Rt 8, Frederick, Md. 21701
8/15/73

Dear Mr. Shepherd,

The one comfort I can take from your straightforward letter of the 13th is that you fall just a bit short of saying absolutely, finally, positively "no!"

In its statement of the problems your letter is honest and perhaps falls short of the reality with which I have lived for many years and of which I am aware. In its criticism of the writing it is kind, unless the samples - by now you have more - are inadequate, by normal standards. You might have included prolixity.

I guess that in making immediate response I want to do more than thanks you for your candor and the speed of your response. In part I know I have in mind a kind of pep talk, which may seem strange (please indulge the kind of life I have led for so long and that I am in what are generally described as the declining years), considering my position and situation and your reasonable views.

In being able to succeed, if I can call my investigative work success, I have had to evolve a kind of intellectual judo. I find that in investigations it works well. From my experience as my own publisher I know it works well and can, with the truly exceptional, emptional subject, work fantastically. Weaknesses can be fulcrumed into strengths. I have done it, over and over again. This depends on the subject and upon how it is handled after publication.

In my first book I dealt with raw material some 10,000,000 words in extent alone. To meet the requirements of a contract, I had four weeks in which to write and deliver it, and I did this. While the publisher was drooling into the till, telling me that from the salesmen's experiences alone he had an initial print of 25,000, he broke the contract. Thereafter, internationally, I had about 100 rejections. It became a best-seller as the first underground book without any real distribution, none organized, without a penny for advertising or promotion, and was a best-seller in paperback, with a first print of 250,000 and two reprints the first month. That publisher had thrice rejected the manuscript. When we signed the contract I begged him to edit it, and although he agreed, he didn't change a word. In normal commercial terms my worst seller more than paid its cost. And all the books I published were unedited rough drafts. I could not afford an editor and worked as such speed I couldn't be my own on that basis alone. And on this, while I regard the essential editing as simple and easy, I would go further than you and say that with an ordinary editor the problems may be insurmountable.

You succinctly state the norm, and I do not argue against it. Rather would I like to hope that both an agent and a publisher would recognize in The Watergate and all its implications a rare departure from the norm as was both the JFK assassination and its official handling. Even more would I like to believe it possible that there is a publisher who would duplicate as faithfully as possible what I did with my books, a kind of intellectual judo I do not believe one will consider even though among its benefits would be a considerable reduction in production costs. The natural promotion and speed are, I believe, greater benefits. In arguing against you, however, I would advance the belief that no book on The Watergate that appears soon and seems to be solid will fail to return more than its cost. This is such a subject, and it will be on the front pages and the tubes a long time. Here those hundreds of thousands if not millions who know me by my work on the assassinations are a large potential market that can be reached. On that dead subject I am still sought out. In today's mail are orders from a total stranger who somehow found about my first two books (1966), where I am, and included a check for them.

If my name means little to most publishers other than those who rejected my work, I do have a good reputation with a large buying public.

This leads to the question of the unhidden partiality of my writing, normally not commercially acceptable. Bobby Kennedy had a personal corruption of Dante that on subjects like this most people believe. He was fond of saying that in times of moral crisis a special corner of Hell is reserved for those who preserve neutrality. On subjects like the assassinations and The Watergate, most ordinary people, if not publishers and reviewers, hold to this view. If I do not cast or conceive myself as their peer, I would remind you of Zola and Paine - and that their partisanship earned them lasting respect and success. Some subjects do cry out for passion. With me I am aware of the added problem, for I feel this stuff and would castrate my self intellectually and be able to produce nothing if I were able to suppress this, as I am not. My history tells me this can be a commercial asset.

You say twice that the project upon which I have started is impossible, the second time "that it is practically beyond the powers of one man to develop a successful book on this subject." (Perhaps you do not realize it or you consider it unimportant, but in simultaneously saying that "a number of publishers are already seriously committed to what they consider important projects" you are saying that I am engaged upon a unique book.) Your discouragement boils down to the meaning of "successful". In most cases, this would mean profitable. In this case, with what The Watergate symbolizes to all and really means, if that meaning is not recognized, I would like to think that among all the American publishers there might be one who could give a special meaning to "successful", one not measured in dollars but in the present and the future, in the kindxx society in which we live and he prospers. This is not to say that a dedication to principle would not mean commercial success. My extensive, personal experience leaves little reasonable doubt it would on this subject, if not generally.

In your thinking you seem to bracket this with the urgency of "every fact and every statement be arranged in a symmetrical and orderly structure that leads inevitably to a single conclusion." You say, with regard to the Senate committee, that it cannot "wade into a mass of data of this kind like a single-minded prosecutor determined to prove his case against an ordinary criminal." In these terms, aside from the strangexx relevance of the second quote in a manner you did not intend, what I am doing is a publishing impossibility. The alternative is that the book be true to life, not to the standard that can't really be followed in rewriting ancient history except by omissions that impinge upon integrity. Life does not so compartmentalize itself. Only simple crime, in fact, lends itself to your comparison with the prosecutor. This is why, when a contract was possible with it, I would not submit an outline to which I would guarantee I would adhere with a breaking story. The material is even more compex than that of the Kennedy assassination. Were I to argue your case, I would say that what I am engaged upon is two books, one on Richard Nixon. (You are wrong in your comment of what a committee can do, and I tell you this not in criticism but for your understanding. Here I do not rest upon my own considerable experience in that area, which includes the preparation for such hearings. If you knew the source of the documents I quote in what I sent you I think you would understand that those who dare not try and do nothing about it also recognize that an updated and more sophisticated Warren Report is in propsect. I did not seek those documents. They amme to me by mail from one who had the moral and professional obligation to use them and dared not.)

