "I didn't intend to," said the man who has been in newspapering, public relations, was a Senate investigator, worked in intelligence during World War II and was a farmer.

At the time of the Kennedy assassination, Weisberg was in the process of liquidating his farming operation and closely followed the events unfolding.

He said he was convinced almost from the beginning that "the crime was beyond any one man."

Weisberg mentioned the thrust of his writings is to point out that in a "time of great crisis" which the killing of a president is, "the institutions of society failed and have failed ever since. There are the institutions, he said, that are supposed to protect us."

The author obviously is caught up in his work and he cited times when he

work around the clock when he was on the trail of something. Could this be called an obsession with him?

"It's easy to jump to that conclusion," Weisberg said, "but, no, and I don't regard it as a crusade."

"Each citizen has some responsibility and it's up to each of them which ones he assumes," he said. The author said it's not considered unusual when a doctor gets up in the middle of the night to be with a sick person, nor is it considered out of the ordinary for a farmer to stay with a cow who is having trouble birthing a calf.

"It's not unusual what I do... citizen participation — that's all I'm doing," he said. "There are no heroes in it at all. It's the function of a writer to ask questions."

Weisberg does not consider his fight with the FBI over getting their files as being hopeless.

"Does what you see downstairs look hopeless?" he said of his files. "Don't ever think you're going to be completely satisfied with government," said Weisberg. "I don't think it's not worth the effort to keep trying to improve it."

## JACK ANDERSON

## THE WASHINGTON POST

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**FBI as Sturgeon** — Thinking to see in a federal judge's decision, the FBI has effectively denied access to his files on the John F. Kennedy and Martin Luther King assassinations to a respected critic of the Warren Commission.

The critic, Harold Weisberg, 67, and his wife has written seven books on the assassinations. In 1970, Judge Gerhardt Caspell ruled that Weisberg, whose only regular income is Social Security benefits, qualified for a waiver of duplicating fees.

But now the bureau has told Weisberg he must pay for document copies — knowing he can't afford it. Obviously, the FBI said Weisberg can look at records in the agency's reading room — though it knows they are a progressively disintegrating copy of a progressively disintegrating copy from his Maryland home-based papers and dangerous.