

8-19-70

CONFIDENTIAL
YOUR EYES ONLY

Dear Fred,

As I proceed with my work, there are several areas and specific items on which I would welcome your help, if you would choose to be of assistance.

The events of June, however, have left a very bad taste in my mouth; it is difficult to pretend they did not happen. Furthermore, those troubles were part of a wider pattern which were symptomatic and typical of our whole relationship.

Rather than pretend that nothing has happened, and that no problems exist, it seemed to me appropriate and possibly useful to set down in writing those matters which, from my point of view, were and are the root causes of the problems we have had.

About a year ago, you received a letter from me in response to the Bell film matter in which it was stated that I trusted you. You had been most offended, at the time, because you felt that actions on my part indicated a lack of trust. There was no hesitation in assuring you that this was not the case.

In my opinion, I have been quite open and above board in my dealings with you. Starting with no preconceived notions about anybody, I am quick to trust, especially if I feel someone exhibits sincerity, and merits trust. I was quite impressed, when I first met you, for I felt that you were quite dedicated and sincere. Had this not been the case, I would never have spent the time I did with you, or told you the many facts about my research project which I have shared with very few other people, and acquainted you in such a specific manner with so many of the hypothesis that are in my manuscript, as well as my methodology, outlook, and political theory.

I am certain that the conversations you have had with me have affected much of your thinking on this case, and caused it to take many quantum jumps. I wouldn't have spent the time and effort in this if I didn't respect you as a person, trust you as a friend, and want you as an ally. I also made clear, rather early on, that there was certain information that I could not share at that time, and would not be able to go into until a much later date. All in all, I feel I have been quite open and above board, very liberal with information and cooperative about doing any favors I possibly can; in fact, within a few months of the time we resumed communicating, after the Thornley matter, I had in the back of my mind that there would be nothing finer than if ~~you~~ it could be arranged that you do all the artwork and illustrations for my book---if that could be legitimately arranged, through a publisher.

Yet as time went on, incidents of various types occurred; any one of them might be termed merely an annoyance; cumulatively ~~then~~, they had a very damaging effect, for they corroded trust. And any relationship, in the final analysis, is based on trust. The extent of the trust determines the extent of the communication you can have. It is central to everything.

Here, in synopsis form, are the incidents, gripes, bitches----whatever you want to call them. Everyone of them has a bearing on the basic question of whether, and to what extent, I could feel you are trustworthy and reliable, as a friend and as a confident.

1) Shortly after one of my first visits to your home, I left a green, metal portable file there. When I contacted you by phone, you informed me that you and your wife had carefully searched each file folder in it, to see if it contained information that I did not wish to pass on at the time. Perhaps you didn't realize the significance of what you were telling me when you told me about that. I took notice and remembered.

That incident didn't build any trust.

2 WEEKS 1

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2) Mary Ferrell came to visit you last August; I desperately wanted to meet her. You put me through a series of social handstands before, finally, ~~XXX~~ agreeing to arrange such a meeting. (To refresh your memory, recall the various conversations you had with me about the difficulties of scheduling me; how, you informed me, you had set up appointments between her and such important and research-prone personages as Steven Burton, Al Swartz, etc---until, finally, I practically had to get down on my hands and knees, attempt to remind you of how important such liason could be for my research, and bluntly plead with you.)

By a combination of plain aggressiveness with you, and just plain squatting there in your living room, reading her notebooks, when I was reminded that it was dinnertime, I managed to not only meet Mary ~~XXX~~ but also talk to her at length.

To put it mildly, the whole thing was not a very pleasant procedure.

I have never talked about it to you; but it is difficult to forget, and it certainly didn't engender trust.

3) Mary permitted you to ~~merox~~ her notebooks. For 5 months, while you pretended great friendship with me, were urging me on to finish, and ---to all outward appearances, had nothing but my best interests at heart---you kept the existance of these xerox copies from me. INstead, you used them to brief yourself on the case so that, as you told me later on, you would appear more intelligent and informed in telephone talks with me!

