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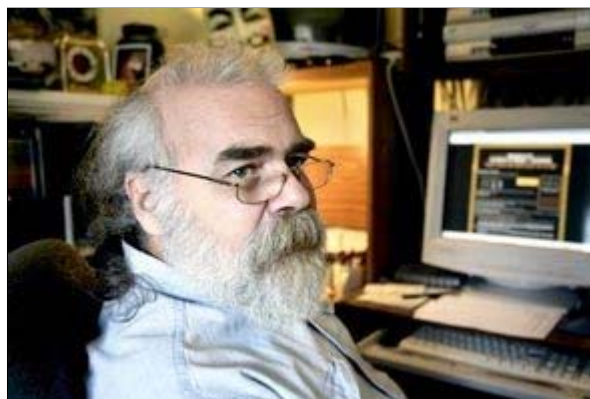
Patriot or crackpot? Seattle man's mission to prosecute Bush

By Mark Rahner

Seattle Times staff reporter

Ask Bob Alexander how often he's heard the word "quixotic" recently. The approximate answer: all the time.

Of all the people who read Charles Manson prosecutor Vincent Bugliosi's best-selling "The Prosecution of George W. Bush for Murder," this 57-year-old Seattle coffee merchant is the only one jolted to act on it in a substantial way. The SuperBeans proprietor has become a super-activist.



COURTNEY BLETHEN / THE SEATTLE TIMES

Bob Alexander rounded up volunteers and money, but he knows others might not see things his way.

With the help of a handful of volunteers and donations, Alexander has sent 2,200 copies of Bugliosi's hardcover to prosecutors around the country.

Now he and his volunteers are following up with each one of them by phone and e-mail, as well as gathering signatures for petitions urging the prosecutors to indict the former president.

Two other things Alexander hears: that he's courageous and principle-driven, and that he's an obsessed crackpot.

"Absolutely," he said with a kind of rueful joviality. He hears he's "a Bush-hater, an America-hater." He wouldn't disagree with the former, but Alexander argues that it's only hatred for what's been done in America's name that spurred him to act.

He had already achieved a degree of recognition for his anti-Bush essays that incendiary liberal talk-radio host Mike Malloy regularly reads on his syndicated show as a "Moment with Bob."

But Alexander was inspired by Bugliosi's premise: Bush lied to make a case for invading Iraq, so he's responsible for each of the more than 4,000 American lives lost there, and prosecutors in counties that had Iraq war casualties have the jurisdiction to file murder charges against Bush.

Not every lawyer and legal scholar agrees with the premise, and it's the possibility of war-crimes investigations — for torture — that's gained the most mainstream traction so far. But Alexander locked in.

"After I read the book, it was the first time in eight years I had seen anyone lay out a clear blueprint of what we could do because of what Bush has done," Alexander said.

Calling all prosecutors

Reached at his Pasadena, Calif., home, Bugliosi recalled, "[Alexander] sent me a letter and said he was telling people, 'Instead of buying my coffee, spend the money on Vincent Bugliosi's book.' I wrote back to him and said, 'I'm very honored you feel so strongly about this, but I feel extremely uncomfortable that you're losing business. Can't you just recommend that people buy the book?' "

Nope. A thought percolated after Alexander attended a Seattle appearance by Bugliosi in September and he listened to the author's argument about the jurisdiction of district attorneys (DA).

"The next day I was walking to school to pick up my little boy and I just thought, *Why don't we send a book to all of them?* It didn't seem at that second a very patriotic thought, or a very courageous thought."

In fact, he said, "One of the grimmest things you can do is look up the names of all the soldiers who died, in each county, and then match them up with a DA."

But in September, Alexander and his wife, Arminda, set up a Web site for the project (prosecutegeorgebush.com) and began raising donations chiefly through Malloy's radio listeners. With a substantial cost break from publisher Vanguard Press and nearly \$18,000 raised, Alexander had enough books by January.

"I didn't quite completely grasp what it was like having 4,000 pounds of books in your house," he said.

With 10 volunteers, some pizza and no doubt plenty of his coffee, Alexander packed the books with a cover letter from Bugliosi, and sent them off Jan. 31. Now they're following up.

"He really took the bull by the horns," Bugliosi said. "Bob's the only one that really took it to the next level."

Question of resources

No takers so far, though, particularly in King County.

Ian Goodhew, deputy chief of staff in the King County Prosecutor's Office, said he's answered about 500 e-mails from people who want charges filed against Bush.

"Mr. Bugliosi has some legal theories that he suggests, but none of which have any legal merit," he said.

Goodhew explained, "The statutes of Washington state only give us jurisdiction for crimes that occur *in* Washington state. We can't prosecute someone for a murder that occurs in California under Washington state law, so how can we prosecute for someone that was killed in Iraq?"

Also, Goodhew said, "Even if there was jurisdiction, we don't have the resources."

Other prosecutors in nearby counties asked for reaction to receiving the book didn't return calls from The Times.

University of Washington professor Peter Arenella, a nationally recognized expert in criminal law, agrees with Goodhew.

Further, Arenella said, "Regardless of whether Bugliosi offers a tenable legal theory for criminal prosecution of Bush for some of his decisions and policies in conducting the Iraq war, one thing is clear: There is a complete absence of any political will to pursue a criminal prosecution against Mr. Bush."

For the latter reason, Bugliosi says, no federal prosecutor who answers to the U.S. attorney general will touch the matter.

Beyond that, he claims those who disagree with him about jurisdiction simply don't understand the law he cites: the Effects Doctrine, which allows prosecution for effects suffered within a jurisdiction for acts committed outside it.

Meanwhile, even though Alexander has his supporters, some others don't quite see things his way.

An Army vet e-mailed him, "Alas my wish that you would be dragged out in the street and shot in public then put on display for 3 days like they used to do to people like you in Iraq will never come true. And to think I actually went through hell to defend this crap."

Another wrote him, "It's liberal facists [sic] like yourself who will destroy this country ... not George Bush."

Yet another wrote, "One day you will be arrested and killed by the government and when that day comes I will celebrate."

Again, quixotic, to say the least.

Realistically, Alexander said, "I think there's a very good chance of getting an indictment" if not a murder conviction against a former president.

"I think there's some DA out there who believes in the law more than he believes in partisan politics. At least with an indictment we can show the rest of the world that we know what happened and we're trying to clean it up."

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