

Dear Roger,

2020/91

As I started to say on the other side, I did not even go out for the mail this morning because after a number of interruptions I'd just been able to return to what I'm trying to write. After correcting a couple of pages and writing a short insert and with a natural break got the mail. When I saw the thickness of your letter + opened it immediately. When I read your second sentence I decided to respond as soon as I could and after reading the rest of it am letting everything else go for now.

I'm concerned because your "down" has lasted too long. Not to have felt down would have been abnormal. +t would have been sick. But it should not linger. You should be over it, should have some time ago. ~~Get it off your back! There is nothing you can do now, if every,~~ and it should not interfere with your life in any way.

You misunderstood my Garrison intentions but we'll let that go for now.

Chip did try and did not succeed. This does not mean he won't continue trying.

I read using a highlighter because I can't trust my memory now. There is some redundancy so I'll try not to be repetitious.

One of my concerns is that you may have an exaggerated opinion of Sylvia's knowledge of the case. Hers, aside from the HCCA drek, ~~she~~ was got its day absolutely great. But so much has come to light of which she had no glimmer that you can only be living in the past when you say, correctly for its time, "she forgot more than most people will ever know." +n and of itself this is true but it is not with respect to what can be known today that she did not know. This is not in any sense to detract in any way from her truly magnificent work. I'm asking you to address your state of mind and whether you are being influenced by the great affection you had for her. For which you are both lucky.

I felt, as you say, hers "was basically a very unhappy" life, which I substitute for "woman." She was never very intimate with me about her personal life or relatives but the first or second time we were together she told me that Neagher had not wanted to marry her for some time and did not live long after he did. am I correct in thinking he had a drinking problem? She never mentioned any many other than him as of any interest to her. I think it is abnormal that as of the last time I saw her that I recall, 1973, she was still dressing in black. + never saw her in any dress of any other color.

Reur anger, p. 3, the other side of this that I've heard is that not to react as you did is what is really abnormal. But it should not last forever.

At several points you raise questions about, on this page "a mental disease or defect." I think, on the little I know, either is an exaggeration. I think it likely that she was, as you say later, as I now am, tired. My reaction is to work. Her's was the opposite. I suppose both are normal. Only one reflects a lack of interest or more.

I think that Lowenstein is not the only thing she "blew out of proportion." That also is not ^{ab}normal or unusual.

"By-and-large competent" means what? (rhetorical, don't answer.) I don't think I ever had any reason to believe otherwise. But this does not mean she was not subject to in-

fueled, external, as from relatives or friends, and internal, which can come from almost anything, including passions, misunderstandings, etc.

From the little I know, as I think I said, I felt that she'd changed when she was hospitalized, as I think Jerry told me, after being taken off diet pills,

On the "clinical reports"(5) I think one owes this to friends.

There are a number of places where you refer to the preservation of her archive intact. I sure hope it still happens! and to Hood and my interest in having it there. It was not in any sense selfish. It was simply because I believe it will have the largest collection and that, in years to come, it will be more used than others and that as a result people who would not go elsewhere to use hers would be attracted to and it would be available at hand, so to speak. I had and have no other interest in having it there and if you think for a minute you ^{might} come to regard this as unselfish, particularly for the earliest period.

What you say about Sylvia and her sudden determination to call all her debts in, particularly when she was "harsh" with you, is at the least strange and out of character to me. But then for so many years I had little or no contact with her.

The Greg Stone element troubles me in all aspects. It was the worst possible judgment on her part to involve him. She should have known better. It is close to if not irrational and self-defeating. She knew he knew nothing about the subject and that he had other interests that meant so much to him. It was also to impose on him, very heavily. I never heard of her doing that to anyone.

At several points you ^{are con-} confused or I confused you. Greg did not tell me he'd have nothing more to do with Melanson. I cautioned him that Melanson was staking out a claim to own the assassinations ~~and~~ and that Greg should be careful, in effect he was next. More strongly than you put it Greg did, reportedly, ^{say} that to someone else, a woman he met at Hood, if I recall her name correctly, Rachel Wetherall. She was friends enough to go to the funeral and was put out that Melanson could not and didn't. But what you say is still true, that is out of keeping with not changing his will.

