

Mr. Roger Feinman
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4/16/92

Dear Roger,

Got the mail when we left for Ed's grocery shopping close to noon and I read it while she shopped. With increased tiredness from the sleep apnea I've taken to using a highlighter to mark for response. There is much more in your letter, for which I thank you, because it increases my understanding of some events of the past, than I'll have time for. Ordinarily first is what relates to orders because we cannot let them accumulate. But although I'm tired enough not to get up and get more white paper (this is some old Thermofax paper) I do want to respond immediately.

You said nothing with which I disagree. And I appreciate your taking the time. And the typing is much easier for me, thanks for that too.

Your quarrel over journalistic standards with CBS is a permanent one of recent years, in all elements of all the media. Some one I know is doing a master's thesis on the media for the first 10 days, mostly the Post and Times.

That is an important point about McCloy telling CBS they could not investigate the crime but could argue for a more objective investigation. It is also a self-condemnation, an admission that their's was not objective. McCloy was right because he knew the crime had never been investigated so there were no leads for private people to follow and it certainly does apply to those I do not regard as real "critics" but as a motley gang that runs from the nuttiest to the most extreme and baseless theorizers of "solutions." No other book, save now Sylvia's, are in the stores and there is no other source for most people.

I have a vague recollection of knowing long ago that Groden had the autopsy film and I said what you and Sylvia said. I presume he stole the color ones somehow from the committee, that is, found a way to make copies. The black-and-whites originated with a retired Secret Service agent named Fox, now dead. ^{Groden} He even sold them to a supermarket tabloid! The entire thing, more than just him, is, I agree, not less than obscene.

Hickey can't put up the money for a lawyer. I have it from another retired agent that he has ^{exposed} ^{FD} exposed suing. In today's mail is a letter that tells me that the Bronson films shows what that wretch and egomaniac Donahue says to be impossible. I think that the Altgens Picture alone does that and I think Zapruder, too, ^{as I told Donahue years ago.}

What you say about Cesar reflects the Bud influence. He was different when I could reason with him. But you don't want to do any kind of quickie book with that material and as you say, you have concerns the theorists don't give a damn about.

I told Donahue that his theory is impossible and in return he maligned me and lied.

I've not yet seen the ^{voice} ~~voice~~ but in all the letters I've gotten since that issue appeared and all the phone calls, only one mention of it!

People like Jerry refuse to learn that the kind of trick he pulled never accomplishes

anything constructive. He is wise enough to know that this one also could not. So what is left is personal, some attention for himself. The money can't mean that much to him. And he just did not care about anything or anyone else. If he told you he hoped that it would lead to CBS's release of its files he is nuts, childish or stupid, if he really meant that. I think it was his excuse for being a wretched bastard, his justification to himself.

I did not know that "roden hasn't read a book on the case but I'm not surprised. He also rarely respond to letters. It all went to his head, too. If you read any of the recent books other than Lifton's it is obvious that their authors are ignorant of available fact. Lifton told the world how he discovered sex and invented the wheel and all he added was a theory he knew was impossible.

Lardner has not mentioned the message I ~~left~~^{left} on his machine ~~of~~^{about} the Voice story and we've spoken several times since then. I felt it wiser, especially ~~having~~^{having} heard nothing new from you, not to raise the matter. I think, in addition, that he knows his desk probably won't got for it. They have an 800 number: 627-1150. My hunch as I think I indicated earlier is to let quiet stay quiet. What you did with Salant was more than just decent and honest and principled - it was, through him, all you have to do with any of them. I've not seen or heard any published reference to it nor have I been told of any. I think that they prefer to forget it and draw no more attention to it.

You are absolutely correct in comparing the work of the late 60s with the subsequent drek, but how many worthwhile books of the 60s were there? Other than Thompson's, a large part of which was cribbed but had the value of those sketches of the Zap frames, there were as I now recall only Sylvia, Roffman and me. Lane's first was dated before it appeared and was cunningly and dishonestly angled away from the counsels and onto Warren and Rankin only and he has been terrible in every way ever since. The only thing good about Epstein's is that it got some attention. It was focused like Lane's.

Interesting that you suggest that I collect all I've written about those bad books and do a book, which I'm not up to, because Wrono is concentrating on that, with my help and encouragement. He is well into a different book first, however.

O'Neill will talk to you and I am confident I can arrange an introduction this way: Peggy Adler Robohn, a brilliant woman, 75 Lawson Street, Madison, CT, # 06443, 203/245-4448. Tell her ^{you} are a friend of mine. She got to know O'Neill through their children. He hews the FBI line. You might ask him if the admitted mistake in their report came from a question they heard being asked rather than a statement. I think it is that. Perhaps a question to the amphitheater. *Re: surgery of the heel.*

There not only is no chance of bringing any assassins to trial, there is no chance of developing any leads that might lead to them.

