

Jonas, Darrell

From: Jonas, Darrell
Sent: Tuesday, September 28, 2004 9:46 AM
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Subject: FYI BOOKSELLER LETTER FROM PETER OSNOS

Dear Colleague,

We are in the midst of a very heated presidential race in which books, for better or worse, are playing a major role. Recently I was asked by the *Los Angeles Times* to write about the phenomenon - and the phenomenal success - of "attack books". The text of that article is attached below. What I could not do in that piece was write about our own books, which I believe can and should play a role in this election. I want to alert you to them again. The hope is that you will include these books in your store's political displays between now and November 2 - and to offer readers the fullest breadth and scope of information possible.

From PublicAffairs Reports:

John F. Kerry: The Complete Biography by the Boston Globe Reporters Who Know Him Best

Michael Kranish, Nina Easton, Brian Mooney

This *New York Times* and *Washington Post* bestseller remains to date the definitive look at the man who would be president. "Vigorously researched... energetically fleshes out the details of Mr. Kerry's life and career... draws a carefully shaded portrait of Mr. Kerry as a man of many contradictions... The voter can only wish that there were as thorough, up-to-date and probing a biography of George W. Bush available before the election." (Michiko Kakutani, *The New York Times*)

Our Plan for America: Stronger at Home, Respected in the World

John Kerry and John Edwards

The official, authorized Kerry/Edwards campaign book, modeled on the 1992 Clinton/Gore bestseller, *Putting People First*, offers voters vital, much-needed insight into the Kerry/Edwards vision for America. This will be a vital reference to the Democrat's platform, and an invaluable companion to the upcoming debates.

The Bubble of American Supremacy: The Costs of America's War in Iraq.

George Soros

George Soros tallies up the real p&l of the war in Iraq, and its implications for the future of this country. This is an essential book from a remarkable man. As the paperback edition lands in stores this week, it will be backed by a huge promotional and advertising campaign, with Soros engaging in an extensive publicity effort.

The 9/11 Investigations

Edited by Steven Strasser

Still the most comprehensive report on the attacks, and the investigations, available today. Landing on the best-seller charts # 10 on the *Los Angeles Times* this week, this is "[a] major, basic reference for anyone who is acutely interested in the events, prelude and aftermath of the September 11, 2001 attack" (*The Baltimore Sun*).

The Abu Ghraib Investigations

Edited by Steven Strasser

This new release offers readers the full text of the independent Abu Ghraib panels official report, as well as an insightful deconstruction of the disturbing events at the Iraqi prison: how they came to pass and their troubling implications for America's role in Iraq and the world.

In addition, from our 2004 frontlists:

The Hammer: Tom DeLay - God, Money, and the Rise of the Republican Congress.

Jan Reid and Lou Dubose

This hard-hitting biography of the most powerful man in the Congress goes on sale today -- just in time for a bevy of indictments against the DeLay fund-raising team. "A terrific book... *The Hammer* is more than a compelling read, it's a public service - a masterly account of an ordinary man's extraordinary climb to power." (*The Dallas Morning News*)

Pols: Great Writers on American Politicians from Bryan to Reagan

Edited by Jack Beatty

A sweeping look back at the history of America politics, and politicians, in the 20th century, as we elect those who will bring us forward into the 21st.

One-Car Caravan: The Amazing True Saga of the 2004 Democratic Race from Its Humble Beginnings to the Boston Convention

Walter Shapiro

Now in paperback, and updated through the Boston Convention. Liz Smith writes in the *New York Post*: "[His] shrewd recording of life on the political road to Washington, and his opinions, are important to us now. This is a highly readable, contemporary work-lighthearted, humorous, compassionate and brilliantly executed."

And, not being averse to following the trends of the times (see article below), we've also published **Cronies: Oil, the Bushes, and the Rise of Texas, America's Superstate**, a "scathing indictment... [that] makes the case that the GOP's focus on oil and profit has created decades of international woes-including the current imbroglio in Iraq." (*Texas Monthly*)

Thanks in advance and all best,



Peter Osnos
Publisher and CEO

From the *Los Angeles Times*
September 20, 2004
page B.11

Mud Flies, Books Fly Off Shelves

Peter Osnos

Attack advertising in politics is hardly innovative. But in this year's election, attack books have added a significant new factor to the shrillness of presidential campaigning. Get used to it.

For weeks, "Unfit for Command" by John E. O'Neill and Jerome R. Corsi has been at the top of bestseller lists, with about half a million copies now in print. The book, an unrelenting assault on John F. Kerry's Vietnam War record, was published by Regnery, a conservative house based in Washington, and it bumped the memoirs of Bill Clinton and Gen. Tommy Franks from the top spots.

But "Unfit for Command" is only one of many such books, from left to right, that portray the president and his challenger in scathing terms as liars, hypocrites and if not corrupt at least corruptible.

Depending on where you draw the line, there are about a dozen of them on next Sunday's New York Times bestseller list. In recent months, authors of such partisan bestsellers have included Bill O'Reilly, Ann Coulter, Michael Moore, Al Franken and many others.

A typical political book on a national bestseller list will sell about 100,000 copies. Some do much better than that; Moore's books have sold in the millions.

Though there have been periods before when political books were in vogue - the protest era of the 1960s, for example, or during the Watergate scandals of the 1970s - this spate is distinctive because the books are so personally insulting. Once a phenomenon like this takes hold in publishing, the process is irreversible.

Book publishers have traditionally been portrayed as more genteel than, say, movie producers or newspaper proprietors. But if that was ever true, it is certainly not the case now. Publishing today is dominated by conglomerates - Viacom, News Corp, Bertelsmann, Time Warner, Pearson - all of which find book profits frustratingly small compared with their other media businesses, and they are determined to find big sellers at nearly any cost.

So when Moore and O'Reilly sell millions of copies, when Kitty Kelley (author of "The Family; The Real Story of the Bush Dynasty") gets a multimillion-dollar advance equal to a movie star's, and when "Unfit for Command" soars, the only logical response is to up the ante further with even more explosive books, especially when they are protected from restraint or regulation - within the bounds of libel laws - by the 1st Amendment.

The main revenue for book publishers comes from sales. Unlike magazines, newspapers or television, books have no advertising and no subscriptions. Unlike movies, there are no product placement deals. Publishers have no choice but to go where the buyers are. And the buyers are clearly relishing the evisceration of our political leaders.

Are these books any good? As in all media, there is a spectrum from brilliant to awful. But standards for books are different from, say, newspaper standards. The biggest sin for a book writer is plagiarism (when it is uncovered). Rarely does a book get discredited for mere exaggeration or distortion. Outright falsehoods are frowned upon, of course. But short of that, anything seems to go in books.

Historians will surely say that attack books in some form have always been around in politics. But their modern history can be tied to President Clinton, our first president with a tabloid profile while in office.

Space does not permit listing all the bestsellers about Clinton's misbehavior (both personally and, allegedly, in his political life).

The outpouring legitimized all-out vilification of the person in the Oval Office. Millions were made and spent on the examination of Clinton's depredations. President Bush came under similar scrutiny. Attacks have now spread to the opposition candidate, although his personal life has so far been spared. (There is, however, the intriguing matter of Kerry's sealed divorce papers.)

How much of an effect will these books have on voters? It's hard to say, specifically. But they are certainly an important part of the overall portrait of the candidates. "Unfit for Command" was tied to anti-Kerry TV advertising; Moore's anti-Bush movie, "Fahrenheit 911," was one of the box-office hits of the summer.

As election day approaches, voters must accept, for better or worse, the consequences for the country of all this abuse. That is, after all, the American Way.