In other words, during this time period, during a time that you claimed you wanted to do all you could to help---and you, of all people, certainly are aware of how useful chronologically arranged data is to my type of work---you engaged in a silly form of one-upmanship, a game which only you knew you were playing. During this period, you held back key research material you could easily have made available, while simultaneously presenting a front to me that "I only want to help". For all you knew, during this period, I might have been spending 14 hours a day ~~xxx~~ working out chronological arrangements of data, when it was all there on your bookshelf in your home.

When I pause to think of the duplicity necessary, over the five month period you kept the existance of this material unnecessarily secret, while simultaneously extending your hand in friendship...it is perhaps the mildest understatement of all to merely state again: that did not engender any trust.

(And, incidentally, I still have not been given real access to this material; but that is another matter, which I will come back to later).

4) I ~~sometimes~~ have wondered: what would Fred Newcomb be like if, by some accident or quirk, information fell into his hands that I had not intended to reveal; information, let us say, which was central in some way to my entire manuscript, and which I had deliberately withheld, so that no possible accidental violation of confidence on your part would lead to publication, by another person on the grapevine, of a piece of my work, completely out of context---something which could really hurt my chances of getting my own work out in complete context, and as one whole unit.

I feel that the following incident has a direct ~~bearing~~ bearing on this question.

Last August, you discovered the existance of the Dallas Times Herald story, "LBJ Sees Kennedy Dallas Trip"; you thought you had found something secret and crucial to my work, in the manner I have previously described. In fact, you had not. That story was even news to me, but that is not the point.

The point is that your behavior in that case is a reasonable example of what to expect had you really made such a discovery.

For days, you had a grand old time, attempting to scare and frighten me. Do you remember the phone calls, Fred, with this line: "There's a clock running, David..." Remember that line?

Rather than simply saying---"Say, look what I found; if this is central to your work, don't worry about it, for it will go no further"...----rather than that, you played the role of a petty psychological terrorist.

It was completely by accident that, in phoning Mary Ferrèll about an entirely different matter, that I learned what it was you were dangling around over my head, attempting to make it appear as some type of sword of damocles with respect to my publication chances, and that ended that episode.

But look how much was learned about your character and psychology through that episode.

Do you think that tended to open, or constrict, the pathways of communication?

I can only assure you ~~XXX~~ that that behavior did not engender trust.

5) Z film research. I was somewhere down on the tail end of your distribution list for your research in this area. Because of your lack of judgement, a lack which went so deep you were not able to distinguish your enemies from your friends, you lost complete possession of a valuable item of evidence.

Although this was not personally insulting to me, it doesn't and didn't engender trust in your judgement.

6) Weigmann-Couch material

I spent a whole evening carefully going over the W-C material at Jack Clemente's one evening. Present also were Judy, Bob Kneisel, [of the JFK committee]. There was never any question about my interest in these pictures, and you were perfectly aware of it. The one technical argument Jack and I had that night was whether to make 35mm black and white negatives, or use Ektachrome slide film. At the time, he said something to the effect that: "Well, I'm doing this for your book, and if I'm going to spend the time to do it, lets do it right", or words to that effect. AS I recall, you couldn't make it that evening, but you knew I had carefully examined the material.

Despite this, despite the time I spent making you a set of Bell slides (and four to six full days 9am-12 midnight were spent on this) project, which was done completely in triplicate, so that you would have a set of those very rare and valuable items) you completely ignored the entire sequence of events, and went ahead and used Jack's equipment, and ~~XXXXX~~ just made one set for yourself.

When I finally asked you why there had not been two sets of negs made, on May 29, you practically whined your answer: "Because you didn't express an interest in it".

HORSESHIT.

And when I spoke to you about it in person, you could hardly look me in the eye on this matter.

It is not my place, nor am I qualified, to go into a definitive analysis of

the psycho-mechanics of your own moods, but it has become increasingly clear to me that the feeling of being ignored, or persecuted---or whatever the grievance may be--- leads to petty acts of revenge on your part.

This behavior, on your part, leads to my viewing you as an unreliable ally. IN any event, it does not engender trust.

