

Roger Feinman  
142-10 Hoover Ave., #404  
Jamaica, N.Y. 11435

5/12/93

Dear Roger,

As soon as I had time today I checked my Best Evidence file because I know that as usual Lifton lied in saying that I had written a number of reviewers hysterically and they had given him copies of my letters. I found I wrote one reviewer, who reviewed the book for the Times. I also wrote the defunct Star about the same review, that letter not delivered. (I suppose I ~~was~~<sup>saw</sup> the review in the Star before someone sent me the Times'.) I'm not taking the time this close to supper to read what I wrote the Times because I am confident that it is factual and not hysterical.

What caught my eye as I looked through the file is the beginning of what I also enclosed, my 1/30/81 memo that he phoned me. So I read the beginning of that.

I did not phone any reporters about his book but if any phoned me I certainly did ~~talk~~<sup>talk</sup> to them.

The part that three reporters told him that I had phoned them and played a tape of him to them seems hard for me to believe. I've not had a working portable tape recorder for years and the deck is in the living room, connected to the stereo. With one exception I do not know where my one tape that I recall of Lifton is. That exception is a dub of Lifton's tape of his very bad behavior when the press was trying to speak to a Guinn after his HSCA testimony. Lardner's asking Guinn if he had validated the specimens he tested was all that interested me.

I've read a little further in the memo and I see the reference to that one tape. He phoned me in 1968 and I taped that. He then lied to me about what I'd asked him and what he'd said then, the LED-Dulles/Rusk scenario part. *on that tape I'll be writing about it.*

The hasty search suggests it would be good to ask Lifton to provide what he says he was given by those reporters, including my hysteria, and let that and him be judged. It should also be made clear that if he does not produce he labels himself a liar and a provocateur.

Please let me know if you'd like me to get xeroxed of Sylvia's Lifton file if that is now possible and if so, if you want any more that her letters and comments, i.e., not copies of reviews, etc.

Best  
Harold

11/30/84

Dave Lifton phoned a little before 6 p.m. yesterday to complain that I was talking to reporters about his book, what he later called dirty pool. (When he used this phrase I asked him about his letter to the NYTimes about WW II and he said that was different, that his letter was factual!!!) It was a very strange call, not because he objected to my talking to reporters but because he tried not to give me an opportunity to say anything. When I got angry and shouted at him he kept on talking in the same conversational tone. I finally got him to shut up long enough for me to say that if he didn't hear what I wanted to say I'd just hang up. So he started to let me say something and I asked him to account for the back gate being locked and for the time required for the taking of pre-autopsy X-rays and pictures, at Bethesda and before he could get into it I told him not to try and pull a 10:20 because Ebersole remembered it that way. So he pulled that Ebersole line, having nothing else he could try, again wouldn't let me talk, so I just hung up.

It was a very strange thing, that continuous talking at a single level, as though he wanted to be able to quote himself again in the future. I think there is enough loudness on the tape to give him a problem, if that was among his purposes.

I'd earlier told him that the <sup>hospitably</sup> real gate was locked and he disputed it and asked about the time for the taking of the X-rays and pix not being in his book. He gave no response to the X-raying time and laughed about the gate and launched into what would have been a monologue if I had not been shouting at him because of his typical misrepresentations, where he has almost everything right and then has one key element knowingly and deliberately wrong.

He tried to threaten me, clearly one of the purposes, and he cited his publisher's lawyers, to tell me that I had violated the law because three reporters had told him that I had called them up and played tapes of him to them. Well, none of this was accurate so I told him to drop his usual dirty tricks. I then told him that I had not only told Kaiser (Rolling Stone) of his line in 1966 about the papier mache trees, all he said that Kaiser had told him, but also about the Brown & Root tunnels in ~~DEALEY~~ Dealey Plaza and his 1968 scenario, LBJ and Allen Dulles/Dean Rusk conspiring throughout Texas the week preceding the assassination. Of course he denied it all and I told him



Mr. Edwin McDowell  
New York Times  
229 West 43 St.,  
New York, N.Y. 10036

7627 Old Receiver Road  
2/4/81  
Frederick, Md. 21701

Dear Mr. McDowell,

I have just received copies of your review of the Lifton book and that of James Conaway in the Washington Star. You quote Professor Robert Blakey as describing the book as "just absurd." Rather than condemnation, this is praise. It is much worse.

In terms of scholarship, and carefully and deliberately disguised, there is nothing of any consequence that can be considered factual that was not published earlier, for the most part more than a decade ago. Virtually none of it is credited, to make it appear that Lifton is bringing these well-published facts to light for the first time. Conaway says, for example, that Lifton "examines every shred of evidence several times over and at the very least is a comprehensive narrative of assassination fact." He also is impressed with how good Lifton is "with data." Actually, he omits fact which disproves his commercialized conjectures and he examines no shred of evidence that is not well known and well published. The Dick Daring bit, attributed to the agent's desire, is designed to mask the unoriginal nature of all but his sick and totally untenable conjectures.

If among all those so-called experts you report that Macmillan hired there had been a single authentic subject expert rather than experts with no subject-matter knowledge, Macmillan would not have published the book with all the Hippodroming it engaged in.

There are several key points in the Lifton fabrications that can be examined with ease. He alleged a conspiracy on Air Force 1, which left the body unattended. All were at the LBJ swearing in. If you compare those who were at the swearing in with those on the plane you find a large number besides General "C" Hugh who were not at the swearing in. Not mentioned by Lifton. Manchester's Death of a President is one source. The official and published White House pictures are another.

