

22 October 1971

Dear Dick,

It was good to hear from you again, and thank you for sending me--with your letter of the 12th--the finished version of your impressive monograph. Now, as earlier, I find it a tightly-reasoned, highly-convincing thesis. I do very much hope that it will be accepted for publication by the Am.Rifleman or some equivalent popular/technical journal. Sincere congratulations on this achievement. (I shall be interested especially in any comments you receive from Shelley Braverman and also from Cyril Wecht, if you send him a copy.)

I had a very good summer on Fire Island, one in which I was almost totally idle. I did establish a good relationship with Howard Roffman and read his astonishingly fine manuscript, which seems to me something of a landmark--the first major work to come from a new generation of researchers. I was deeply disappointed when it was rejected; but few mss. are, after all, accepted by the first publisher and I believe that the high maturity and merit of Howard's book will ultimately find publication and acclaim--acclaim from the informed, if not from the public at large.

At this point, please consider this letter confidential, as I want to express my growing concern and even alarm about our friend and colleague Harold Weisberg. He has always been a difficult person but the weight of many years of frustration, fatigue, and hardship (much of which seems to me self-imposed and, unhappily, ultimately futile and self-defeating) have caused him to become increasingly unreasonable.

Harold seems to feel that he has some kind of monopoly or priority in our field of work and that nothing should be done unless he is first consulted and gives his approval. He seems to feel that everyone should be in orbit around him--offer him financial subsidy--and take the same keen and detailed interest in his day-to-day, hour-by-hour activities as he himself takes, and remember it all much later with the same obsession as he does. He is tending increasingly to create knotty complexities and crossed-lines among groups of us, on the basis of little or no foundation at all, and to accuse more and more people of being bitten by the bug of being the first to solve the case, and also of money-grubbing and general venality. In so doing, he seems oblivious of the extent to which he is inviting the suspicion that he is projecting his own fixations on others.

Recently he has created a big commotion about Cyril Wecht's application to see the autopsy photos and X-rays at the expiration of the five-year moratorium. Although Cyril has yet to make a written request, rumor has escalated to the wholly unfounded assertion that he has been granted access to the materials! and Harold, no doubt inadvertently, has involved a number of us in heated exchanges of anxieties and reassurances, taxing the time and energy of people who cannot afford the expenditure involved--especially when it is based on hysteria and no substance at all. He has pushed me to nearly the limit of the restraint and patience I have always tried to practice with him, but what is worse he has managed to really offend and alienate Cyril Wecht, whose cooperation and good-will we can scarcely afford to jeopardize.

I don't suppose there is anything that you yourself can do about this, even if I could take the time to give a blow-by-blow account, but I thought that I should alert you to what seems to me to be a dangerous deterioration in Harold's judgment and stability. (End of confidential portion of this letter.)

I had an exchange of letters with Belin in the wake of the Givens article but to no avail--he simply would not and obviously could not address himself to the specific evidence, but was abusive and irrelevant, and I finally decided not to squander more time on this pathetic wretch. I have nothing else in the works, as the situation at the UN keeps me busier than I can describe and I am all out of ideas anyhow. However, I am and always will be keenly interested in your work and that of other serious researchers, so that I hope that you will stay in touch. Very best of luck and happiness in your new home. Best,