

Auckland, 21/05/95

Dear Harold

I go back to school tomorrow after my two week break. It has been a busy time for me. I have managed to sort out quite a few things which was good. We have taken our house off the market too, I must have told you this already as we took this move three weeks ago now. It has taken some of the pressure off our family, whew!

I had a letter from Andy at "The Last Hurrah Bookshop" yesterday letting me know he had received stock of "NEVER AGAIN" and asking me whether I wanted my copy sent by air or surface mail. He had misplaced my letter and could not remember. I am glad he checked with me first. I phoned him straight away and asked him to send it to me by air. He said demand for the book had been good.

I realise now I forgot to send you copies of my correspondence with Carroll & Graf, they must have had my letters answered by a very junior person in the firm who did not respond to my questions. The West Coast distributor for Carroll & Graf were no better, they wrote back to me as if I was a importing publisher, not a private individual offering to help get their titles (your books) into NZ bookshops. It was evident they had not understood my letter. I did not bother to reply, it was obvious they are only set up to deal with other publishers and somebody like me did not fit into their idea of doing business at all.

But I do have a couple of other bits of correspondence I have made copies of for you, just to keep you informed. First there is the letter I wrote to Jim Froot, the secretary of the Auckland History Teachers' Association. I worded it the way I did because Jim is going to copy it and distribute it with the association's next newsletter.

Next- some two months ago my literary agent rang me and told me he had a manuscript of a novel dealing with the JFK Assassination that he had been trying unsuccessfully to sign with a North American publisher. Every publisher in the USA he had sent it to returned it and expressed no interest in handling it. I took the MS home and read through most of it. You will see the letter I wrote to my agent when I returned the MS. The author, John Drummond, is a professor of music and the story he had written was built around the discovery of a diary among the possessions of an American who lived and died in a remote part of the South Island. The diary ended up in the hands of the hero of our story who realised it must have belonged to one of the assassins of JFK. The hero investigates the information in the diary, and to cut this story short, he discovered the conspiracy involved Oswald working with the Mafia, including Ruby and various underworld Cubans. What I found strange, incongruous, was that Drummond quotes Posner as a reliable authority on the assassination.

I am also enclosing a copy of the Community Education Programme that my college is running this term. We are a 'community college' and under our charter we are obliged to make our facilities available to our community for a wide range of educational, cultural and social activities.

Last, and most importantly, is a copy of a letter Chris Chittenden wrote to me on the night of 10th May. After writing to you that day I rang Chris that evening and had a very long talk with him. The letter he wrote later that night summarises by points his attitude to the sort of book he would want to publish. The book must be short and sharp, focused on narrow historical skills more than the larger context the assassination falls into, strictly related to current curriculum unit standards, and written in such a way that teachers and students can use it without having to do a lot of additional reading. This is a difficult prescription to satisfy. It was my idea that I use my night class as 'guinea pigs' by testing possible historical "reconstruction" exercises involving working through samples of evidence, and to keep Chris and MacMillans informed of how the material was being received by my students.

Looking back at your earlier letters, you asked me how I thought you could best prepare your papers for the people who will follow in your footsteps and carry on your work and research through reference to your collection of documents. All I can think of that may be useful would be to write cross references you think may be important for individual or groups of documents. You see your papers and your work from the centre looking out, and there must be a myriad of connections and cross references between many many areas of your work so obvious you do not realise how they all originally came together, while anybody coming at your records from the outside has to discover these connections and patterns. Does that make any sense? I worked on a book project years ago about Maori soldiers in WWII with a Maori author. We were picking up on a book started years before by a group of writers but not finished. We both found the people who begun the work we tried to finish had not noted any of the relationships between the large bundles of letters and documents they had classified by separating them into bundles tied with blue tape. We did not finish it, the book, and I eventually handed our research work over to a TV production team that was looking at the same general subject as our book. But I remember sitting in the National Archives reading room with these papers spread out on a table, making notes on a pad, reading through these letters and papers, and not understanding the relationship between the individual papers in each bundle and between each bundle. (The TV programme did go to air but the book from the programme that was supposed to come out after the series was also stillborn- that book still waits to be written!)

Of Mailer, and a title, how about "Mailer's Missing Tales" as the main title and still use your suggested subtitle "Of the JFK Assassination". I assume you will be offering readers some of the 'missing information' from Mailer's book, hence the use of the term "missing" in your title. Or maybe "Mailer's Mauling Tales"?

I have had luck at last with cracking the software on the diskette that has the unedited version of "CASE OPEN". It took an expert again to open it for printing. I hope to have it printed this week. I was going to ask you questions about the NAA and spectrographic analyses of the ballistic evidence, but it can wait until my next letter.

Much love and best wishes to  
you and Lil,  
Dad.