I'll be reading Newman after the ~~fire~~^{friend} who bought it finishes, thanks. I disagree and do not believe that discussion of the case should travel that road. There are too many who can fit within the cul bono approach. I would not eliminate any in thinking

about it. Which for years I haven't. And I doubt if anything relevant can be learned from chasing Mongoose or rising the JM/Wave. Especially not if they are relevant.

Rorke is not really relevant. Those who thought there was a Cuban assassination did consider all those characters relevant. If I said that Rorke's daughter filed the FOIA suit I was wrong. Sullivan's daughter did. He was with Rorke.

It is not impossible for me to search the vast files for a single record and the separate copy I made of that McNaughton record, complete with file folder, is gone. So I'd very much appreciate a copy or if you have only notes, the citation. If you do not have the same record in mind that I recall, FBI reaction to his not swooning over CD1, I'd still appreciate copies because the entire file is gone.

Before I mention even elliptically that there may be a CBS book to Gallen I think you should think it through. For that you really do need a good agent.

Wild Turkey is a very old brand! ^{ye} Yes, isn't it? I gave up rye when I tasted ^{good} bourbon and after WWar II I switched to Scotch. Which I take with water, not soda.

Before WWar II Dad and I used to finish meals with B & B but neither has had any in years.

On Crenshaw, the only thing new in it was the alleged call from LBJ. In thinking about that I'd concluded that Crenshaw lied. Not enough time for what he says.

Believe it or not it is not quite 3 and I've been up 15 hours. Of them I spent two hours cutting cardboard up for backing books and to get rid of a size box I can no longer use. The next Orioles game I'll cut what I can use to size and pack the rest for recycling.

I'll let this wait until tomorrow to read and correct. Reduces but does not eliminate confabulation.

I do hope something open up for you.

Our best,

Harold

While writing this, as usual, I was interrupted by a number of phone calls. I was writing the first letter relating to book sales when Richard Gallen's son David phoned me about another matter. So, I yielded to impulse - here a call from California and earlier one from ~~Ex~~ Australia - and I said only what you said. He said they'd certainly be very interested. His father is a director of Publisher's Group West and last year their sales were up 10,000,000, to 40,000,000.

April 11, 1992

Dear Harold,

I'm typing this to make it easier for you to read. I handwrote my last letter over dinner while my thoughts were spontaneous and fresh. The essay was an extra copy for you.

It's interesting you should ask about Wershba, because I had originally put a lengthy paragraph in my essay about him. Upon reading it over, it seemed an unnecessary detour on the way to my main point, so I cut it out and saved it for the book. The analogy to Adams was apropos. Wershba had struck a deal with Garrison regarding access in exchange for a promise that CBS would not try Garrison's case on its planned special report. The senior execs refused to back Wershba up on this and, from then on, he refused to have anything more to do with their Kennedy assassination projects. From 1968 (when 60 MINUTES began) until he retired, Joe Wershba stayed in his happy little corner of the CBS Broadcast Center in the 60 MINUTES offices, which were at the diagonally opposite end of the building from Midgley's unit. Because of his seniority with the company, and contractual considerations, the executives were never able to touch him. By the way, when I left CBS, Joe gave me his copy of Eisenschiml's "Why was Lincoln Murdered?", autographed by the author! It is one of my prized treasures.

Your warning about the Livingstone and Crenshaw books came about a week late. This brings me to amplify my last letter a bit.

If anything good came out of this shocking disappointment from Jerry, it was the very rude and painful reawakening in me of a sense of where I fit in and why I became involved in the case and -- later on -- attempted to confront Salant and Midgley, et. al. during my time at CBS News. My quarrel with them was not over whether the Warren Report was right or wrong, or whether there was or wasn't a conspiracy; it was over journalistic standards, both written and unwritten. I never saw myself as an activist in the same mode as, say, a Greg Stone or a Kevin Walsh or (forgive me) a Ted Gandolfo, etc. That's why I kept my circle of friends on this subject very tight. I will accept the label "critic" in the best sense of the word as I think you have used it; perhaps what Sylvia used to call "a student of the assassination."

Going back to a point I made in my eulogy for Sylvia, posture is the key to all of this. John J. McCloy told CBS News privately that he didn't think any news organization could actually "investigate" the case, but that it could perhaps argue for a more objective investigation. They ignored his advice, another nail in the coffin of Jerry's great conspiracy theory. McCloy was obviously no fool; he knew why he had been asked to serve. I think McCloy was right on this score, and I think the same point applies just as aptly to the critics. As I said of Sylvia's philosophy (which I share), it is for the critics (and any journalists who have the balls) to raise questions for the government to answer.