Because I recognize that "meaningless and irrelevant facts must be excluded" and that what is meaningless and irrelevant is a very personal determination, often made by those without a solid basis for determinations, I am trying to put the book together in a manner that will make elimination by scissors of blue-pencil possible and easy.

You are perceptive and correct in saying I"would really be writing something like a brief for impeachment." Here I am quite willing to go farthur in what I hope you will not conclude is immodesty: if I do not do it, it will not be done within your active profes-

sional life. The question about such a bill of impeachment is first, whether it can be a commercial success, which I think is a virtual certainty if done speedily, and and then whether there is a publisher willing to do it and risk not making a profit, which I believe will be determined by what the publisher does with it more than by the book itself.

The problem you state as one of "symmetrical and orderly structure" I see as one of arrangement for comprehension. With these inordinately complicated materials there are determinations anything but easy on organization and on omissions. This also means the includion of what I would much prefer to omit and what I drafted long ago in an unread short chapter titled, "The Law for the Layman." And it means that determinations must be flexible. Early this morning I decided upon a shifting of chapters that requires rushing some writing so that it will not delay my wife, who has begun to retype in sequence, not out of order as I have been writing.

In all honesty I must add what you may take as discouragement but what I think is not. Long ago I recognized those problems you state and others perhaps more pertinent that you do not. With this recognition of the unwelcome and unpleasant I had to cast myself in a different role, as the man who makes a record for history with only the hope that it can be published. So, I am writing a long book. But if it is believed to be too long, I am also writing it for adjustment by scissors and pencil used with speed.

These many problems are real. They can all become commercial assets rather than literary liabilities, what I conceive as intellectual judo. One of the means of addressing them is what in the past might have been a liability, personalizing parts of the book. When I have had extensive personal experience with the Washington prosecutors, who defended three suits I filed, and with Mitchell, Kleindienst, Ruckelshaus and the FBI, among others in this case, I hope it can be an asset. It is something I don't believe anyone else will be selling. Or writing. If intensive experience with the college generation of 1967-8 is relevant to the college generation of 1973-4, this alone will assure good sales. Those kids turned on and bought books. And never wanted a speech to end.

With the central character, Hunt, the problem is an asset. I will have in this book what is entirely missing in the extensive reporting and all the official investigations. I already have enough, according to several lawyers, to file suit in federal court against the CIA and the White House, the former for surveillance of me (the ACLU has not yet decided, but they were interested) and the latter for denying me(Hunt) information to which I am entitled under the law. Now Archibald Cox, who yesterday came close to exculpating most potential defendants, is withholding from me, has been foolish enough to deny me what his predecessor actually did release. I am aptiently exhausting what is called my "administrative remedies" under the law, preliminary to a possible suit. Obviously, I ma not going off half-cocked and I am not about to. But I do know what such suits can do to the sale of a book. One, where against the issue is official suppression, is now before the federal court of appeals and is headed to the Supreme Court. It will attract attention to anything with my name on it. What I am here trying to argue is that considerations not normal can have much to do with the commercial success of a book. There are many. I believe. Including exclusive, shocking content.

Whether it is attributable to friendship with Dick or is the kind of man you are, I do appreciate your frankness. I owe you what I hope is honest response by which I also hope to give you some encouragement. Regardless, I must continue with this. I will and I do, immediately (with aoplogies for uncorrected typos). At 60 I have many miles to go before I sleep, but no fewer promises to keep.

Sincerely,

cc:Dick Gallen

Harold Weisberg

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August 13, 1973

Mr. Harold Weisberg
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Dear Mr. Weisberg:

Your very interesting letter with its enclosures arrived here this morning.

I have to say that I think the project you have embarked upon is not feasible.

There should be a book to make it clear what the Watergate scandal means. It seems to me that for a book to achieve this purpose it must have a very simple, strong thesis. You suggest the thesis that the Watergate affair was the result of Nixon's deliberate plan for a fascist subversion of the Constitution. It might be possible to produce an effective book to state this idea. You would really be writing something like a brief for impeachment. In such writing it is essential that every fact and every statement be arranged in a symmetrical and orderly structure that leads inevitably to a single conclusion. Disruption of this structure is fatal. Meaningless and irrelevant facts must be excluded.

I appreciate that the enclosures that you sent me have been taken in effect at random from your text. Bearing that fact in mind, I nevertheless must say that I've been forced to conclude that you do not have sufficient control over the material to arrange it within a structure that has the necessary strictness.

I think, for example, that your references to the quality of the questioning by the Ervin committee are tendentious. No committee of the Senate can possibly wade into a mass of data of this kind like a single-minded prosecutor determined to prove his case against an ordinary criminal. Of course, the committee and its staff have failed to ask many questions

DOROTHY OLDING

that they ought to have asked. In any event, the evidence masses up before us and it is the evaluation and ordering of that evidence that we ought to concentrate on.

It is a very hard thing to deal now with any book on this subject. I have not been able to keep up with the planned books either, but I am sure that more than one are indeed really Watergate books and I know that a number of publishers in addition to Simon & Schuster are already seriously committed to what they consider to be important projects.

I really would like to be encouraging in some way, but I must say that I have concluded that it is practically beyond the powers of one man to develop a successful book on this subject.

Sincerely yours,

Peter Shepherd/kv

Peter Shepherd

PS/kv
cc: Richard T. Gallen, Esq.