7) Train~~X~~ hypothesis. I was appalled at how easily you were intimidated, by a few challenging devil's advocate's arguments, into not believing a piece of your own research-----or even addressing yourself to the evidence in order to answer the points raised! I bring this up because it goes to the matter of to what extent you have the courage of your convictions, and would be a reliable ally, when the going gets rough. No one is asking you to not follow facts, or go where the evidence leads. That is not the point. I am addressing myself to the quality of the fiber in your backbone.

8) Long Beach lecture.

You and I agreed, in my apartment, to a lecture format, which was then put in writing, with you leaving the apartment with a carbon copy of it. Part of that format was that you would lecture on three areas; one of those areas concerned the train hypothesis.

Despite your reservations about the train hypothesis, you agreed to lecture on it, weakening it where you felt necessary, and explaining to the audience, as I suggested you do, what you felt the problems were with the hypothesis.

This is a perfectly acceptable and honest approach; no one expects you to be a fountainhead of absolute,ly proveable truths.

Now at any time, you could have changed your mind, altered the format, and voiced these changes to me. You did none of these things.

Despite conversations ~~XXXX~~ I had with you the night before, conversations with you the next day, and even afternoon, just before you left your home and even conversations with you in the lecture hall, just before the lecture began, you went through the really hideously dishonest and embarrassing procedure of permitting me to learn----while I was standing before an audience of 400 people, and with the lights out----that you had quife deliberately and consciously not brought the train material.

This was totally dishonest, hypocritical, and corrupt/^{thing}of you to do.

Stating it rather mildly, it did not engender any trust.

9) The Baxter Ward news show and ~~the~~train slides.

You agreed to have the train material presented on the Baxter ward show, and to make your train slides available for that purpose. (In fact, one of the reasons you stated they were not immediately available was that you needed them for the lecture!!)

In accordance with these conversations, I passed on this information to Carol Thorpe, who gave appropriate instructions to the station's messenger to pick this material up at your home, when he called on you to ~~XXXXXX~~ return to you the Oswald slides, on the Friday morning of my appointment at the studio (the day following our joint lecture)~~XX~~

I called the station Friday morning, shortly before I was about to leave, only to find that when the KHJ messenger had showed up, you had refused to make the material available, as you had agreed to do.

For that reason, I rescheduled my appointment, and went through considerable difficulties digging up the slides necessary to make my own presentation.

The disorder this caused in my keeping my commitments that day is not the important thing. What is important is that apparently, there are various situations in which you secretly and unilaterally decide that your word shall mean nothing. You are perfectly willing to deliberately lie and mislead me, while at the same time, pretending friendship.

The fact that you breaking your word to me made me ~~XXX~~ look foolish in their eyes, and wasted their messenger's time is really not primary here.

The real question is: can you be trusted? Why do you do these things, Fred?

Do you think that engenders any trust???

10) Jim Ferrell's west coast trip, and photos he might bring *back - G hypothesis*

DRIVER SWITCH

With great apprehension and excitement, I awaited Jim's trip out here, to see what photos he might have garnered, through his searches. If a photo turns up which can prove this hypothesis, it will cause a major revision in the structure of my manuscript; for this hypothesis governs, to a large extent, ~~KK~~ to what extent one can charge the SS with being in on a plot.

You are perfectly aware of the stakes here.

(Indeed, here, at least, is an area where we have both profited, mutually, from the relationship. My hypothesizing and ideas gave direction to your work; furthermore, your hypothesizing and work explained the key inconsistency--the Towner photo----for its you who put forward the idea that Towner is a composite, and its you who detected the frame-to-frame blot-outs of the drivers face on some of the movie footage (obtained from Gary).

Despite all this, you kept me completely in the dark on Jim's trip.

(I sometimes wonder if you have any idea of the extent of the capacity for cruelty you so often show; but then, the flippant way I saw you joking about your kids reaction in seeing an animal ~~WIKKWKX~~ whose head you tore off....oh well, need I say more?)