In November 1988, two months before Sylvia passed away, Carroll & Graf published a second paperback edition of Lifton's book, this time including some of the bootlegged autopsy x-rays and photos. When I stumbled across this edition at Barnes & Noble, I was so frantic that I ran outside to a phone booth and called Sylvia. What you may not be aware of is that, back in 1980 at Al Lowenstein's funeral in New York City, Groden had told both of us that he had the autopsy photos. We encouraged him to get rid of them immediately. Our reaction to Lifton's book was very similar: Sylvia agreed with my feeling that it would reflect very badly on the critics for this stuff to be published so long as the x-rays and photos were officially sequestered. Up to her death, Sylvia refused to look at the new edition of Lifton's book. Of course, since then both Groden and Livingstone have published the materials in all their gory color, Summers included a couple in his updated edition, and some of them have been flashed on TV from time-to-time. It's nothing less than obscene, as that word connotes an appeal to prurient interest, for this stuff to be sold in popular trade while the widow and her children, as well as other immediate family members of JFK, are still living. I want no part of any crowd that finds this type of pandering to be fair game.

This assassination controversy has turned into something ugly. We have a whole crop of younger people who, not having reasonable access to the 26 volumes and other original source materials, have formed their impressions and conclusions about this case on the basis of some of the nuttier books that have come out in recent years. (I understand that Secret Service Agent

Hickey's family is greatly distressed by the recently published "Mortal Error". I don't blame them.) Thanks to Oliver Stone, people who don't even remember the real Jim Garrison think that he was a virtual Jimmy Stewart.

Most disturbingly, it seems that the means have begun to justify the ends, whatever those ends may be in individual cases. While waging a fight to obtain the release of the HSCA files, one former committee staff member surreptitiously leaks documents which he illegally copied from those files. The case involving Jerry is not an isolated instance, as I have been led to believe in recent weeks. As for Jerry, his lies and total dishonesty in subservience to Oliver Stone and his researcher, Jane Ruscone (who commissioned the Voice piece), speak for themselves; I cannot summon the words for further comment. And I have been exhorted by some, including your old pal Jim Lesar, to take advantage of the tremendous opportunity that the Stone film has created to publish a quickie book about CBS and the assassination. As if I should be dying to jump on the Stone bandwagon after enjoining Greg not to sell Sylvia's rights to him! And as for Oliver Stone, his limp excuse of "dramatic license" in making Garrison a prosaic hero just rings so tinny and hollow when one considers any number of other devices he had available to him to accomplish his purpose. Policoff seeks to emulate his hero: he justifies some of the terrible lapses of his Village Voice piece as "literary license." It's just amazing who he'll lie in bed with to make a name for himself and a few pieces of change, especially considering some of the cautionary conversations we had about Stone's project last year, before the publicity mill began to grind in high gear.

(I digress: I think that Jerry was indeed unconsciously trying to hurt me. I think a lot of envy concerning my relationship with Sylvia came to the surface through what he did. I also think that it must rankle him that he doesn't have access to the same materials I have, and he has never shown any degree of understanding or empathy for what I had to go through and what I sacrificed to get them.)

Think of the hypocrisy involved: You know better than anyone else that Gerald Ford was a fair target for criticism for relying on executive session transcripts for his book, "Portrait of an Assassin", while you were jumping through hoops to get those same transcripts. Yet, it is our own

sympathizers who illegally copied and disseminated the autopsy photography and other documents. Must we become what we despise in order to correct the imbalance of power between the governors and the governed?

You appreciate, I'm sure, that I could have forgone writing an essay and remained silent. Perhaps few people would notice the Voice piece and it would die an ignominious death. But my name is contained in some of those documents that were leaked. I am also on record with CBS as to the McCloy business as far back as August 1976, although they didn't know then that I had the documents (CBS's lawyers studiously avoided asking me for them during our lawsuit), so there is no doubt that they would ultimately realize where this stuff came from. I had to get out in front of the Village Voice piece and dissociate myself from it. What irks me no end is that someone else -- an erstwhile trusted friend, no less -- took it upon himself to turn my little moral victory into something shabby, sensational, irresponsible and utterly false and misleading, and he did so in a deliberate attempt to accomplish an expressly stated ulterior motive: embarrassing CBS into releasing all its file material. I tried to point out to him, "Look, Jerry, Midgley published his memoirs in 1989 and he obviously makes extensive reference to his files, so it's clear that he took them with him." (I did see Midgley carrying a lot of stuff out of the building at a time when I was raising some objections to his specials with the senior management of the company.) Jerry never even bothered to pick up a copy of Midgley's memoirs. That's how lazy and reckless he is: He just didn't care. He wanted to get an article in print before the Motion Picture Academy voted on the Oscars. For his friend Stone. And Stone's bitch, whom Jerry no doubt fancies.