I believe your recollection is accurate when you say he told you'd he use the O. Stone money on his foundation. But he told Wrono and me that he would use it on Sylvia's papers. If he was pushed over that thin line, you didn't do it. If anything did it, we'll have to wait and see if he took that money. I was quite straightforward with him, telling him he was being offered money so they'd have the right to misuse Sylvia's name. Can you imagine how he felt if he'd contracted by then? and it is true, I'm certain. Stone needs nothing from Sylvia's work for the monster he is building.

At the bottom of 8 you are not talking what I was talking about. Certainly, any one has a right to decide what he or she will do with anything owned. I never questioned that.

Not knowing that she had unpublished manuscripts of others I told Greg that only what she indicated she wanted confidential should be regarded as that. This was not part of the

discussion I had with Greg. (Here you say what may be true but I do not recall, that I continued to persuade Greg to leave the papers at "ood over your objections.) repeat, I have no personal interest at all in where her papers go but I'd hate them to be gathering dust in a prestigious place that really doesn't care and won't spend the time or money and also when it assigns people puts the least competent on accessioning papers. It does happen this way, except with the very important. What good would it be for them to stay in boxes at Yale or Harvard?)

at the top of 10 you get to what I told Greg. When he said there was more involved than what she had marked confidential he did not say what and I said that the rest of us have no right to censor ^{anything} ~~anything~~ she may have said about us, which is to censor history. I also told him that he did not know the subject, that he ought be getting on with his own life (several conversations I tried to persuade him to resume his degree work and ~~once~~ at least he indicated agreement) and that he should get you to give whatever reviewing might be necessary. It is on the accessioning, the word he used, that I said that is the institution's obligation.

The only things I remember regarding as in any way abnormal about Sylvia is her apparent determination not to remarry and the excesses of her passions, particularly of hate. I have no reason to believe she was incompetent when she decided but it is so unwise, so much against her interest and declared intentions, it simply is entirely unlike the wise and brilliant woman I knew. And, as you say, you can't undo it.

I think it would be better if you did not let it dominate your present life as much as it appears to.

If I forgot above, when I was pressing him to return to his studies and to get you to do whatever was needed on her papers, he indicated he agreed and as I recall said he'd get back to me about that soon. Instead in a few days he killed himself.

In your files memo of the 13th, I never got the impression from Greg that he was Sylvia's heir. He gave me the impression that she had charged him with arranging their deposit.

You appear to me to be oppressed by this. As I friend I encourage you to forget it to the degree possible and friendship with her permits.

Hopefully,

Harold

142-10 Hoover Avenue
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February 16, 1991

Dear Harold,

I write in haste responding to your note of 2/11 with enclosed letters on Oliver Stone, and your 2/14 regarding my memorandum on the disposition of Sylvia's papers.

Frankly, I've been so down since the Greg Stone business came up that I have to catch up on some newspapers. If I run across the clip, I'll send it. My feeling is to do nothing unless asked by a friendly and trustworthy reporter. Any publicity the critics generate will only promote the movie. It's too late to stop it now, and it won't reach theaters for another year (at least) anyway. Let's see what the script looks like. If it's really bad news, I would think along the lines of op-ed pieces to send around about a month before the film opens, and going to work on movie critics as well as reporters. But this has to be done in a carefully honed way to remind people that Garrison is no hero of the justice system, and he may have done more to retard the case than any man in history. (What would really be great is to get a guy like Chip Selby to start work now on a documentary about the Garrison fiasco. He'd be certain to sell it to cable TV for airing at about the time Stone's film comes out).

With regard to your comments on my memo about Sylvia and her archives, first I enclose a short file memo following up on the last. Second, I'm sorry for keeping you up nights <smile>.

My relationship with Sylvia was such that we were on the phone very often: at the beginning of our friendship about once or twice a week, but after she retired from the UN, at least three times a week, more often if there was something interesting going on with the case. She invited me to join her for dinner frequently, or just to visit. During the last five summers that she rented a house on Fire Island for six weeks stretches (1981-1985), she invited me to be her house guest as often as I could make it, provided she had room for me. Actually, she had also invited me in 1978, 1979 and 1980, but being the modest and unassuming gentleman I am <grin>, I didn't feel it would be appropriate to impose on her hospitality in 1978-79, and in 1980 I was preparing for the bar exam. She confided in me the things that other researchers/writers on the case confided in her, knowing that they would go no further. She shared with me

