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Networks Promote Anti-Nixon Author As Credible, But They Dismissed Anti-Clinton Authors

Nixon, the Wife Abuser and Drug Addict?

With ferocious prompting from the Clinton White House, the national media quickly picked apart and dismissed author and former FBI agent Gary Aldrich in 1996 for his book on the Clinton White House, *Unlimited Access*, denouncing it as badly sourced. Several networks canceled their interviews after Aldrich was grilled on ABC's *This Week*.

But author Anthony Summers, perhaps best known for charging that FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover was a secret cross-dresser (using a source convicted of perjury), is being welcomed by network bookers for his new book *The Arrogance of Power*, which charges without much evidence that Richard Nixon was a wife beater and drug abuser. Do the networks have one standard for authors attacking Democrats, and another for attacking Republicans? Here's some of the Summers book publicity:

NPR. *Talk of the Nation* gave Summers an hour for his book. But Aldrich was never interviewed by NPR, and was dismissed by NPR anchor Bob Edwards on the July 5, 1996 *Morning Edition*: "President Clinton and the White House staff were the subject of many of those hearsay, and as it turns out, untrue accusations."

Cable News. The same double standard is occurring in cable news: CNN's *Larry King Live* canceled Aldrich in 1996, but King began Monday night's show by asking about Summers. *Dateline NBC* canceled Aldrich, but CNBC's *Rivera Live* and MSNBC's *Hardball* have interviewed Summers. (Geraldo Rivera called it "a hell of a book.")

ABC. On Monday's *Good Morning America*, ABC's Jack Ford led Summers through allegations that Nixon had "numerous neurotic symptoms" and Nixon's alleged alcohol and drug use. He added: "You were able to confirm many of these allegations," although he did suggest the wife-beating story was thinly sourced: "Why would you include such an allegation?"

On July 19, ABC's Terry Moran interviewed Paul Fray, who claimed in Jerry Oppenheimer's new book *State of a*

Union that Hillary Clinton called him a "f—ing Jew bastard" in 1974. Moran sounded like a White House aide. First he brought up Fray's 1997 letter to Hillary apologizing "for making accusations, and these are your words...without factual foundation...So you have falsely accused her before." But Moran wasn't done: "What are we to think of somebody who had to surrender their law license for altering a court

document, who was drug-dependent, who the Supreme Court of Arkansas said doesn't have the moral character to practice law in this state? Why should people believe you?" This may be the first (and last) time ABC has considered Arkansas disbarment a character flaw.

CBS. CBS never interviewed Gary Aldrich, although four years ago *CBS This Morning* anchor

Troy Edwards reported "Aldrich admits much of it is second-hand and many of his sources dispute his versions of the events." CBS did not interview Oppenheimer or Fray last month, although *CBS This Morning* co-host Harry Smith told Oppenheimer in a 1994 interview that his book on Ethel Kennedy was "scathing and it's mean-spirited and it's very, very nasty stuff."

On Monday, *The Early Show* put the worst charges on screen in capital letters [See box]. John Roberts interviewed John Dean (who was supportive of the book) and Bryant Gumbel interviewed Henry Kissinger. Gumbel asked of the wife-beating charge: "If it's impossible, how do you account for such a wide variety of charges from so many people over so many different years?" He asked: "What about claims that he had a drinking problem and on more than one occasion ordered bombing missions while intoxicated?" Gumbel placed no responsibility on the author to prove his charges. He only forced Kissinger to rebut them. — *Tim Graham*

CBS put up these unproven charges:

"Former California Governor Pat Brown: WE GOT WORD AT ONE STAGE OF THE [1962] CAMPAIGN THAT HE KICKED THE HELL OUT OF HER, HIT HER."

And: "Reporter Bill Van Petten: Nixon BEAT PAT SO BADLY...SO BADLY THAT SHE COULD NOT GO OUT THE NEXT DAY."

L. Brent Bozell III, Publisher; **Brent Baker**, **Tim Graham**, Editors; **Jessica Anderson**, **Brian Boyd**, **Geoffrey Dickens**, **Ted King**, **Paul Smith**, **Brad Wilmoth**, Media Analysts; **Kristina Sewell**, Research Associate; **Liz Swasey**, Director of Communications. See Gumbel's differing take on Ralph Abernathy's book on Martin Luther King at www.mrc.org/news/mediawatch/1989/mw19891101nbites.html