Getting back to Jim's trip. You did not tell me when he'd be out here, or even whether he had turned up anything. You performed none of the normal liason functions one friend performs for another. And yet, in this key area, I had put complete trust in you and dependence on you for just these activities.

The situation got so bad that I had to get on the telephone to Dallas and get my own information, and even the photos themselves, so unreliable was your performance.

The fact is, I love to talk to Mary; but it is also a fact that I can ill afford those sort of expenses. But I had to establish my own liason, which eventually led to my meeting Jim on his trip. When I got my phone bill that month, with the \$10-15 worth of Dallas calls necessary to work around you, I remember thinking "Thanks to Fred Newcomb", as I wrote the check to General Tel. that month.

As has almost always turned out to be the case with you, you used a temporary information advantage in a rather cruel way.

And I had to foot the bill to counter it.

That does not engender trust, or a feeling that you can be relied upon.

11) This is a matter I can't discuss in too much detail.

I am perfectly aware that you have written, on at least one occasion, a terribly dishonest letter to a third party. This letter requested that certain information be withheld from me, and you gave, as your excuse, that if this were done, ~~XXXXX~~ why then you could use the item involved ~~XX~~ in a trade.

Aren't you a bit too adult to play such games? And didn't it take a considerable amount of dishonesty on your part to so totally misrepresent my actions and motives on that occasion?

One friend does not do that to another friend.

It does not engender trust.

12) Gary Schoener.

About Spring, 1969---I sympathetically listened to you while you told me of your gripes re your relationship with Gary. I then went to bat for you, for I thought you had been treated unfairly. I wrote him a letter.

The result of this experience was to find that you ducked down and pulled back, neither lending me support nor corroboration in the way of quotes from previous letters, when he countered the charges I made.

And, to top it off, in the middle of all this, you sent off ^{to me} a dilly of a letter in which you completely undercut me, by stating, (as I recollect) that just previous to mailing my letter to Gary, I had said:

"This is going to piss Schoener off, but I'm going to mail it anyway".

IN the wake of that event, I was left to wonder whether I was dealing with a Machiavalian genius, a chamelian, or just someone who was plain stupid.

Out of sympathy I had gone to bat for your interests, only to ~~not~~ only find you not there to defend yourself, when the time came for that, but rather, engaged in undercutting me with Gary!

Again, wishy-washiness under fire; unreliability as an ally.

I_t did not engender trust.

From the above list, perhaps you can see why I feel that I have been on the receiving end of a host of petty manipulations, game playing, and just plain childish behavior-- all of which makes me constantly wonder to what extent you are reliable as a friend, and can be trusted as an ally.

The question is not: can you be loyal.? Rather, it is a question of whether there is any reliability in your loyalties.

There is the strong impression that, rather than just judge people rationally, you vacillate periodically between hero-hate and hero-worship.

Many of the things in this letter, I'm sure, you are hearing for the very first time. For from the start of these incidents, I have kept myself from saying things, and suppressed my complaints, in the interest of preserving a relationship with you.

But I find it difficult to state certain things orally to you. So I thought it would be best to put these things in writing. The purpose of this letter is to inform you frankly of my grievances; for it has gotten to the point where its not going to be possible to salvage any type of relationship at all, if this type of thing is not dealt with satisfactorily.

I am going to take the liberty of going out on a limb and giving you my explanation for ~~XXXX~~ much of this behavior.

The common denominator of many of these events, and much of your behavior, is your apparent need for a constant ego-massage.

It seems to me that anyone who will properly massage your ego, will have in you a life long friend, even if it means disloyalty to an already established relationship.

The opposite side of this same coin is that anyone who once starts down that path must keep massaging your ego, to retain the friendship. You appear quick to impute motives of personal rejection, even when there is disagreement on ideas.

But

Your whole attitude seems to be: "~~AND~~ what have you done for me lately?" where "lately" can sometimes be the time between two telephone conversations, ~~XXXX~~ held merely an hour apart.

Given all the information I have made available to you, the remark you made which has disturbed me the most was when, in your last letter, you wrote in the margin a snide remark about me cutting you off what you termed my "one man grapevine".

