

11 May 1966

Dear Maggie,

I really marvel at your composure and your uncomplaining tone when you called from the hospital last Friday night. When I try to imagine how I might have reacted to such an ordeal, I can only admire your calm and courage all the more. Maggie, since we cannot possibly spare you for any length of time, you obviously must get completely well and back to work, as soon as possible—no malingering, hear?

Yesterday I had a long phone-call from Welsh, partly about the material I had submitted in the beginning, and partly about the August issue; and when I got home in the evening I found a long letter from Dave Lifton, generally covering the same ground (the August issue). It seems that Ramparts has really worked up a full head of steam and is going all-out. That is very reassuring, of course, and I am ready to allow my original hopes to revive. Ramparts can certainly play a key role if, as I foresee, we are moving out of Phase One—the junking of the spurious WR—into Phase Two, the investigations and re-investigations which can still be attempted and which may lead us toward the truth of which we were deliberately and cynically cheated by the WC. I must confess that high on my personal list of priorities is a vindictive hope of seeing the Chairman and his collaborators in public disgrace.

Maggie, strictly between you and me only: a footnote to the Salandria/TMO/Ramparts affair. After the 11th hour discovery that Vince's find was a dud, Arnoni broke the news to Vince on the phone, but I didn't get on the phone—only because Arnoni didn't suggest it, and it was his nickel. I kept expecting Vince to call me but the days passed and he didn't. My niece, who had chauffeured me to Arnoni's house with my bale of documents and volumes, kept urging me to call him; Arnoni also suggested that I should make the first move, hinting that Vince was flagellating himself and apologetic for all the trouble he had caused (I must admit that it took five years off my life and cost me about \$100 in incidentals!). So, against my inclination and judgment, I yielded to their opinion, and Isabel's, too, and called Vince. Boy! was I sorry! He didn't even MENTION the high drama of the preceding week, which left me in the stupid position of having called without any reason. I had prepared myself to reassure him as forcefully as I could that anyone could have made the same error, etc. etc.; but when he ignored the whole thing, I was left feeling like a fool, without any excuse for even phoning.

Oh, well, that's life among the so-called amateur sleuths.

I didn't get a chance to tell you that after the great denouement on Saturday, I was called out of an important meeting on Monday for a phone-call. I was quite alarmed, because the girls in the office would not put a call through unless it was something urgent, and I was worried by my father's state of mind when I had talked to him the day before. Imagine my surprise to find Jones Harris on the line (he never calls me at the office). For once, he was extremely pleasant and treated me almost as an equal, or potential equal. He had heard about the collapse of Vince's discovery, and was very generous and seemingly sincere about it—even suggesting, for the first time, that I must come to his house and see his photographic evidence on the doorway photo. (He must have thought better of that, for there the invitation has remained, dangling.) But the irony was that Jones, of all people, should have been so thoughtful, and Vince so cavalier.

Again, Maggie, for your information alone—I haven't told you before the full extent of the disaster that almost took place. It was not a question of a special issue of TMO, to come out within a week, as I had thought until Saturday morning. But Arnoni (notice, not Vince) called me that morning to say that largely because of the series of frantic phonecalls and strategems by Ramparts, and indications that another magazine might soon try to get into the act too, he and Vince had agreed to break the news on Monday morning via a nation-wide full-dress press conference. That was why I had to rush out to Arnoni's place in New Jersey—they needed a good copy of the doorway photo for the hand-out to the press, which was to include photocopies of the documents Vince had found in the archives plus his 16-page article—Arnoni was not even going to copyright it, on the grounds that the material was of such overriding significance that it should belong to the whole country, without reservations.

It was while I was waiting for my niece Susan to pick me up and take me out there that I decided to make an exacting check of every single item in the H&E that had to do with the doorway picture, the shirt, etc. and it was only one minute—literally one minute—before Susan arrived that I found the dismaying proof that Vince had misinterpreted the document he was about to announce to the world. Susan found me almost fainting with shock and dismay; I couldn't be absolutely certain that Vince was wrong until I read his article; and the strain of the whole thing was really acute. I didn't tell you about the press-conference-plan because, again, I had been asked to keep it absolutely secret. But now that it is all over, you may as well know the whole situation (but please don't tell anyone else).

The hour for the publication of Ed's book is drawing quite near—about four weeks, now, I think, for copies in book stores. I cannot tell you how much I am holding my breath—almost in a state of suspended animation—to see if my expectations come to pass. I still feel certain about the impact it will make but I'm being prudent and leaving myself an "out" just in case I am wrong—that is always possible, but I don't want to give the impression that I have any doubt in terms of the book, it's just that I don't want to be hoist by my own absolutes. And maybe it's a little superstition too, not to give myself a "conahorra" (ph.spelling), a term that had a lot of usage in my family.

Incidentally, one other thing I want to straighten out about the Vince/TMO affair. Vince had suggested that I should submit my Hartogs article (Thor's Great You-Know-What) to TMO, which I did. The day after I mailed it, I got a call from Arnoni, at my office, expressing much enthusiasm, etc. He wanted to get together to talk about the case, and about the Hartogs article, and we made a date for him to come here on Wednesday night. On Tuesday night, I called Vince to tell him about Arnoni's reaction to the Hartogs piece and find out what kind of thing he drinks, or eats, as he was coming the next night. It was during that phone-call that Vince told me about his earth-shaking discovery. I was so sick about it the next day that I literally could not work or function; so the moment I got home, and before Arnoni arrived, I called Vince again to ask if he was absolutely sure, if he had taken into account the shirt comparisons in Shaneyfelt No. 24 exhibit, etc. And he said yes, yes, there was absolutely no room for doubt, etc. That was how it got under way for me—so that when Arnoni arrived a little later, we didn't talk about my Hartogs piece or anything much else, just about the bombshell Vince had found. However, once it was all over, Arnoni did call, last Thursday I think, to say that my Hartogs write-up will be in the next issue of TMO (June)—but sans Thor's G-A, which has been replaced by something I hope you will like just as well. I didn't expect TMO to be so decorous (not to say puritan). It's one surprise after another these days.

Maggie, need I say that I love you dearly and my thoughts have been with you every moment?