

15 February 1972

Dear Howard,

This replies to your confidential letter of the 10th on the issue of the effort to examine the autopsy photos and X-rays and I will be blunt in my comments in the hope that you will understand that I do not intend any personal offense or affront.

First, it is unwise to assimilate the totality of anyone's ideas or arguments on any issue, as a general principle. In more specific terms, no one should be unduly influenced by a mentor whose past positions and advocacies of particular strategies and tactics have sometimes led to self-defeating results or otherwise failed. This is all the more true when the individual in question (1) only some three years ago held a completely opposite position on the examination of the autopsy photos and X-rays and excoriated the person who then warned of a trap and tried to obstruct the effort and succeeded in doing so; yet there have been no developments in the intervening years to cause such an about-face. (2) The individual in question, always a difficult and fractious personality, has recently manifested such aberrations as to raise serious questions about his balance and ability to cope with reality and to make judicious, objective judgments.

Some time ago I was myself counseled to keep silent and subdue my own judgment, on the issue of the Garrison "investigation", on the basis of various arguments not wholly unlike those now at issue. I have never regretted my refusal to be influenced, and I think that time has certainly vindicated my position that the truth must be told, let the chips fall where they may. Indeed, one must wonder if our position today as critics might not be a great deal less onerous had our colleagues been guided by their own misgivings and repudiated the New Orleans theater-of-the-ridiculous at that early stage when ample grounds presented themselves for disassociating serious research from the pseudo-investigation conducted by a crude demagogue.

You ask me if I have thought about the position of people like Hoover and Specter when the whole official story is disproved by a man of the credentials and caliber of Cyril Wecht. No, I have not thought about the consequences, in those terms, at any stage in my work on the case and I do not intend to begin now. By that yardstick, every investigative finding made by the critics was "dangerous" and should have been suppressed. Hoover, Specter, et al certainly reacted hysterically and in full disarray when Inquest got page one headlines in mid-1966. And to what dire result? None whatsoever, up to the time that Garrison's preposterous brayings diverted all attention from the genuine evidentiary issues which had then been made public in the works of the serious critics.

Now, am I really supposed to tremble at the prospect that there will be an attempt to shift the blame to the Kennedys? You have a very deficient premise there. I regard them as people who obstructed the critics in every way at every opportunity, people who exerted themselves to sell the WR to the public and the press, and people who have not the least claim to my loyalty or concern. They are well equipped to protect themselves from every contingency, being deficient only in principle, ethics, and brains, as witness the infamous Chappaquiddik affair.

My sole anxiety about the future political career of Edward M. Kennedy is that I should be preserved from living in a country under his presidency, since he has been persistently adept at finding reasons to conceal the truth, about his own part in what seems to have been at the least an involuntary homicide and about the assassination of both his brothers. Do you seriously think that after I have worked for nearly nine years, as unselfishly and honourably as I was capable of working, with the single thought of vindicating an innocent man and exposing a dirty evil fraud on the decent people of this country, I would now be swayed by the fate of the likes of Ted Kennedy or by any other consideration to consent to a default?

One can always find "good" reasons for suppressing the facts, and we both know that at this moment vital documents are suppressed from the public, and have been so withheld for years, not only by the government but by at least one of the critics and perhaps two. Both these contending parties produce exactly the same result--the effective and prolonged suppression of vital evidence from the public. And, in the case of the critics, can you be certain that there is no element of self-interest involved? No vested interest in a potential literary property? No "ego trip" directed to serving as the one to break the case, no element of a misplaced sense of prerogative, no element of plain everyday venality, to which the central objective has become subordinated?

You are dead wrong when you tell me that I cannot imagine the guilt of the WC members, the staff, J. Edgar and Arlen Specter. I am quite aware of their perversions of evidence and I want that exposed. You have seen more documentation than I of their iniquity. It exists. It is held under wraps, year after year. Instead of asking me to worry that Teddy may fall into his last political trap--I frankly would not give a damn--you might better exert yourself to persuade the custodian of that massive secret evidence that it is not morally his personal property but belongs to the people of this country and on the open record. And you might ask yourself if suppression of vital evidence by a critic supposedly dedicated to uncovering the truth is not, regardless of the rationalizations and excuses given for the refusal to let it be used, even more shocking and less justifiable than the governmental resort to secrecy and suppression.

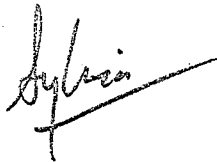
I am an anti-Freudian, generally speaking, but I recognize the existence of a syndrome which he called, if I am not mistaken, folie-a-deux. You should guard against it. If we are to be rendered impotent and inactive now by fear of remote and vague dangers, we might just as well go over to the other side and be done with it, for I feel sure that the Warren Commission and its cohorts had even better rationalizations for what they did than those which are now presented to obstruct the effort to examine the autopsy materials. I do not and never will recognize as valid ANY considerations which pretend to have priority over the truth, and having at a much earlier time in my life survived a confrontation with the FBI and Specter-like spectres, I advise you to have less awe of Mr. Hoover and his minions, and still less awe of the high priests of caution and secrecy in our midst. You have yourself acknowledged that if Wecht get to see the material in question "a competent, reliable

medical authority (will) disprove the whole government story." What has animated each and all of us if not the paramount need to disprove the whole government story? Must it be done by Critic X or Critic Y but not be Critic Z? Can it ever be done by the one critic whose reputation raises a stench from coast to coast, thanks to his own penchant for writing interminable letters of an obscene and gratuitously offensive nature, with or without cause?

I am simply astounded that you should advocate abnegation of what you yourself recognize as an opportunity to disprove the whole government story, for any reason whatsoever. That you offer the argument of potential embarrassment to the Kennedys or an attempt to shift blame to them, as if they had the smallest entitlement to our concern or the smallest need for our protection, simply boggles my mind. I can only wonder if Frederick, Md. is not host to aberrations which are contagious to visitors.

One of us is obviously dead wrong in his position on this question. I do not think either will convert the other. Let us see what time will prove. I doubt if we should pursue this further, since we seem to start from different and antithetical basic premises. And, before I become haroldian in length or self-righteousness, I will close, with the hope that you have not taken offense at the manner in which I have expressed my convictions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Sylvia", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.