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any particularly interesting information coming out of the manuscripts she critiqued, whether for a publishing house or at the request of another critic. In August 1977, when she was asked to sign a secrecy oath as a prerequisite for participating in the HSCA colloquium, and to submit a memo in advance of the meeting, she called me and took me into her strictest confidence. She explained the circumstances and told me that, because she had not been active in the case for several years she had lost some of her grasp for details (whatever she forgot was more than most people will ever know). She asked me to help her with the memorandum, and I did. (Although it was submitted in her name, I have her acknowledgment of my co-authorship in writing, and it irked me no end when Jerry Rose published it in full after her death without knowing the circumstances. That memo was supposed to be confidential.) Sylvia also confided some of the most intimate details of her current family life, although she would keep the past somewhat murky (I later got further details from her friends and one of her nieces). I knew of most all her callers and correspondents. Naturally, not all of our conversations centered on the case. We would shoot the breeze about politics, movies and baseball, among other topics.

When Sylvia died, and I was composing my eulogy, I knew from the time I heard the news that she had left her collection to Greg Stone. I resolved, however, that I owed it to her to at least present her in the light she would have wanted to be remembered by those who did not know her as well. I am not one of those who believes, for example, that the names of each of JFK's bedmates is relevant to history; it is the persona which one wishes to present to the public and the ideals for which one stands by which he/she should be known and judged. Sylvia had her human failings, but our main interest should be in the fine work she did. One of my earliest memories of Sylvia is seeing her revel in the attention she received from young people when she showed up at the NYU Law School weekend symposium on the case in 1975. (You'll recall that you fell ill that time and Lesar had to stand in.) Many people knew her as an icon and still regard her as such. That was deliberate image-making on her part. I also knew her, however as a human being.

Without going into the depths of her past, Sylvia was basically a very unhappy woman who had a very unhappy life. She ended up with no immediate family, no children, and three nieces who didn't take to her until they were older. While she was satisfied and proud of her career with the UN, all she wanted to leave on this earth was a placemark for history through her work on the case.

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Whether she had a proclivity toward young men who were interested in her work has no value to me in attempting to explain what happened with her collection. (By the way, she did have a close friendship with Mary Ferrell's daughter, Carol Ann, and there were young women in her poker group, so her younger friends were not exclusively male.) Significantly, all of her young male colleagues were her colleagues on the case, unlike her beneficiary, Greg Stone.

During the months immediately following her death, I experienced the kind of anger which psychologists would probably regard as a normal part of grief. I considered the possibilities that she had betrayed me (which, in a sense, she did), that she had been stringing me along because she was afraid of losing the companionship, that she suffered from a mental disease or defect which I did not appreciate, etc. Having allowed that initial period of mourning a loss to pass, and having now spoken with her closest girlfriends and others, however, I am absolutely certain that she loved me like a son and wanted only the best for me. She never would have maliciously or deliberately hurt me the way she did. It doesn't make me feel much happier about the resulting situation, which could have been easily remedied, but to believe otherwise would make Sylvia out to be some kind of horrid monster, and I know better than that.

Unfortunately, after she finished her Index to the HSCA, she simply languished in her apartment and, after 1985, even stopped going to Fire Island for the summer. I spoke to her about the benefits of staying active, but to no avail. She spent most of her time just reading or watching television. She seemed to dwell on the deaths of two of her closest girlfriends and the murder of Al Lowenstein which, considering the brevity of their association, I believe she blew out of all proportion. Except for a few telephone interviews she did for the 20th and 25th anniversaries, reviewing some manuscripts for Prentice Hall/Simon & Schuster, speaking with other authors who were writing books on the case, and helping me, she did nothing further on the case aside from keeping abreast of what little new developments there were. Buying Sylvia a VCR was probably the worst thing her nieces could have done for her. Interrupting her during baseball or tennis was verboten. Her mobility itself was limited for a brief period of time after she suffered a twisting injury to her foot during a shopping errand around 1987. She rarely went outside again after that. And she was taking assorted medications for depression or diabetes. She was also smoking like a chimney and may have had emphysema. She never cut down on the habit. In short, her last years were spent in a kind of malaise she did not seem able or willing to surface from.

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Susan and Lenny went to work on her beginning in the early 80's. The family invited her to New Jersey for dinner on the major Jewish holidays and Thanksgiving, where Susan and Lenny would trot out their two young sons, one to show his love of books and learning and the other to show his interest in baseball. She was very impressed by the former, whom she regarded as the only member of the family who showed any promise. I am certain they were trying to influence her to leave the books to the grandnephew (she ended up leaving him only her non-assassination books). One of Sylvia's friends suggested to me, "They used the boys to get to her." Looking back on Sylvia's recounting these visits to me, I share that view.

