

Dear George,

7/12/91

You'll remember, I believe, the part of our disagreement in which I said, among other things, that it was unwise and unnecessary to refight the Vietnam war and that your formulation played into Stone's hands. I think, also without my looking it up this very early morning, I also said that he'd just love your arguing the way you proposed because it would give him a wonder^{ful} opportunity for the kind of response he'd want to make and would and could exploit.

I have a fairly clear recollection of that part of script and believed that Stone was quite unfair to LBJ. It is something like his saying on Sunday afternoon^{ing} 11/24/63, that he was all for the Vietnam war.

In forming this opinion, that he was unfair, I did not recall, not having seen it, that he did a Vietnam movie.

Well, I was wrong and he was right and you'd have had egg on your face.

As you know, from time to time my historian friend Dave Wrone asks me to annotate books when he thinks I can recall some of what historians and others are writing about because I lived through those times and some books on the assassinations.

Currently I've almost finished annotating an exceptionally anti-JFK book ^{by} ~~for~~ a professional historian. His efforts to bash JFK are thinly hidden. But on the specifics of that one bit of Stone's script I quote from the bottom of page 680:

"On Sunday afternoon, November 24, Lyndon Johnson kept the dead President's appointment with Lodge and told him that he was not willing to "lose Vietnam": "Tell those generals in Saigon that Lyndon Johnson intends to stand by our word."

In his notes he gives as his sources Manchester's book, with page number, and "Halberstam" also with two page numbers. Because he has two Halberstam books in his bibliography I'm not going back to his list of how he cites what so I can determine which of these books he cites. My hunch is that it is The Best and the Brightest.

What seems to be without question is that for once Stone did have a legitimate source, not the innumerable zany theories on which his script is based, and you singled that one in particular out for arguing your point of view.

In general, on this general subject, you doubted what I told you about my interview with General Gavin in which Gavin told me that JFK had made it clear he did intend to get us out of Vietnam after the election. I am surprised at the number of dependable sources that at various places anti-JFK Beschloss cites on this, including Mike Mansfield.

I think that I also said that with the attention he and Warners could get this would have been a bonanza for Stone. You can now judge for yourself whether this is true.

At some point you may write some books. I think that with your experience and your knowledge of some areas you should. Please learn from this and from my experience, the approach you took is ultimately self-defeating. Few things are more controversial than

what my books are about. Some entirely and others in part were written with as much haste ^{as} you write stories on deadline. I've published rough drafts, having no real choice. In both the CIA and the FBI these books have gotten close scrutiny. I've gotten tens of thousands of letters. But not a single complaint about anything like what you wanted to do represents. It isn't necessary, if you avoid what amount to political self-indulgence. Even you in the past have exclaimed to me, "Why you are defending the FBI!"

Yet after my first book I was severely critical of the FBI in the next six.

And from their own records that I've gone over carefully they found no error and only two complaints were registered. One was ludicrous, telling Hoover he was ~~right~~ right when he was wrong is one and the other involves a Shaneyfelt ploy. If you are interested I'll locate and send you copies.

Shaneyfelt proposed that he front for the FBI and sue me over what I'd written. It was bucked up to Hoover, approved even by the General Counsel Division. After he'd made his brownie points and gotten an OK he wrote another memo saying that maybe the suit would get me more attention and thus might not be a good idea. It was dropped.

When I learned about it I wrote him telling him he did not have the "balls."

I also told him that I'd pay his filing fees if he'd file the suit he proposed, that I'd welcome a judicial decision on what I wrote about him.

He did not respond. I'd made no error and was not unfair.

In seven books this is the limit of such complaints. It is not necessary to even risk them and if you'll pardon what may seem like the avuncular, they should be avoided.

I also call to your attention that what I wrote Stone about Garrison got not a word from him or from Garrison and that what I wrote him the day after the Post carried his piece also remains without contradiction.

I had nothing the equivalent of what you proposed about LBJ and Vietnam.

If you do write books I hope you remember this so that what you write won't be faulted as this bit would have been.

Best,
Shaneyfelt

People here Friday and yesterday, with no outgoing mail yesterday, delayed my reading and correcting this. It also permitted me to receive the pictures you returned. I'm glad to get them. I still have difficulty understanding why you have not returned those documents I asked you to return and you said you would. The one I singled out, needing it then, the Scimabra memo, was no trouble for you to find and return. I have no reason to believe returning the others represents a real problem for you.

I have not phoned because as I believe I told you, especially since the heart surgery I can't take arguing and controversy as I once did and this I avoid it.

That for whatever reason you have not done this has discouraged me from calling what I believe is another and an important story to your attention. What I'll be able to do in carrying it forward will be less than the best, and I've sought some help on this but I'm not able to do it myself and I have no reason to believe that it will add materially to what I do have. However, if I am not able to add to it I believe that what I do have is in itself a significant story and can make a first-rate scandal of a different kind. Probably several, including a few people you are not fond of.

NW 7/14/91