That reminds me of another point: Did you know that Groden has never read a book about the case? Why is it that the most visible and successful rabble-rousers are also among the most ignorant?

It also irks me that Jerry got the story basically wrong, and I wish that we had been successful in getting Lardner interested in getting it right. I'm loathe to call Salant again in the aftermath of this article's publication, but I know I'll have to do it, and soon. That's another thing Jerry did: He robbed me of any room to maneuver here and placed the CBS people on notice that

I've got the documents. I might not even have had to use the McCloy-related documents if I had been able to handle Salant in the right way. What do you think of someone who takes it upon himself to burn my bridges for me?

Look at the quality of work on the case that was produced in the mid- to late-Sixties, and compare to most of what has been published recently. I would not even apply the word "scholarship" to some of the more recent tomes, and I even include Scheim's heavily footnoted work in that grouping. (Here's an idea for your final work on the case, Harold: Collect all of the notes and comments you've made on the books that have been published during the last twenty years, group them together according to common themes as to where, how and why the authors went wrong, and make each theme a separate chapter. It'll make a devastating commentary on the decline of serious work and how the public has been misled.)

The way to defeat an adversary is not to destroy him, not to ruin him, or to ruin the innocent, for that matter. The way to defeat an adversary is to shatter his argument. The atmosphere, thanks in some part to Stone and Lesar and Walsh, and Jerry Rose and a few others I could name, has become vicious and even desperate. It doesn't help at all. I'm still reading and, as time permits, researching. I'm seriously considering writing an article related to the medical evidence for Jerry Rose's newsletter, just to get something on the record. (I might try for an interview with Francis X. O'Neill, so if you have any thoughts, suggestions or questions, let me know soonest.) But I want no part of what's going on right now or the people behind it. I'm hoping that once Stone's home video release is out, the hoopla will die and we can move on to the next phase. My main point is that, in the absence of any realistic possibility at this juncture of bringing the assassins to trial, all that is left to us is the moral victory of ascertaining the political and historical solution to this crime and reasserting the primacy of people over institutions, but you simply can't achieve a moral victory through immoral, indecent and purely expedient methods.

One good book to come out of all of this is Newman's "JFK and Vietnam", which I hope you have picked up. This is the direction in which I think discussion about the case ought to travel. Also, Operation Mongoose and JM/Wave.

I never heard of Alexander Rorke. What's the relevance to the case? How about the plane McNaughton was on when he was killed? I'd certainly like to know more about that. Refer to your Justice Department file regarding McNaughton.

Vintage has republished Accessories without any new introduction. It's basically the same as the 1976 paperback. I'm glad it's available again.

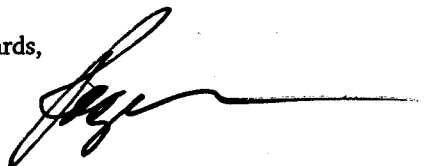
Just a brief word about the copyright issue regarding CBS. There have been a number of cases during the 1980s, which went up the Supreme Court, about the use of private, unpublished letters, etc. These involved L. Ron Hubbard and the Church of Scientology, J.D. Salinger, and even The Nation's scoop on Gerald Ford's memoirs. The authors won hands down. Congress has been trying to change the copyright law during the past couple of years to overrule the Court and give more leeway to scholars. The glitch in amending the law is that computer software authors have raised a ruckus because they fear that they will lose some protection. We'll just have to wait and see how this turns out. I tried explaining this problem to Sylvia (and Jerry) many times. Nobody seems to like listening to a lawyer talk about all this legal mumbo jumbo, even though it can wreak havoc on anyone who doesn't have insurance to cover this sort of thing. Their argument seemed to be that, CBS wouldn't dare try to challenge my use of this material. I like when someone else seems so willing to gamble with my chips.

You might casually mention to your friend, Dick Gallen, that you know someone who is contemplating a major book project on CBS and the assassination, and who might look him up in the future.

I'm glad that you're imbibing a bit. It's supposed to be good for you. I enjoy a glass of wine with dinner, but my favorite drink is Wild Turkey. Sometimes, when I'm feeling suave and sophisticated, a shot of Benedictine & Brandy in my coffee. I'll do Scotch and soda just to be sociable. My conceit is that mega-vitamins will save me.

These are tough times for lawyers, and I've avoided talking about my problems, but it's been rough. I'm still out there trying.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "Seymour", written over a horizontal line.