Sylvia was fond of her nieces; she just recognized their limitations. Family is family, and they were the only family she had left. She had to rely upon them to comfort her in her approaching old age and carry out her wishes after her death. She was also very worried about their happiness. They were, after all, the daughters of her late sister. According to a conversation I had with Susan several weeks after Sylvia's death, none of the three nieces liked Sylvia when they were younger. Susan also described herself as "the one who was protecting her." Fat chance.

My own perception was that Sylvia remained by-and-large competent. I have previously alluded to a major change in her behavior in late 1985, but I believe now that she had a motive for this. As for the end, during December 1988, I had dinner with her twice, once in the company of Jerry Policoff and the last time in the company of Larry Schlossman. At that time, she did seem to have a certain preoccupation with days gone by, especially (for some reason) Ray Marcus's work on the Moorman photos. Up to her final illness, we were both discussing such matters as Lifton's publication of the bootleg autopsy photos, the John Davis book, the Selby documentary, and completing our respective collections of 25th anniversary videos (I recall that Groden had promised her a complete set of tapes from the big conference that was held). During her final illness, while she was home, we spoke twice that week. Aside from the fact that she was obviously ill and weak, she engaged in intelligent discourse. Of course, I was in close touch with her and may not have noticed any mental deterioration. She did seem to get closer to her religious roots (without actually becoming an observant Jew), and closer to pro-Israel views than she had been earlier in our friendship. She had a motherly concern for a problem confronting her grandniece. So, there were changes in her from the fiery days of her younger middle age which most people who knew of her work recall. She mellowed. She got tired. She

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made peace with her surviving family after a troubled past with them. She confronted her own mortality.

Other than some mental disease or defect which may have affected her without my perceiving it (and I must interject that it was not her custom to provide clinical reports as richly detailed as yours), I can think of no more logical explanation than that which I already have stated: a desire to preserve her collection intact and protect me from having to deal with her relatives. There were any number of people to whom she could have plausibly left her papers. Leaving them to Stone made absolutely no sense unless placed in the overall context I have advanced. I'm not saying by any stretch of the imagination that anyone strapped her into a chair and forced her to sign a Will. I am saying that, at one and the same time, she yielded to the pressures of her family and "compromised with them", so to speak, in order to accomplish her primary objective, which was the preservation of her archives intact. Her compromises consisted of: (a) deleting the "forgiveness of debts" provision (but she made sure to call in her debts after that so that her friends would not have to face her family); (b) leaving her non-assassination related books to one of Susan and Lenny's sons, and (c) leaving the assassination archives to someone to whom the family could not reasonably object.

More regarding the "forgiveness of debts" aspect, because in retrospect I find it most unusual and intriguing. Although Sylvia was very comfortable with regard to money (she had a sizable estate, a generous tax-sheltered pension from the UN, and lived very simply and unostentatiously), there appeared to be some kind of urgency in the way she went about contacting her debtors and asking them to repay their loans. With respect to my own situation, I had already repaid her half of the amount I owed her, and when she called me for repayment of the other half, she knew that I had been unemployed for two months and was looking for a job. She also knew that I had gone through a series of low-paying jobs early in my legal career. Nevertheless, she was very harsh with me and, while she did not accuse me of taking advantage of her, she spoke about other people who allegedly were. She made me promise to repay the remaining portion of the debt within a specified period of time. It was a hurtful conversation. I even drafted a letter to her asking for an apology, but thought better of sending it, and I waited a full week before speaking with her. The subject never came up again. I am told, however, that there was a woman who lived in Sylvia's building and to whom she had also lent money. During this same period, Sylvia was so callous toward the woman that she could not look Sylvia in the eye; she began to slip envelopes containing weekly payments under Sylvia's door. I remember once seeing (probably

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around the time I did the first draft of her Will) a whole list of debtors and amounts that she kept. I have been led to believe that she was contacting all of them during this same period of time, shortly after the execution of her second and final Will. Sylvia's behavior was so completely out-of-character and at odds with the very firm intent she evinced in our 1981 conversations that I am now morally certain she was acting out of the same desire to spare her friends from having to deal with her family after her death. Whatever confidence she had in 1981 that her family would not pose any problem to the effectuation of her wishes for the estate must have eroded during the interim.

