

Mrs. Katherine Weber
108 Beacon Road
Bethany, CT 06524

2/25/94

Dear Kathy,

In the convoluted life I lead I had your letter in mind most of the ^{yesterday} day. I'd read and corrected about 4,000 words before having to leave as dawn was announcing itself and was not long home when a massive oak tree on the edge of our property at the road fell across it. Taking down phone, electricity and cable TV cables and wires. When the mail could get through I had only time to read it before taking Lil for an ophthalmological examination, with lunch first. By the time we were home it was close to ^{the} end of my convoluted days. The examination was fine and a date was set for the removal of her other cataract. It is now possible, in the event you know anyone with a cataract to be removed, to make significant corrections in that procedure now. Lil's life-long astigmatism was corrected in that eye and will be in the other one.

You have had a rough time! All those serious medical problems and the worry about the novel atop it! We've been through a hysterectomy, when Lil was about your age. I've had two emergency operations, one of which I was not expected to survive. I have hemorrhaged internally and that is a 24-hour concern because an anticoagulant has kept me alive for now almost 20 years. But by the end of the day I realized that you are handling all of this very well indeed. Good for you all!

On Nick and what keeps him from finishing his tome, with two books to appear this year, one gutted but still very strong (and Random House will not like it at all!) I'd returned to one I'd laid aside and then got an idea for an addition and when I had almost finished the rough draft of that addition saw a lengthy article that will probably never be printed but is important for the record for history and by the time we left yesterday had read and corrected close to 4,000 words of it. As often happens when work is on my mind, up too soon, at 12:30, I was unable to return to sleep so up again at 1, with what came to mind when I could not return to sleep, I've just finished the draft of about 1750 more words for it - at 3:15 a.m.! Some of us do get ourselves involved!

While the FBI does have a considerable FOIA backlog and contrives to have one all the time and while it is supposed to process requests in order of their receipt, for its own reasons it does not always do what it is supposed to do. Most people avoid taking it to court. This means they accept both the delays and the withholdings. Some withholdings are justified but in political matters some often are not and are to avoid potential embarrassment. It is legitimate to withhold what can defame the living and what can identify informers. (The FBI hates that word. It uses "informants".) Unless you have some special need for getting those 800 pages rapidly you are probably better off just waiting. When you get those pages if there is anything I can explain to you, please ask me. If you decide they are just stonewalling or withholding what they should not

and want a lawyer, you will not want to pay for his education on the law. The friend who handled almost all of my cases is as informed on the law, practises and decisions as anyone in the country, I am sure. He is also too involved in too much. And he is a fine human being. He is Jim Lomar, 918 F St., NW, #509, Washington, DC 20004. ~~PHONE~~ Phone is 202/ 393-1921. He is in sole practise and is in and out.

If as I suspect those 800 pages ~~are~~ represent what headquarters has, the ~~field~~ field offices may well have more. The degree of headquarters duplications varies.

All the numbers have meaning and if you have any questions about them I can probably answer them.

I never knew more than I told you about Budberg but from what Sidney said she ~~may~~ have set a record for trying beds out. He never reflected any such interest in her. Probably wasn't there when she was ⁱⁿ between them.

Sidney has to have had at least three security checks, Army, Navy and OSS. The likely classification number for them is 77 and the file classification number is the first number. The second is of that particular file, the third the serial number within the second. 100 and ~~105~~ 105 are for what the FBI regards as "subversive." If you see a "T" number within any record, that is to ^{mask} mask the identity of a source whose real identity appears on a separate last page you will not get.

I think you'll find it interesting reading, much as it may look like Swiss cheese.

The movie about your grandmother ought be exciting to you! From before you were born movies and I have been strangers. But I have an actor friend whose wife produced a movie for TV in which Mia Farrow starred. He sent me a cassette and I soon changed my misimpression, that she was only a sex symbol. Her acting in a very difficult role was simply marvellous! Hope she gets the part!

Lil is a tax consultant and a good one but she avoids the estates. Hope it all works out well and soon for you. If soon is possible with most estates that are at all complicated.

The winter is again harsh here. We had six inches day before yesterday, a thaw yesterday, but because I anticipate ice in the lane only I'll now dress and leave for my early-morning walking. Which is more resting that walking but I do walk.

Our love to you all. And all includes your mother,

Beards

February 21 1994

Katharine Weber

108 BEACON ROAD, BETHANY, CONNECTICUT 06524

Dear Harold, and Lil,

A hasty scribble, this. I await momentarily the tax attorney who will assist me with the work on my grandmother's endlessly complex estate. There are interesting aspects to this, however. On Thursday, I meet with John Guare the playwright, who is writing a screenplay for a Scorsese movie about Gershwin. (Mia Farrow for Kay Saut?)

Apologies for the silence, caused by, in rough order: preoccupation with work completing the novel, disastrous failure of auction of said novel, in August, ultimate reversal and success (November) in the form of a good contract with Crown! (now part of the Random House group) for publication next winter, work on revisions of manuscript as per excellent editing, time out for sudden disastrous reversal in health, mid-November, culminating in a hysterectomy on January 6 (my second abdominal surgery in 18 months), recovery, work on novel, hemorrhage, hospital, re-recovery, work on novel. I think that catches us up to the present moment. The children, as you could see, are fine, and Nick is too, though plagued by too much work in too many directions. He's been in Dublin, and Venice, for Albers and museum related work, and he hates being away from us, and being away from his book on the painter Balthus, which was due two years ago at Knopf. (700 pages and not near finished - it won't be that long, ultimately.)

Your letter, Harold, was fascinating as always. Did you know that when Nick and I spent our honeymoon in Ireland (1976), we stayed in a flat by the sea, in the village where we now own a cottage. The flat was called, strangely (for Ireland), "The Dacha." It belonged to a Danish woman who was a friend of Moura Budberg. The flat had been built for Moura, who had just died before she could retire there, as was her plan. I have no idea if Sidney had an affair with her, but I don't see why not. I know H.G. Wells was one of her conquests. That reminds me that the FBI still hasn't come through with the 800 pages. (A form letter in response to my inquiry complained about lack of funding and claimed they were working as quickly as they could but I would have to wait my turn. Is this legal?)

Well, I need to return to the exciting world of estate tax. I am glad this harsh winter hasn't treated you too cruelly, or if it has, I guess the best that can be said is that based on your letter it brought out the best in some people. This past weekend brought a wonderful warm reprieve, didn't it? - I hope for you, too -