

Letter to Ray Marceus
— not sent.

22 January 1968

Dear Ray,

Yesterday (Sunday) I received your telegram; and I want to thank you and Letha for your expression of sympathy and condolence.

At first glance, I thought the telegram referred to your brief letter of the 12th--which might perhaps be described as "brutally frank"--and that your wire had crossed with my letter of the 18th. On more careful reading, however, I realized that you must be referring to a second "brutally frank" letter which had not yet arrived.

Tonight, when I returned from work, it was in the mailbox. In the light of your telegraphed regret for your "ill-considered timing" and the indication that you would not have mailed this letter had you known of my father's death, I have not opened the envelope. You have my word of honor that it is sitting on my table, sealed and unread.

We seldom have the opportunity to do things over in the light of later perspective, and we seldom can provide this opportunity to another. In this instance, it is possible: I will not open your envelope until such time as you stipulate. Thus, in effect, you will not have mailed the letter on the 19th of January and you can "mail" it on a date you select.

There is only one proviso, and I think you will agree that it is reasonable: If it turns out that copies of this letter have been sent to third parties, and read by them while I abjure reading the original, I will reserve the option of opening the envelope before the stipulated date.

My offer to delay reading the letter is not really heroic. In truth, I am in no state of mind to read brutal or brutally frank letters. My curiosity is in low gear, and my morale. Perhaps by the time you "mail" it, I will be in better condition to read it. Meanwhile, I cannot help speculating on the contents.

What have I done that made it necessary, in your opinion, to be "brutally frank"? It must have to do with Thompson's alleged plagiarism, or his double-agentry, or Garrison, or a combination. Naturally, I am examining my conscience.

Have I done you an injustice in failing to agree with your charges against Tink, or most of them? When my opinion was solicited, I was not aware that I was under compulsion to render a view identical with yours, or with Thompson's: I assumed that my honest opinion, for whatever it was worth, was desired. Was my differing opinion dishonest? self-interested? opportunistic? prejudiced? disloyal? Or merely "differing" and therefore to be excoriated? (I am trying to figure out what is in your envelope!)

Or, on the other hand, did my transgression occur earlier, when I reviewed Thompson's manuscript for accuracy of the citations from the Hearings and Exhibits and such other comments and suggestions as occurred to me, without taking issue with his attributions of credit to you and/or other researchers (including myself)? I am truly guilty, in that case, of not having carried around in my head a detailed inventory of who discovered what, and when, and whom he told, and what he submitted for publication, and what he published, and when, and where. Having failed in my duty then, am I now minimizing Thompson's transgressions to cover up my own?

Do I demand for myself the last microscopic morsel of credit due me, while expecting others to accept shortchanging or eclipse? I think not, since I have never asked for credit, or for more credit than was given. Again, this is not because I am a heroine. It is because I have too much pride to demand "my due" and too much self-confidence to worry or grumble, even when the results of my work are published in Philadelphia as the findings of a journalist whom I have never met, to this day, but whom I "know" through a mutual friend. I feel that everything will fall into place, in due time, and I will get whatever credit I have earned. (But if I don't, tough shit.)

Another set of speculations: I am predisposed toward the Epsteins and the Thompsons and thus toward The Establishment; and I am trying to cover up a Government conspiracy and/or a Warren Commission fraud. I have taken arms against the "good guys" like Lane, Garrison, and Mort Sahl; and joined ranks with the bad guys, Epstein and Thompson. And--how could I forget!--with Sauvage, who has committed the multiple sins of showing public contempt for Lane and Buchanan, and has called Garrison the Henry Wade of New Orleans (HOW I wish I had thought of it first! There is something for which I would insist on getting credit.)

Am I merely "predisposed" or am I consciously on the side of the villains? Well, we have different villains, Ray, you and I. I empathize with the imperfect human who is sometimes opportunistic, sometimes careless, sometimes presumptuous, sometimes a coward or a compromiser or a self-seeker, but whose basic morals and motives are trustworthy and who strives for integrity. If this imperfect human also makes a momentous contribution to the effort to expose the Warren Report and to uncover the truth, all the better. But I repudiate as morally scabrous the corrupt human who deliberately cites "evidence" (the stress marks on the Stemmmons sign, the document destroyed while being thermofaxed, etc.) which he privately knows and concedes to be invalidated or misleading. I repudiate the consistently unscrupulous demagogue, the District Lunatic of New Orleans, and his entourage. And if they endanger the achievement and the effectiveness of the entire critical fraternity, all the worse. There is no room for an Arlen Specter in the camp of opponents of the Warren Commission; certainly there is no room for a transparent charlatan who makes Specter look like a piker.