I specifically discussed with her in 1981 whether she wished to place her papers with a university during her lifetime, but it was her desire to hang onto her collection and maintain complete ownership of it. I also specifically asked her whether her family would have a problem with her leaving the assassination collection and the copyrights to me. She said that she would explain things to Susan and her other nieces, and that there would be no problem. Naturally, if she had ever given me any inkling that a problem might be in the making, I would have advised her along the lines of an inter vivos trust or a joint ownership agreement that would have taken the collection out of the Will. Perhaps I made a mistake in not advising her about the availability of those devices, but there didn't seem to be the need.

I further recall that she insisted upon being my first client as an attorney, and preparing a Will for her in 1981 as per her explicit instructions and a very lengthy discussion in her apartment. She would not let me refuse her. She had already told me her desires, and the provision we spent the most time discussing was the "forgiveness of debts", because I tried to talk her out of it. (I had a selfish motive for doing so, since she had just recently lent me a sum of money and, as I stated to her, I was afraid that if she happened to "pop off" the following week, before I could repay her, the Will would be open to question.) I subsequently gave a completed draft to her and, explaining the formalities that were necessary to make it a valid Will, I told her I would not supervise the execution because I was afraid that it would be subject to later attack. I told her to go to an independent attorney for the execution. I told her I did not want our friendship to revolve around the issue whether or not she was leaving anything to me and, for reasons already explained in my memo, that I thought it best we not discuss the matter again. She offered to pay me for the service, but I settled with her for dinner instead.

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To clarify the first graf on page 6 for you: As I said, there was a provision in her second Will (not her first) leaving the non-assassination books to the grandnephew, but the separate provision regarding the assassination books was clear and distinct. The family tried to raise a bogus ambiguity with Greg, but they backed off from it. It never got beyond that. They had no chance.

A digression: I met Susan and Lenny and their two children for the first time at the memorial service. (Lenny was particularly distant; all I remember of him was a less-than-hearty handshake and a simple "thank-you" as he was departing. I was watching him as I spoke. Not once during my talk did he look directly at me, although he and Susan were sitting directly in front of me not more than four feet away in center row. He kept his eyes fixed on a portrait of Sylvia which had been placed on an easel to the left of the rostrum.) I seem to recall exchanging pleasantries with Susan as to whether the boys would follow in their Aunt's footsteps in the case, but there didn't seem to be any expression of interest. Jerry may have a better recollection than I do because I was in pretty bad shape. I'm sure, however, that her family regarded Sylvia as their eccentric Aunt and had no real interest in the case or in her work beyond seeing that it kept her preoccupied. They wanted her assassination library for its value.

Regarding your 2/14, bottom of page 3 to the top of page 4, I stand by my account of the conversation with Stone as being accurate, but I think he probably spoke to you after he spoke to me and had the chance to reconsider how his intentions sounded. I agree with you on the differing amounts. I just have a feeling that Greg dealt with you (and maybe others) on the basis of telling you what he thought you needed to hear. (Frankly, I have also had a suspicion for some time that he and Melanson were awfully close. I know that Sylvia had a manuscript of Melanson's which Greg retrieved for him from the apartment. It troubles me that Stone would tell you that he'd have nothing further to do with Melanson, yet he left his personal papers on the RFK case to Melanson. If Stone had meant what he told you, considering the meticulous way he planned for his death it could be expected he'd have changed his Will.) Your version on the amount and the intention have gone a long way to damage my assumption of his sincerity. Since he told me he had just received the offer that day, I doubt he accepted it (although the same thought has crossed my mind as well). Actually, I think I caught Greg completely off guard with my suggestion. He seemed flustered. He was definitely considering putting the money into his foundation (if his legal adviser told him it was permissible; apparently it has a limited charter) or using it for related

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causes. One of the reasons I remember this so distinctly is that I offered to put him in touch with an entertainment lawyer I know here in New York City, but he said he had a lawyer out in LA who had done public interest work for him related to the foundation. He definitely was not considering using the money for any purpose related to Sylvia's papers or her work. Harold, he just wasn't interested, and I slammed him for it. I slammed him hard. Only Sylvia could have been more direct with him. If anyone pushed him over "the thin line", it may have been me, and while I did not wish him dead, I cannot honestly apologize. I did not know him well and, apart from whatever he wanted to do with Sylvia's legacy, I must confess I had no interest in Stone at all. I had no idea of the true nature of his condition, and I found his performance re Sylvia's bequest a frustrating disappointment.

