

4/20/76.

Sylvia Meagher
New York

Dear Sylvia,

It was good to hear from you.

I appreciate your comments on my 605 Elsbeth memo, and have followed up on your suspicion of Clements. The analysis in AAF is excellent, and can only leave one with the gravest doubt about what was really found in the wallet. I am trying to take this further, by putting together what there is of the full chain of possession of the wallet and its contents. I've found some interesting things so far which I shall put into a memo, but most interesting to me is that (apparently) the Commission never published the full contents or even a photo of the wallet itself. Did they even have it? I'll be writing the Archives on this.

I am a bit confused about your comment concerning my letter to Paul re Thompson. You express concern and sadness, but I don't know for certain if this refers to the academic or the personal realm. I understand that you are good friends with Thompson, so I suspect there is personal sadness. My own sadness and concern is academic, for I do feel that Thompson makes several errors in his book. I bear no personal grudge against Thompson, and I do not share Harold's intense personal dislike for him. Believe me, that is one of many of Harold's battles that I am not fighting. It's just that the closer I look at Six Seconds, the more I find errors and weaknesses. This is not to say I find nothing positive in the book (for example, I think the discussion of "Which stretcher" is very good, and Wecht's appendix is excellent--probably the last thing Wecht did that I'd call "excellent").

I have received the new edition of my book, and although I am very pleased with it, there is one matter which concerns me and about which I feel obliged to write you. Several months ago I learned that the publisher planned to devote the back jacket to reviewer comments about PG. I wrote a letter making several suggestions among them, to include comments about the original version of the book that you had sent to me in a handwritten letter many years ago. Your letter was quite favorable to the book, and stated that I should feel free to quote your comments to help the book--or words to that effect. I had sent a copy to Barnes in 1973 when they were first considering the book--that is, the edited version. When I wrote them this year, I reminded them of this letter from you, and asked them to contact you to obtain your permission should they wish to quote from your letter, because I did not think it fair to take remarks you made about the longer version and apply them to the edited version from which much material had been extracted. Your letter of April 12 makes it apparent to me that the publisher never contacted you, but an extract from your letter does appear on the back jacket of the new PG. In case you have not seen the new jacket, let me set forth how you are quoted:

"I am truly awed and full of admiration for the quality of the research, the importance of the discoveries, the objectivity and fairness,...the force of the reasoning and the clarity of the exposition....The book is a major work of crucial, perhaps decisive importance. The achievement is simply monumental."

--Sylvia Meagher, author Accessories After the Fact

If you have any objections to this quote being applied to the published version of PG, please write me or my publisher. I'm sorry to have to take this up with you now, after publication, but I'm afraid that the neglect of my publisher has forced me into this rather embarrassing position.

I can't help noting that I feel somewhat of a heel upon reflecting that my editing of the original, longer version of PG was undertaken at the suggestion and virtually under the direction of none other than Josiah Thompspon, pursuant to his "Reader's Report" for U. of Pa. Press. Regardless of how I feel about his book, I do freely admit that Thompspon's criticisms of mine were excellent and helped to make it a tighter, hopefully, more comprehensible and compelling book, certainly a less vituperative one.

However, on the matter of the jacket quote, I truly hope that it is not embarrassing or disagreeable to you, and I offer you my apology that you were not extended the decency of advance consent to its use.

With best wishes,



Howard Roffman