

3/9/76

Mr. M.J.Conklin
Box 362
Canton, Ill. 61520

Dear Mike,

If this does not bear tomorrow's postmark, well, right now it looks as though I'm going to be snowed in. Bad time for it, though I'm prepared. Vascular appointment for tomorrow.

If the snow is not too deep my lane may still drift in. And when the road is plowed the plow throws the snow into the end of the lane. While a little shovelling would be good for me, the lane is 500 feet long, so unless I can get help there is a good chance the mailing may be delayed. But I want to write it now before I can be taken off on other work, as I expect tomorrow.

The first of the papers I said I would get for you are to be mailed tonight.

I've just heard back. They may not reach me tomorrow but should before I leave, so they'll be off soon if we don't repeat the blizzard of '98 here.

What follows is an explanation, not a criticism. You pretended Sunday night that you did not call Anderson's office six months ago and you did not tell me that you called just before the column appeared; just after it did; and then said that one M.J.Conklin knows a lot about this.

Fortunately, I did not give it away. I do think that for now you need anonymity. I am also certain that when the time comes if you can't come here someone you can trust will go there. But not without your approval. I did not say or let on that you are the one you said knows much. Until that time comes I think it best you not identify yourself on their phone, especially not with this hitting the fan and a Senate report not yet out.

Be patient and let this work out. It will, either way, and well.

But there are ethics to be considered. When Les did not get my first messages and then could not call back when he was sick, and when you expressed an interest in the Enquirer, I made an approach there and about that we all must be ethical and wait a reasonable time for a response. I'll do what I can by phone with my friend away. I did try yesterday.

Les Whitten and I are good friends. He has this much respect for me: when I was in the hospital he came to see me and gave me as high praise as I've gotten in years. He told me I'm one of the last of a disappearing breed of real investigative reporters, not leak cultivators. So, we level with each other. He knows the exact situation with the Enquirer, meaning understands it and what it requires of me to be ethical. He also knows that if nothing comes of it soon I'll be in touch with him and we'll go that way. Meanwhile, an advantage to you and all around, they'll do their own looking. They are interested.

Gary could not get back to me yesterday, as Les said he would, because my phone stayed busy until after 7 p.m. on a consultancy I have with a magazine on a bad story. He called me earlier this evening. This is how I know, from his description of your voice, that you called him twice. (The first time the column had been written and distributed but had not appeared.) He is going to send me Gunn's phone and address.

They do not always have ot take time for thorough work. A daily column is a great difficulty. They don't even have the Olson files. I told him, without using your name, that I'm sending it to you and what he sends me. He knows my opinion, that you may see what others do not. Names are masked. You may be able to figure out what they are. But whatever I get I'll send.

Until it appears less unwise than it now does please try to avoid putting me in a position where I might accidentally slip. I do think your bag should now be anonymity, in public. There is no doubt that the government knows, but that is another matter. There was nothing in the column to lead to you. And in talking to Gary I let it appear that you and M.J.Conklin are two different people, as you did. However, these are pretty sharp fellows. Their main interest is in a story, not whether others get hurt, although they sometimes think of it. However, they are also honorable and will respect agreements. What they accept in confidence they will keep that way. You may understand this well enough, but I want to be sure. Les, for example, has written Dan Schorr a letter offering to testify for him in any way he can, subject only to the reservation that he will not under any conditions disclose any of his sources.

However, I can't be sure that they did not do the obvious arithmetic on the name. I could not ask and they did not indicate.

Actually, Les is leaving this all up to Gary. They have to work that way. They have too much to do.

Prior to hearing from Gary I wrote Les and told him when I'll be in Washington, where I'll be staying if for overnight, and offering to get together with him and/or Gary. Today I also heard from the United States Attorney's office in Washington. They are setting up an arrangement for me to go over FBI and Justice files I'm suing for beginning on the 23rd. This will be after I'm back, when I'll stop in Washington, too. So, we'll have time in the near future, after I'll have been able to hear from you again and after the time required with the Enquirer.

I did not ask you for your phone and when you did not offer it I presume you did not want me to call you. So, I've not even checked with information and won't. But this means I can't inform you when I'll be here. So, as of now I'm leaving the morning of the 14th and I will be in Washington on the way back any time beginning the night of the 17th. I should be home beginning the night of the 18th, unless I'm delayed in New York for a day or so. I'll be busy the night of the 22d locally but not home until about when I should now go to bed. The next morning I'll be leaving early for Washington. However long the work takes there, I also have to be in court there on the 26th, morning. I'll be home that night.

I think I once suggested to you but if I did not I now suggest that you type up all you know, distinguishing between knowledge and belief. Put a copy in a fairly safe place and send one to me by registered mail. There is not as much chance there should be none at all - of interference with registered mail because there is a written record of each person possessing it. For most purposes certified is adequate. There is more security in registered. By now I think you know you can trust me. However, this is also wise for you because it is a kind of insurance. It has the added advantage of providing leads that can be followed. Either way or both there will be competent people working on it. Meanwhile, neither will expect me to disclose my source until you are satisfied it should be done and as of this minute perhaps that time is not now. By the way, I told Gary that one of your needs for anonymity is that other people can be hurt.

Excuse the typos. I want to be full and I'm busy with other things and my wife calls to supper.

Best,