Regarding the location, as I made clear, I'm of the opinion that more inquiries had to be made and options considered. Based on all of Greg's fancy talk about the process he intended to undertake, he knew it too. Only, he seems to have hoped that I would be the one to make the inquiries for him. I don't know whether he thought I was some kind of a dope or what. (My mother suggested to me only half-jokingly after my January 7 conversation with Stone that I should send him a bill.) The idea should have been to make an informed judgment as to the best place for the papers. (Sylvia knew you were putting your papers at Hood, but that didn't seem to sway her to donate hers to the same place. If it had, she could have taken care of this explicitly in her Will.)

Regarding "censoring history", I do not see that as an issue here. First, a private person has a right to decide what they will and will not leave for other people to scrutinize, so I have no philosophical problem with whatever instructions Sylvia gave to Stone that he apparently was not responsible enough to act upon. Second, sequestration for an appropriate period of time is not the same as censorship. It simply reflects a considered judgment that some things, such as are found in private correspondence, would be better left to the consideration of future scholars because they might tend to hurt living private (not public figure) citizens in ways that were never contemplated.

You have consistently ignored a very important point in your efforts to persuade Greg to leave the papers with Hood, and I must say that I wish you had just laid off of him as I had asked, in friendship. There is a clear distinction between being responsible to an individual like Sylvia who leaves such a collection, and being responsible to history. While I believe it is possible for one person to undertake

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both responsibilities, what I am saying is that Greg undertook a responsibility directly to Sylvia to "protect and preserve" the body of her work and "use it to advance the state of existing knowledge and understanding of the case." (Quotes from the Will.) His responsibility to her included ensuring that her work would be presented and used in ways that she would have wanted, initiating a process which would last beyond all our lifetimes of ensuring that the reputation she built for herself would continue. His responsibility also included following through on whatever representations he made to her or whatever specific instructions he noted during their discussions. He could not possibly carry out that responsibility unless he examined her papers. He did not examine her papers because he knew that he had no knowledge, understanding or interest in her work, which is why the subject of my being his "surrogate reviewer" came up in the first place. He understood that someone who actually worked with Sylvia and was close to her ought to at least take a good look at what was there before it passed into other hands. He could not credibly seek a proper permanent home for these papers without knowing what they contained so that he could work up a little presentation to make to college administrators. He could not give any consideration to what provisos ought to be attached to a permanent agreement unless he knew what her files contained.

You say you worked out all of the details relating to your files in advance with Hood College. Why do you seem to belittle and so easily dismiss Greg's preference (or mine) that someone acting on Sylvia's behalf should have the same opportunity to work out details regarding the placement of her files? That's what Greg was supposed to be there for. Wouldn't it have been nice for Greg (or someone else acting on Sylvia's behalf) to say to a college: "I'd like to see you give prominent mention of this collection in your admissions catalog? I'd like you to print a catalog of the collection and make it available to people in remote locations for a nominal charge. I'd like a representation from you that her library will be preserved intact and kept apart from your general circulation materials. I would like you to ask for certain types of identification from people wishing to examine her files. I would like you to obtain from the family of Sylvia Meagher a suitable portrait for hanging in your library, which should be mounted with an appropriate plaque in her honor, etc." Why do you pooh-pooh the desires of Sylvia's friends (including her beneficiary) to perform this service for her and do the best that can possibly be done for her legacy? Why did you attempt to persuade Stone that he needn't be concerned about such issues; someone else at Hood would take care of everything for him? What could possibly be your motives? Your attitude on this infuriates me, not only because of its onesidedness, but also because

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of its insensitivity. You of all people, having known and respected Sylvia (as she respected you) should have encouraged Stone to either meet his responsibilities directly to Sylvia or turn the matter over to someone ready, willing and able to make the judgments he had no enthusiasm for making.

While Greg was not legally a trustee, he clearly understood that Sylvia expected the same of him ("trustee" is how he described himself to me), yet he was never even interested enough to inventory the contents of her bequest! Would he even know or care if someone got into those file cabinets and made off with some of her books, etc., before he turned ownership and possession over to an institution?

