

Dear Fred,
31 August 1970

Many thanks for your letter of the 28th. I was most interested in your accounts of Lifton's plan to go to a magazine if LBJ ran for re-election, to make certain that he would be defeated. Yes, I agree that had he done so anyhow, in the simple service of truth and justice, the RFK assassination might not have come to pass—nor, indeed, the many other horrors we have witnessed, not since LBJ abdicated in 1968 but, rather, since Lifton acquired his decisive information in October 1966, which I imagine we all remember quite well.

By the way, I meant to ask you a facetious question in my preceding letter but forgot to include it. What significance would Al Newman (or Garrison, for that matter) read into the strange fact that your street number is "4640" while Mary Ferrell's is "4406"? I shudder to think!

I think, Fred, that you may have misunderstood my question about why the lawyers did nothing when they became aware of Lifton's "find." Your analysis is directed at the reasons why the lawyers and/or the Commission did nothing, before or after Lifton's find, to expose what does indeed seem to have been a coup d'etat, by the palace guard or the next in succession. On that score, I generally agree with your reasoning. But what I really was questioning is why, given the stakes (protecting the institutions of government or the government as the national institution, and also protecting individual careers, reputations, and places in history), nothing was done to thwart disclosure by Lifton of his find—by compromising the evidence itself, if it could be done, or by destroying it (a fortuitous fire or explosion), or by destroying Lifton or all possibility of his future credibility. Even, it occurs to me, by beating him to the punch and disclosing the find, with suitable "explanation" which would disarm the weapon and render it innocuous.

What does puzzle me is that they should sit around year after year, wondering if and when this explosive information will be made public, as if resigned to take their medicine like little gentlemen if need be.

You say that you do not know what you would have done had you been in the shoes of the Commission members or lawyers who understood the situation and backed off. Perhaps in the context of 1963-1964 it did pose a really painful dilemma (although, for myself, I believe that I would not have hesitated for one moment, then, later, or now, to disclose and let come what may). But with the hindsight that we now enjoy, it seems apparent that it was the suppression that set into motion a chain of disastrous events which have moved the country to the brink of disintegration and civil war. Can any of us believe that the cover-up, and the railroading of an innocent pawn, "saved" the country from any fate worse than we now seem to face?

I will of course gladly read with interest your presentation of the nature and the level of the plot, as you have reasoned it out. But you should not belittle your own abilities as a writer. Your letters are sufficient to demonstrate a distinct gift for organizing and expressing ideas and for communicating information, as well as for formulating cogent arguments in support of a particular position. I do enjoy your letters, as I also enjoy Mary's, for style as well as content.

I would love to spend some time with you and Marilyn and Mary but from here to July 1971 I am riveted here, by a heavy program of work at my office. Perhaps next summer....but it is far too early even to be tentative about. Much affection,

P.S. Had a talk with Wecht by phone the other night. Lifton apparently had boasted to him some time ago of his breaking-and-entering and his acquisition of super-important new information, though Wecht's recollection had become vague as to exact details. He did not remember at all, interestingly enough, a call in which Lifton read him an autopsy report on an unnamed person, and denies that he ever suggested any injection of air or the like. Could he have forgotten such a conversation? or could Lifton have invented it all? I just don't know what to think.

But as to the present situation, which I explained, Wecht felt that to approach the press was not only a good idea but the only feasible course of action which was open to us. However, I am still hoping to talk with Sauvage before doing anything definite, and he remains incommunicado, working on his grave as to services of a private investigator, the many other horrors he has witnessed, and since Lifton worked his best to avoid the subject, which I mention in October 1964, when I mention it in my letter.

By the way, I want to ask you a question in my preceding letter but forgot to include it. It should be noted that Garrison (for that matter) read into the article that your street number is "4400" while "4400" is "4400" I should think!

I think, Fred, that you may have misunderstood my question about why the lawyers did nothing when they became aware of Lifton's "find" or analysis as directed at the reasons why the lawyers and/or the Commission did nothing, before Lifton's find, to expose what does indeed seem to have been a coup d'etat, of the palace guard or the next in succession. (In fact, I generally agree with your reasoning. But what I really was questioning is why, given the stakes (protecting the institutions of government or the government as the national institution, and also protecting individual careers, reputations, and places in history), nothing was done to thwart disclosure of Lifton's find---of compromising the evidence itself, or by destroying it (a fortuitous fire or explosion), or by destroying Lifton or all possibility of his future credibility. As to me, by besting him to the punch and disclosing the find, with suitable "explanation" which would disarm the weapon and render it innocuous.

What does puzzle me is that they should sit around year after year, wondering if and when this explosive information will be made public, as if resigned to take their medicine like little gentlemen it need be.

You say that you do not know what you would have done had you been in the shoes of the Commission members-lawyers who understood the situation and backed off. Perhaps in the context of 1963-1964 it did pose a really painful dilemma (although, for myself, I believe that I would not have hesitated for one moment, then, later, or now, to disclose and let come what may). But with the hindsight that we now enjoy, it seems apparent that it was the supposition that set into motion a chain of disastrous events which have moved the country to the brink of disintegration and civil war. Can any of us believe that the cover-up and the withholding of an innocent party, "saved" the country from any fate worse than we now seem to face?

I will of course gladly read with interest your presentation of the nature and the level of the plot, as you have remarked it out. But you should not be too hard on your own abilities as a writer. Your letters are sufficient to demonstrate a high level of organization and for communicating information, as well as for formulating cogent arguments in support of a particular position. I do enjoy your letters, as I also enjoy Kelly's, for style as well as content.

I would love to spend some time with you and Marilyn and Gary but from here to July 1964 I am involved here, by a heavy program of work at my office. Perhaps you should try to get some of the sensitive about...