In this the way you view confidences and information that I have shared with few other people, to ~~XXXX~~ contemptuously call it a "one man grapevine"?

If you place so little value on what I consider to be so much, (and what is, by any standard of measure that I could possibly think up, actually, so much) that is not a very good omen as to your reaction and protectiveness had I gone even further.

You must understand that I am not out to mollify your contempt, by surrendering information. Information gets passed when trust already exists. My opinion concerning your behavior has gradually emerged to be something like this: given any grievance, real or imagined, your loyalty becomes unreliable, and you become whimsical, vindictive, and rather devious.

And a key word in the above sentence is "imagined". For it seems to me that one ~~XXXXX~~ of the things that makes for so much uncertainty in dealing with you is that one never knows when the above behavior pattern is going to be tripped off by some totally imagined grievance. X

I can't always be on the defensive, wondering whether Fred has dreamed up some new "hurt".

Example 1: The NBC tapes, which you were given by me, and which had audio

breaks in them. You ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ accused me of editing these tapes, before I gave them to you, and went off on one of your irrational, behavioral tangents.

Example 2 ABNP order. Same complaint, only here with respect to some page groupings I did not order because of money and relevance.

Whether I'm dealing with a material good, or information transmitted, the basic problem is the same. If Z films are left in your car, or a confidential piece of information in your mind----if a reliable relationship exists, I shouldn't have to worry whether the film in the car or the info in your mind will become a hostage in some petty and cruel game you will play, with regard to the latest grievance, ~~XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX~~

This is the problem of the whole relationship. Its not whether loyalty ~~XXXX~~ exists, but the fact that it appears to be a sometime thing with you, subject to your latest mood; which is, in turn, subject to the latest injustice or grievance (real or imagined----and it doesn't matter which it is, for in a good relationship, people talk about their differences; one person doesn't stick a knife in the other person's back); and this in turn is aggravated by your constant need for an ego massage.

Dealing with you is like being in a cage with a hungry animal, where you have to keep feeding it a piece of yourself to keep it from biting you to death.

I hope I have made my point; its really up to you to do something about these things.

A word about Dennis.

I have had several contacts with him, in getting material back to you. On such occasions, I have herd him articulate what he claims to be your "position" on various matters. If I were to rely on information from him, I would have to come to the conclusion that you are constantly pre-occupied with gloom and resentment towards me because there are areas of my research which I have not yet told you about.

Dennis' statement of your "position" on this matter is so constant, so ~~XXXXXX~~ pushy, so aggressive, so gauche, and so distasteful----and sounds so unlike anything I have ever heard come from you directly----that I cannot help but entertain the suspicion that he sometimes uses his position as an "intermediary" to advance the interests of his own curiosity on this whole matter.

On two occasions, I have found him acting like a provocateur and throwing sand into the gears of my relationship with Jack. Whether done thru carelessness or intention, it is a behavior that has been crudely obvious; so perhaps you can understand that my suspicions go to other situations as ~~XXXX~~ well.

~~XXXX~~ Both Jack and I feel that your relationship with Dennis has been, to a certain extent, responsible for the deterioration of your ~~XXXXXXXXXXXX~~ communication with us. (And I must add a personal note: nowhere in this letter have my remarks been directed against the basic sincerity of your motives or purposes; I have addressed myself to what I call personality problems. But Dennis is really an entirely different story...)

Some concluding remarks. I have written this letter because I find it easier to say things in writing than in person. It is not my purpose that you wallow

in those paragraphs or sentences which you disagree with most strongly, reading them over and over, and getting progressively angrier and angrier.

But that is the risk one always takes with written communication; that a letter will be misused in the sense that it will be misread; instead of becoming a device used to inform and communicate, it will become a constant irritant.

So try to remember that there is a date on the letter, and that it was really only meant to be read once, and meant to break open what I consider to be an ugly and unnecessary sore, rather than to pretend it didn't exist.

I would not have spent the time writing this letter if I didn't feel there was value to be gained in us communicating and dealing with each other.

