

These are a few pages only from the Sylvia Meagher records at ~~H~~ood College, Drawer 4c. They relate mostly to her correspondence with David Lifton and about his book, Best Evidence.

140 Beach 135 St.
Rockaway Beach, N.Y. 11694
Sept. 11, 1980
(212) 634 1967

Sylvia Meagher
302 W. 12 St., Apt. 15D
New York, N.Y.

Dear Sylvia,

Attached find a check for \$25. This fee constitutes full compensation for your having granted me permission to quote portions of a letter you wrote me dated October 9, 1966 in my book titled BEST EVIDENCE, which will be published by my publisher, the Macmillan Publishing Co., and its licensees.

For identification, I am attaching a copy of the portion of the manuscript which shows the portion of the letter quoted, in block quote form, and a few other direct quotations from it.

As discussed, I have no objection to modifying the first sentence following the block quote to reflect the fact that your concern about my relationship with Liebeler extended to the work of all the critics. This minor modification will be worked out by phone, probably tomorrow.

It is agreed that your endorsement and deposit of the check confirms that this letter correctly states our complete understanding and agreement.


Please return a copy of this agreement to me, with your signature.

Sincerely,

David S. Lifton
David S. Lifton

Accepted and Agreed:

Sylvia Meagher

DAVID S. LIFTON		2052
11818 1/2 DOROTHY 826-1610		
LOS ANGELES, CALIF. 90049		
PAY TO THE ORDER OF	<i>Sylvia Meagher</i>	<u>9/11</u> 19 <u>80</u> <u>16-383</u> 1222
	<i>Twenty-five and 00/100</i>	\$ <u>25</u> ⁰⁰ / ₁₀₀
		DOLLARS
	Century Bank	<i>David S. Lifton</i>
	WESTWOOD OFFICE 2028 WESTWOOD BOULEVARD LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA 90025	
MEMO <i>Permissions</i>		
⑆ 1 222 0383 2052 1 29142 4 ⑆		

12 September 1980

David Lifton
140 B. 135 St.
Rockaway Beach
New York 11694

My dear Lifton,

Your letter of yesterday's date was delivered to me this morning. I find absolutely unacceptable and offensive the sentence on your manuscript page which reads "Mrs. Meagher then made clear that she considered any conversation with Liebeler a danger to her still-unpublished manuscript." This is a complete misrepresentation of the letter and the spirit of my 9 October 1966 letter to you, and is perjorative if not libellous.

I request you to delete the quoted sentence from your manuscript and to replace it with the following accurate paraphrase of my 1966 letter:

Mrs. Meagher then made clear that she considered that it would be a breach of faith to discuss with Liebeler the work being done by the critics, including the contents of her still-unpublished manuscript.

If you are willing to make the deletion and to substitute the sentence specified above, I will consider giving permission for the use of excerpts from my letter of 9 October 1966, which is clearly marked "Strictly Confidential" and which must not be quoted without my express written agreement. Moreover, I must insist that your publisher as well as you personally be a party to the agreement. I have obtained legal advice on all these points and I must insist that the written agreement must quote the exact text to which I am asked to agree—in other words, I want the revised page quoted in the body of the agreement, and I want Macmillan as well as you personally to be a signatory.

Unless you agree to these terms and conditions, I expressly forbid you to quote excerpts from my strictly confidential letter dated 9 October 1966. Copies of this letter will be made available to my attorney and to the Macmillan Publishing Company.

Yours very truly,

Sylvia Meagher
302 West 12 Street
New York, N.Y. 10014

MACMILLAN PUBLISHING CO., INC.

866 Third Avenue, New York, N. Y. 10022

GENERAL BOOKS DIVISION

September 13, 1980

Sylvia Meagher
302 W. 12 St., Apt. 15D
New York, N.Y.

Dear Sylvia,

I, along with my editor George Walsh, who is also the editor-in-chief of the Trade Books division at Macmillan, and who is also a signatory to this letter, request your permission to quote from your letter to me of October 9, 1966, in my book BEST EVIDENCE.

The exact passage in which quotes from your letter, and references to it, appear, is typed out here:

" A few days later, a letter arrived, expressing sentiments which marked the beginning of a lot of trouble between me and some of the critics:

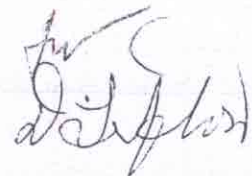
...I want to urge you again, this time in writing, to consider with the greatest care the implications of further "collaboration" with L. It is clear that you have absolutely nothing to gain...the prospects of converting a person who is so committed to a particular point of view---and indeed, to self protection---is really illusory.⁶³

"Mrs. Meagher then made clear that she considered that it would be a breach of faith to discuss with Liebeler the work being done by the critics including the contents of her still unpublished manuscript. She warned against funneling any material, verbal or written, obtained from her or anyone else "to our adversaries" whose purpose was 'to find a way of...destroying it.'⁶⁴

"I had vouched for what I accepted as Liebeler's honest intentions, but Mrs. Meagher insisted that by associating with him I risked 'the appearance of having sold out...'⁶⁵"

It is understood that your signature of this letter constitutes a permission granted by you for the material quoted above to be published, exactly as it is typed out above, in my book BEST EVIDENCE, to be published by my publisher, the Macmillan Publishing Co., and its licensees.

(CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE)



MACMILLAN PUBLISHING CO., INC.

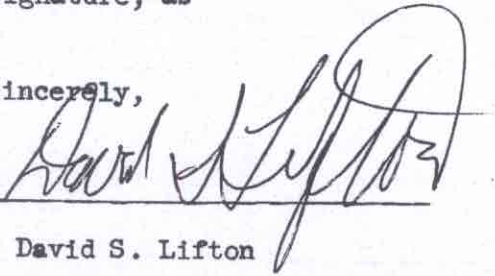
866 Third Avenue, New York, N. Y. 10022

GENERAL BOOKS DIVISION

(continuation of letter dated September 13, 1980 to Sylvia Meagher)

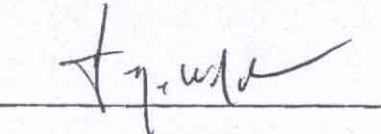
Assuming this meets with your approval, we would appreciate your returning a copy of this letter, with your signature, as soon as possible.

Sincerely,



Handwritten signature of David S. Lifton, written in cursive over a horizontal line.

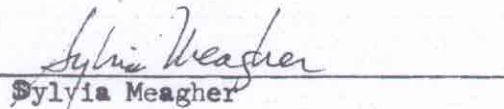
David S. Lifton



Handwritten signature of George Walsh, written in cursive over a horizontal line.

George Walsh
Ed.-in-Chief

Accepted and agreed:



Handwritten signature of Sylvia Meagher, written in cursive over a horizontal line.

Sylvia Meagher

Dear Sylvia,

1/23/81

When I came to the point in Lifton's book where he refers to a call he made to you in Lieweler's interest from Joe Ball's office I decided to renew FOIA requests through DoD, in the hope they do not refer me to all the other components. I'll keep you and Roger posted.

To call Lifton a ~~big~~ pig is to defame swine. He has spent the years perfecting his natural skills in the widest assortment of dishonesties and has become quite adept in them. As usual he is uninhibited in his pursuit of evil.

This work can be more than usually hurtful because its excesses will, inevitably, be wiped off on all critics, as George McMillan is now about for the New Republic. It also is very hurtful to a large number of innocents. Now it is no longer the people. It includes their children and grandchildren.

Lonnie Hidkins told me that several of those Lifton quote climbed all over him on cable TV to his face. If anyone has time to get a transcript of that it could be useful.

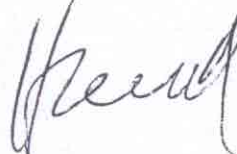
I don't know if Lardner is going to review for the Post. I know that Lifton courted him and that he found Lifton's videotape effective and persuasive.

It would be good if I could be kept as informed as possible in the event I am asked by anyone.

I'd almost welcome being asked to do a review!

If you know what his great sensation everybody was keeping so secret for years is I'd like to know if it is some of the dreck in this sickness of a book. It can't be the "discovery" of the report of surgery in the S-O'Neil report because I was in contact with many about it yours ago. I don't recall if I included it in PM. It can hardly be the shuffling of the caskets or the critics are as bad a lot as he makes out.

Best wishes,



28 January 1981

Dear Harold,

Thank you for your letter of the 23rd and for the copy of your letter to Charles Hinkle.

That Lifton tried to paint a very negative picture of me in his book came as no surprise. What did surprise me was that he then proceeded to describe his progressive disenchantment with Liebeler and to show that in fact all my warnings were justified -- to show that he gave Liebeler ammunition to use against the critics, and that Liebeler was determined to defend the Warren Report at any cost -- without even acknowledging that my advice was right on target. But what else should one expect from a slimy despicable bastard like Lifton?

I agree that his book will be harmful to the critics and harmful to any national reasonable reexamination of the assassination. He is becoming a "star of stage screen and television" in his effort to promote the book. But I feel pretty sure that the book will fail, out of its inherent weaknesses and the preposterous nature of his over-all hypothesis. Indeed, Roger and I had a wonderful fantasy of reenacting the three-vehicle, two-coffin, exits and entrances sequence, with the Marx Brothers playing the parts, and laughed ourselves into aching sides and streaming eyes.

