

Richard Stott - why he was a great journalist

Wednesday, 01 August 2007

I wrote to Richard from prison, as I wrote to many in the media. I only knew him superficially through a chart hype story in the 70's (which, though against me, was absolutely accurate).

He wrote back saying sorry, having read about my case he was not on my side. He particularly mentioned the widely reported "seduction packs".

I replied telling him that these had never existed (they were in fact Concorde packs) and that the police did not seize any (since they didn't exist) or produce them in court and the Judge had ordered the mention struck out (though of course it still ran in the media). I also gave him several other factual inaccuracies (the police never seized or even looked at my computers, saying they had not been invented at the time of the claims. I found this odd. Surely if they really thought I was guilty - they didn't - they would have wanted to see if I was "still at it").

What Richard then did was what made him a great journalist and the kind we need today (there are so very few).

He checked out my claims. And found them true.

As a result he wrote a supportive column saying I should be granted first parole. He was never 100% on my side but he felt there was something unfair in the way I'd been treated. And dared to say so.

Surely that is the way real, honourable, intelligent reporters work? Just as, when he called and confronted me about the chart hype story, I'd held my hand up and said "you've got it right, mate".

I suggest that 99% of journalists, editors and media people these days don't bother about detail or truth. They just ask "is it a good story?". Richard asked "is it true?". That is sadly very, very rare.

We kept in touch with each other after my release. He was a gentleman with good manners as well as a terrific journalist. May he rest in peace.