It seems to me silly to approach the completion of my work without cooperation; where I can't obtain items from you that you might have, or check facts, or whatever.

I've been spending 16 hours a day on this, 7 days a week. I realize that you have work to do, and can probably only spare a small amount of time each day, and perhaps more time on the weekend. The point is, there should be communication, even if there is not agreement on the details of the assassination.

It is difficult for me to believe that, day after day, while you sit in your studio doing your commercial work, the notebooks of Mary and her group, as expanded ~~XXXX~~ by you, sit there in your home, not being made available to a research effort which is leading to publication.

As you sit there doing your work, does it make you feel superior to know that you have information which could be of great ~~XX~~ use to me, and which you are withholding?

I mean, the question must be asked bluntly: don't you want to help? Don't you want to contribute anything you possibly can, so that this piece of work will be as factual as possible, as accurate as possible, and make use of the best material available?

Or have you become so corroded with resentment that, from the point of view of your own psychology and personality, your satisfaction will come when, with a published book on the shelves, you can leaf through ~~XXXXXXXX~~ it and take satisfaction at the various places it could have been stronger, but where, out of spite, you intentionally withheld information?

If it has gone this far, if your resentment is that deep, well, then I can do nothing about it.

To me, this is a rather unhealthy way to be motivated, but then, the choice is really yours to make.

If you feel you do not wish to reestablish communication, and if you wish to conclude our relationship, then I would like to request that, as a token of our past friendship, you will keep confidential any of the matters we've discussed in conversation with each other, and which pertain to this whole project ~~XXX~~, in general, and to the material that will be in my book.

Sincerely,



David

P.S. Should you wish to reestablish communication, I suggest we meet somewhere where we can talk alone---~~KMX~~ either at my place, or perhaps at Jack's.

That is, if you want to discuss any of the material in this letter.

Now there are certain specifics that~~XXXX~~ I suppose are on your mind, and which should be on the agenda.

Re the Z project. I have no objection to meeting and swapping data. Neither has Jack. ~~X~~ I am trying, right now, to arrange a trip to New York. I hope it will come off.

If you wish to combine swapped data in some format, I have no objection to discussing this matter. But it is not clear to me that any useful ~~conclusion~~ *purpose* is served by attempting to draw up a memo for multiple signatures. Certainly, Wexler doesn't care a wit about that.

Re items I owe you. As per your letter, and as per the matters I raised in this one, it seems to me a fair suggestion that you made----that these be split up in half. I have not touched C-W for several weeks, and so I am a bit behind. I have to run them through processing to make a group of prints for Roffman; and I have picked ~~out~~ key frames ~~for~~ which I want 8 by 10s and crops made.

I have been very short of cash, and so have been putting it off.

I also owe you the 35mm strip you took of the train passing. I'm all through with them; they're ready to be returned.

And screen Z, to Jack.

Re items I would like to obtain from you

I have ~~spoken~~ to Mary about a week ago. Then, just a few days ago, I spoke to Sylvia, who is down in Dallas visiting. ~~X~~ From the tone of these talks (for example: Sylvia was given the notebooks, or at least one of them, to take to her hotel) I don't feel there would be any problem in obtaining permission from Mary for me to completely xerox the notebooks she gave you. I know that she is extremely anxious to help me in any way ~~she~~ possibly can; all I have to do is ask. As of now, I have not informed her of this whole situation re the notebooks. You have made a considerable expansion of the 11/22 book, by a large percentage. ON these pages, it is really your decision. I'm hoping you'll say yes. Making notes on these things is just too time consuming. If they are to be of any use, it should be available *for xerox* so that I can simply browse them at various times during the day, when I'm eating, etc. That is the only way I can benefit from that material, and really become familiar with it as a research tool.

I was excited to learn, from speaking to Mary, that your daughter Val, charmed her way up to Bower's tower, and took pictures which may have a bearing on the validity of Bowers testimony. I hope you would ~~let~~ me see these, and make me prints if they're ~~XXXX~~ useful.

There are a bunch of other items, which I ~~have~~ jotted down. They can be talked about as time permits.