If George McMillan or anyone else of his ilk calls me, I plan to say merely that I haven't had time to read the book yet. As for the earthshaking discovery -- you may remember that he told me in 1966 that he had taken it to Liebeler but that he would not share it with any of the critics, which shocked and outraged me and caused me to break off all contact with Lifton for a long time. I deduce from his book that the "earthshaking discovery" was the alleged "surgery" reference in the Sibert-O'Neill report, which was hardly exclusive, since you and Fred Newcomb had already discovered it and written about it.

Much of the "disguise and deception" was carried out by Lifton himself, and no one can read the book without learning from his own narration that he was consistently dishonest, nasty, and self-serving. His own rope will be sufficient to hang him.

Harold, I do hope that you are beginning to feel better and more comfortable -- as you must know, all your friends including Roger and myself are concerned about your well-being and wish you renewed health. With warmest regards and affection,

Yours as ever,

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February 18, 1981

Dear Sylvia,

Thanks for your letter of the 3rd. Your views ~~of~~ on Lifton's book are thoughtful and well balanced. My reference to people who buy the Clinton witnesses but dismiss David's out of hand was mainly about Ewing, who seems to find nothing serious in David's work. By the way, someone is sending me Harrison Salisbury's ~~my~~ negative review in next Sunday's Times, so you needn't bother. More of my own comments on Lifton in the enclosed newsletter.

Best regards,

Paul

3 February 1981

Dear Paul,

Thanks for your letter of 28 January and for the several goodies which you enclosed in answer to my request.

What do I think of Lifton's book? My feelings are very mixed. On one level, it sent me into wild gales of laughter, visualizing the Marx Brothers rushing into and out of the Bethesda morgue with different caskets, some with and some without the body. As Lifton himself conceded on a radio broadcast last week, a veritable Keystone Cops comedy. On a more serious level, I am impressed by parts of the book. In the first half, he presented very effectively the state of the autopsy evidence as it stood circa 1966-1967. In the second half, he presents arresting new allegations and evidence, some of which is quite persuasive. But I am always very uneasy with assertions, from any source, coming long after an event. I have never "bought" the Clinton witnesses, and I think some of Lifton's witnesses, speaking innocently and in good faith 15 or 16 years after the fact, may have erroneous recollections. Yet, even if most of them are both honest and accurate, I do have enormous difficulty with Lifton's theory of abduction and alteration of the body. The time element is against it. Moreover, a number of his witnesses describe the large wound in the head as being in the same posterior location as the Parkland doctors said. This, after the head was supposedly altered to remove suspicion of a front-to-back bullet hit.

Moreover, in arguing for alteration of the body so as to convert the trajectories from front-to-back, to back-to-front, Lifton leaves out entirely the Connally shot or shots, which indisputably came from behind.

As to my screaming and screeching, only two critics have ever been able to make me lose my cool. Lifton is one, and James Harris is the other. I don't so much object to Lifton's description of my raised voice as I object to his inexcusable failure to acknowledge that my objections to his liaison with Liebeler proved to be wholly correct--as is implicit in Lifton's admission that he provided Liebeler with ammunition to use against the critics; that Liebeler was determined to defend the Warren Report at any cost; and that ultimately Lifton ceased to trust him and began to withhold information from him. These admissions by Lifton make it implicit that I was right to object to his fraternization with Liebeler, but Lifton did not have the grace or the honesty to make that explicit.

I am surprised not to have seen any reviews of the Lifton book as yet. It is a serious and major work, whatever its defects (and I am outraged by his attempt to exonerate the Warren Commission and the autopsy doctors, by arguments which cannot be sustained if one takes into account the long list of distortions and misrepresentations by the WC in virtually every area of the case; and the misrepresentations by Humes on the location of wounds, to say nothing of his burning of vital documentation), and should be the focus of serious discussion.

Best regards,

Dear Sylvia,

2/3/81

Lifton has apparently added me to his list of personal personal attacks and he tried to do the same thing in a call to me last week. As usually, full of misrepresentations and distortions. Because he really did anger me by his viciousness and dishonesty and because I had the feeling he was make a self-serving tape for self-serving misuse, I hollered at him constantly when he would not give me a chance to talk, so he won't have much of a tape to use. I also bearddd him on the glaring fault in his time recon^cstruction: he does not account for the time required for the initial X-rays and pictures. If he did he'd have no theory of pre-autopsy autopsy. (Which if one tried to reason did not scarve its purpose anyway.) So he has now switched to Ebersole, as I was sure he would and told him not to try, that the autopsy did not begin until 10:30.

I've done a bit more checking. The manchester account of what happenexed on the plabe, while not unequivocal, makes it clear that all the people on the plane were not away from the caskey, that Lifton insanity. So it could not have been toyed with then. If anyone would have dreamed of running the risk of getting caught when nobody knew who would be where and when.