Lifton makes on that the body was kidnapped at Andrews Field, offloaded on the

opposite side. Under klieg lights? With some 3000 witnesses, none of whom saw it? All those spectators on the fence side of the field saw nothing but there was something to see?

Essential to his concoctions is the spiriting of the body into the <sup>5</sup>ethesda medical installation through the back gate. The most cursory check, which he does not report, would have disclosed that it was both locked and without a guard to open it.

Then there is all that hanky-panky with the body, alleged, with some fumbling over minor discrepancies in time. Lifton makes a big deal over the alleged kidnapping of the corpse between the time it got to the back door of the hospital, a little after 7:30 p.m., and the beginning of the cutting, at 8:00 or 8:15 p.m. But nowhere does he report the taking of the X-rays and those pictures which also had to be taken before there was any cutting. The reason is obvious: if Lifton had reported these well-known facts, that certain procedures were essential before any alteration of the body, he'd not have been able to perpetrate this monstrous ~~fake~~, he'd have had no theory to commercialize and his great efforts for all those years would have been exposed as what they are, an enormous nothingness.

The record is clear, uncontradicted and uncontradictable: those X-rays and pictures were taken, as they had to be. (What kind of forensic expert did Macmillan hire if he was not aware of this?) Lifton likewise is aware of this.

Of course there is much more that is very <sup>yl</sup> wrong about the book. But if any one of the things I report above is true - and they are all true - then a great disservice has been done the nation and all the justified and legitimate criticism of ~~an~~ <sup>the</sup> official account of the assassination is undermined.

Lifton's book is indistinguishable from a spook "black book" because it serves those ends and only those ends, save for making him a phoney Dick Daring.

Unfortunately, most of the press <sup>does</sup> ~~do~~ not make an effort to obtain independent confirmation of such works.

None of the reasons offered for withholding copies until publication is tenable.

The concerns that led to the legal expert are of libel, as Lifton himself complained to me.

There was no likelihood of any effort to get an injunction against publication because in his wholesale and unjustified defamations Lifton is careful to name no names. (He complained to me about Macmillan's insistence that he remove some and rephrase parts.)

It was all promotional and nothing else.

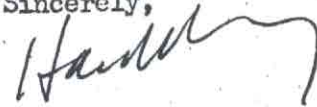
When you were told who had been offered the book in advance of publication Newsweek was omitted - apparently because they <sup>have</sup> ~~are~~ an in-house expert who recommended having nothing to do with the book.

As for that Lifton unique "discovery," an obvious error in an FBI report, I first read it when I "discovered" that record in the spring of 1966. I later published <sup>ished</sup> ~~the~~ the entire record in facsimile <sup>(as Lifton does not do)</sup> and I am not alone in writing about <sup>the</sup> ~~an~~ alleged surgery long before Lifton. Some "discovery" indeed!

Lifton is not without conspiracy theories. He revised them until he could get published. In 1966 he told me that Brown & Root (buzzword for LBJ) had dug tunnels throughout Dealey Plaza and the shooting was from a papier-mache tree. In 1968 he told me that the conspirators, LBJ and Dean Rusk, met in secret throughout Texas. (He also had it with LBJ and Allen Dulles.) In December 1966 Esquire credited him with the tunnel vision.

I agree with Conaway - "Best Evidence is a disturbing book."

Sincerely,



Harold Weisberg

cc: James Conaway

Perhaps a few of the many examples of Lifton's goodness with data, as Conaway sees it, of how he "examines every shred of evidence several times over," can be helpful.

Lifton pretends that the 'resident's brain was spirited away during the autopsy and that instead of a stillborn baby on a hospital cart, that was the disguised brain. Manchester times the passing of that cart, with the stillborn, at before any cutting began in the morgue and hence it could not have held any autopsy materials even if it had come from the morgue, as it hadn't.

To promulgate his case of a shell game with caskets, Lifton makes a big thing of his representation that there was no corpse of a colonel for another casket and seeks to support this by alleging that the colonel was not buried in Arlington, as had been reported. To make this appear to be credible he had an associate call Arlington cemetery and ask if a colonel had been buried the next day. He claims the response was that nobody was buried the next day. Inference, the stories were false.

The falsity is Lifton's. He fails to inform that the next day was a <sup>~</sup>Saturday and that there were no burials at all at ~~A~~ Arlington on Saturdays.

Book Review Editor  
Washington Star  
Washington, D.C.

7627 Old Receiver Road  
Frederick, Md. 21701  
2/12/81

Dear Editor,

In writing James Conaway about his review of the ~~Lifton~~ <sup>book,</sup> ~~book,~~ with the Orwellian title "Best Evidence," I forgot that~~h~~ he might not be a staffer or to address him c/o of you, so the letter was returned.

I wrote Conaway and the New York Times jointly.

If you have any interest feel free to read the letter.

Conaway and the Star were conned, which is not unusual if the reviewer lacks subject-matter knowledge or has no independent sources he can consult.

The result is that although unwittingly the Star has contributed to some pretty wretched defamations of the innocent and by now their children and grandchildren.

It is unfortunate that the publishing history of works on the political assassinations indicates that commercially acceptable bad books find a ready market while there is no ready market for reasonable writing.

I regard this as unhealthy for the country as well as publishing.

Jerry O'Leary might not have had the detailed knowledge of the autopsy and what relates to it but I'm sure he'd have had doubts about Lifton's conjectures and I'm inclined to feel that his personal contact with Lifton during the days of the House assassins committee might have added to his doubts.

Sincerely,

Harold Weisberg