It was his responsibility in the first instance to make the kinds of judgments that he and I discussed, as set forth in my memorandum, and to carry out whatever instructions Sylvia gave to him, which he obviously agreed to perform; it is the permanent repository's responsibility to make their own independent judgments as to how they wish to handle and present the materials. He simply threw up his hands. What irritates me no end is the seeming disrespect. I would have liked to see him make a little fuss over the papers and demonstrate that he had an appreciation and respect for what had been left in his care -- show me and everyone else who admired Sylvia that he was paying serious attention.

Quite honestly, I wonder whether there was some kind of dysfunctional aspect to the communications between Sylvia and Greg. He would call her to cry on her shoulder about how terrible he felt about Al Lowenstein. I'm not sure she ever appreciated that his commitment was to Lowenstein, not the RFK case per se or assassination research in general. If she ever entertained any notion that he might one day decide to take an interest in the JFK case, after 22-25 years of never having manifested such an interest, then she was in worse shape than I have thought. If she thought he was a poor wretch in need of assistance, she was misled, because he apparently was not strapped for money; he only lived and behaved like a pauper. No, absent some evidence of fraud and deceit on the part of Stone or mental incompetence on the part of Sylvia, I'm convinced now that her primary concern was the intact preservation of her collection outside of family hands: She chose someone she thought she could trust but to whom no one could object because he could, after all, be defended on purely sentimental grounds; geographical distance; infrequent contact; and no apparent interest in making money from her work. She did not leave the collection to me because of her fear that her intent might be defeated by the family, who wished to keep her valuable set of books on the case. She made a terrible mistake in keeping her own counsel on this, and her 3+ years of silence

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on the issue, coupled with her undelivered deathbed summons to me, cause me to believe that she was very uncomfortable. You suggest that Sylvia malevolently abused me, but I think that she was the one tormented up to her last moments.

If she had trusted her family to place her collection with an institution, she could just as easily have made that specific directive in her Will, and the court would have enforced it if they did not.

I did not say that I want to "dissassociate myself from her papers". What I said was that I will not render any further assistance regarding their handling, since it appeared based on the information you gave me that he left the matter of her collection and copyrights up in the air and that his estate will have to decide what to do with them. I gave Greg whatever help I could to prevent him from taking any missteps. Had he lived, I would have "stayed on his case" and pushed even harder until the matter of the papers was settled. Greg was a live connection to Sylvia, but I don't have that same connection with strangers, and I don't wish to participate in decisions that will ultimately be made by strangers on this matter. Absent some extraordinarily skillful legal maneuvering, I cannot undo the mistake Sylvia made, and I don't wish to aggravate myself needlessly over it. People will have to judge her actions (and Greg's) on their own merit. (The foregoing is not meant to totally preclude any action I might consider taking if it appears that a serious violation of Sylvia's intentions or of the rights of researchers to access her materials takes place. For that purpose, if for no other, I wish to maintain my independence.) I certainly need to work with her papers before I can complete my own projects. I would have liked to have had the first crack, since my work would have been made much easier and I could probably finish my projects much sooner. She made it more difficult for me. Now, the problems are: when and how?

Best regards,



MEMORANDUM

DATE: February 13, 1991

TO: File

FROM: Roger B. Feinman *RF*

CC:

RE: DISPOSITION OF SYLVIA MEAGHER'S WORKING PAPERS AND
LITERARY ESTATE

Jerry Policoff called last night, mainly about an LA Times reporter's snooping around for a Greg Stone suicide story. One interesting sidelight which he failed to mention when he called last week to describe Greg's funeral:

According to discussion with Greg's friends, "he apparently didn't know why Sylvia had left the papers to him. He talked to a lot of people about it." Jerry said he heard that Greg "didn't really know what to do with it."

I believe this because it's consistent with Greg's behavior. It is also consistent with the theory that she needed a caretaker beneficiary to preserve her archives intact and keep it out of her family's reach in a way that could not be challenged in court. I couldn't remember where my copy of her final Will is, so I ran down to Surrogate's Court today to take a look at their file. The following passage from the bequest to Greg Stone is pertinent:

Without limiting the absoluteness of this bequest, it is my wish that either during his lifetime or upon his death he place my library and papers dealing with the assassination in a university library or public archive of his choosing where, within his sole discretion and judgment, they may best be preserved as an intact collection and made available to future scholars. (emphasis added)

If she had told me that she suspected the family might put up a fight about the books, I could have shown her better alternative ways of accomplishing this which would have still afforded her the right to keep her archives until her death. But I'm the one who told her in 1981 that I didn't want to have further discussion about the Will with her, so we didn't.