At Andrews Manchester's account is definitive. There were two cermeonial guards, the one not used was between the place AF1 was to be and the two helicopters (the one that took off had to have held LBJ, not the cadaver.) ~~But~~ On the side of the plane toead the field there were so many people, including 50 dignatories. On the opposite side nothing - and 3,000 people looking at the plane. So how much chance of any kid-napping? None! and nobody does any checking in the media.

If I didn't tell Roger, I have this coincidental destruction of the Lifton theory: the back gate through which he says the body was spirited in was locked. I learned this way:

I have a neighbor who stays up late. He is my age and also has medical problems. I asked him, if he were staying up that late, to tape Lifton on the Tom Snyder Show. That afternoon he brought the tape over and told me he was impressed the wrong way by lifton. He also told me that he had been at the hospital that day because he worked there. He was an Air Force colonel. He is a vet and was then attached to the Air Force Radiological Institute, which was there. He said that the word went around about the assassination but he did not know the body was coming there. When he left work he noticed that the helipad was all lit up. When he got the the rear gate, the one he customarily used, it was locked- and there was no guard to open it. This was about 6:30. So he turned around, used the front gatem was delayed somewhat by all the gommotion, and went home.

He volunteered that there was a forensic pathologist at ethesda, said his recollection was ubclear, but he'd have the name at home. He phoned to tell me- Pierre A. Finck. But then he ~~had~~ added that rather than being AFRI Finch was AFIP, where he knew him.

If one takes the time, there is no point in Lifton's creation that stacks up factually. it is an enormous deception and misrepresentation and cangt be unknowing.

I think he'll not be happy about the Rolling Stone review that is coming. I don't know if "ardner is going to do one.

I don't feel badly. I'm just not able. My leg and foot are swelling more but I can also walk a little more and I can exercycle fairly well. Yesterday 30 miles at the equivalent of 15 mph. I guess only time will tell.

In case ardner wants to do a review and if you have it, the names of those who were with LBJ when he was sown in and of those who were on the plane would be helpful because it will show a number of people on the plane and not with LBJ at that time and thus able to see the casket. I'd like to be able to refute even one of the swine's fabrications.

Excuse the typos. I just got a batch of legal records to read and I've just finished skimming 6,000 pages on the destruction of records program for another suit. Nothing about the assassination in them. Best to Roger,

Sincerely,

Harold

25 February 1981

Dear Paul,

My letter of 3 February assessing Lifton's book was not intended to be publicized or shared with anyone--least of all with Lifton. I am sorry that you disclosed the contents of my letter, without checking with me first, to Lifton.

This is not a petty or formalistic objection, because as a result of this indiscretion Lifton is now telling people that I think his book is great, or words to that effect. That is, of course, a gross misrepresentation of what I said in my letter. Most of the letter voiced reservations and objections to the book, in whole or in part, but Lifton of course is not mentioning my negative criticisms.

Moreover, he is also telling people that the only critics who have been able to make me lose my temper are himself and Jones Harris. That will soon get back to Jones Harris, if it has not already come to his attention.

After your long association with Lifton, you should have been aware that his judgment and character are sometimes lacking and that he might misuse my commentary, which followed your request that I tell you what I think of his book and which was intended solely for you. In the future, please consider any letters from me as "confidential" or "eyes only" unless there is an indication to the contrary.

Yours sincerely,

April 5, 1981

Dear Sylvia,

Sorry about the business with the letter re Lifton~~*~~; it ~~was~~ won't happen again. For someone who says he doesn't care what the critics think, Lifton cares quite a bit about what the critics think!

Thanks for the Powers review of "Best Evidence". I wrote him, and got a thoughtful letter back. Have you ever met him? My impression is that a few chats with reasonable critics would make him more sympathetic to our work. He lives not far from you - 43 West 10th St. He basically seems to feel that we're not going to solve the case - or re-solve it - but that you learn quite a bit about how ~~xxx~~ things work by looking at the case.

Here's my latest newsletter (#2); not much additional gossip to report.

I suppose you've seen Blakey's book by now. He's got a rather strange bibliography - lots of Aristotle and the like - and it's made even stranger by the inclusion of your book only with the 1976 (re-issue) date.

It's a bit irritating that Blakey gave us, first, an ~~official~~ official report with footnotes but no index, and now a book with an index but no footnotes. I'm curious to see where his book differs from the report, and without the indexes you and Gary did, it would be impossible to tell easily. (For example, I think there's a story behind Blakey's ~~xxx~~ emphasis on Judy Exner, and the absence of any references to her in the published HSC material.)

With best ~~xxx~~ regards,

Paul

PLH