

7/6/72

Dear Mary,

There is something I've been wanting to tell you that I couldn't because I was told to keep it in confidence. That is, my source asked me to say nothing about it to anyone as long as I had no other source. This avoided involving my source. Until my source finds out that his source is a real blabbermouth about it and releases me from this obligation, I have to keep my source out of it and keep what I was asked to keep in confidence to myself. However, part of it, the essence but as of this morning no details, is no longer confidential. I may learn more about it today. If I do, I'll add it to this. There is no rush in mailing this in your situation. I merely think it is something you will want to know, not something about which you could do anything even if you feel as I do, that if there were anything you could do you would want to.

The source I will quote now is Jim Lesar. He is coming up today, finally, to go over the tapes of interviews I conducted as the basis of affidavits for the habeas corpus in the Ray case. He was to have begun doing this by the middle of May, almost two months ago. I fear much of what was then in my mind and not on tape will have fled the mind by now. And I think it did as thorough and definitively a job as possible, the only one that could make affidavits from the only available sources stick, with external and independent support.

He phoned me yesterday to say he could come today and ask if it is ok. In the course of talking, I reminded him of a few things he should bring, some he should go over so we wouldn't forget, and asked him what is new, anything I should know.

"Sylvia is sick", he said. I asked him if Jerry, who you do not know, was his source. He stumbled for a minute and then said "Not directly". I assume but do not know it to be the case that Cyril Wecht was his source. Thus I can now tell you no more than this. If Jim knows more and tells me more, I'll add it after he leaves. I do know more but as I've said, I know it under circumstances that preclude my telling you.

I don't recall exactly which carbon I sent you. I sent you probably one of one of the letters I wrote to those who had either written me or abused me. I have made no distribution of these among any critics but have been careful to make and file copies for the time when it may not be counterproductive and others, like you, may want copies. In fact, there are now only two others I will be in touch with, so my need for them will not be great. You know about the Wecht dispute, you know I discussed it with you in detail in November, and you probably remember that I sent a circular invitation to a dialogue to everyone. I didn't then and do not now think that if Pink Marshall or his federal master want someone else to see the stuff we can prevent it. My objections to Cyril were on a different basis, including that he could hurt us most of all because of his earned reputation. Now it exceeds this, but that is what it was then.

"Nobody engaged in this dialogue except Howard, who discussed it with me here, and Hoch, who waited several months to respond and then said he hadn't really thought it through, which is no basis for dialogue. It is an invitation to a monologue. The young ones in particular seem to resent it when I say do your own thinking, quite the opposite of the general complaint of that generation. Except Howard who, as it turns out, agreed with both of us, not just with me. He agreed with me but felt he had to also help Cyril. I encouraged him to follow the dictates of his own conscience. This included his making independent stipulations to protect his integrity. I had nothing to do with them and didn't know about this or any of the other relevant things until after the fact, nobody telling me. Sylvia as outraged and really leaned on the poor kid on the phone, as did Jerry.

I had encouraged him to associate with her, telling him she was brilliant and he could learn much from it. I fill, at the same time, filled with trepidation, for I long ago learned that Sylvia has a thing I have not completely satisfied myself about with young men. I think it is a suppressed maternal instinct. I think it is not what most would assume, sexual interest, if only because of the extreme to which she has gone to make herself what she need not at all be, so unattractive. I think she could be attractive, and this has often led me to ask myself why she does this. I knew it was an emotional problem, but I haven't really tried to plumb it. I guess she has been off men for years, and that is her business.

I have also known for years that Sylvia is for some reason jealous of me. Bits and pieces have come to me from others, but I have ignored them, as I have put my own observations in the back of my mind. Personal considerations should not dominate the work we do or our ability to cooperate. This would be self-destructive. At the beginning she was not this way but quite the opposite. I can give the change in her attitude that I detected a rough

dating: when she met Epstein. She raved about him and the trashy, copout book as I have never heard her rave about anything. I had had my own experiences with Viking, including knowledge from someone on the inside, to be satisfied she was exaggerating, but no more. Not until I read the book and understood it was I really shocked at her description, as I soon enough was at her description of the man, if he is one. None of this at any point ever interfered with my willingness to help her with her book or what I assumed wrongly would be continuing work. However, she bore this deep resentment first publicly expressed in her deliberate misdating of the other works in her book and privately in her refusal to correct the error in proofs, the real cause of her considerable emotion when we lunched at the UN the summer of 1967. Garrison, who I had then met but once, figured in it but did not cause her considerable emotion. This, too, made no difference to me. Throughout the total period of our association, from the time she met Epstein, she would never take anything from me in confidence, saying she couldn't be sure of preserving them anymore, a superficially reasonable basis, and at the same time kept on taking them from others. The difference, for the most part, was that what I wanted to tell her in confidence, once it became clear that she was not continuing work, was in her interest and what she held in confidence sometimes turned out to be disastrous for us. If, as I do not anticipate, you want more on this, ask. In any event, the real shocked to me was when she once, in an outburst of passion, accused me of libelling her on the basis of what she said I told Schiller and Lewis. This was particularly surprising to me because it is the only case I can now recall when Sylvia's judgement of people was sound where mine was wrong. I simply took them at face value on Penn's name. This, remember, was in 1966 when they did their distirness. Their record was done when I was in California before Xmas that year. Now the most superficial reading by anyone knowing anything has to show that I could not possibly have said what they say. It was a physical impossibility because Sylvia's book was almost a year later coming out and I hadn't seen the ms. My written protest to Capitol and demand that they withdraw it and all the rest is recorded and generally she then knew about it. I am sure I sent her a copy of that letter. In any event, she could not have believed I had said that unless she was, for some psychological reason, grasping at straws.

There is no point in my going over what you probably know better than I for I have never sought to learn the details. Enough came to me without seeking it. For years she has waged a strange kind of ~~own~~ campaign against me, always being careful to put it in terms of her enormous respect for my work. I have ignored it in our relationship, which got less close simply because she was so out of it.

Then she really put Howard in a very bad spot, and he is only now 19. She pressured him incredibly, and for no real reason except to involve him in possible guilt if anything went wrong with the Cyril operation. She involved those she found to be nuisances and who hadn't even read the basic literature if, indeed, the report itself, those she knew knew nothing. Everyone she thought she could. I feel about Howard as I do about a son. And, I do not always accept the kinds of attacks she launched behind my back. So, I sat down and unloaded several personal pages on her, citing her own record, and asking her to face it. If I didn't say all I could, I said enough. She has not responded and I think she will not unless, as the kids say, she finally puts her head together. She probably took it as pretty strong. I tell you that strong as it is, it is less than I consider I could have said. She may not conceive it possible, but aside from obligations to myself and to Howard and to the rest of us, I felt I owed this to her, that she face what she was getting into before it was too late.

Here I can only conjecture, but I think two things caused a personal crisis: Howard's independent attitude and his insistence on having nothing to do with those he regarded as ignorant, irresponsible or both, on steps he regarded as in the common interest and need; and confrontation with my letter, which came later. I knew nothing of this until after the fact, when the attacks on my got so vile that Howard felt he could no longer be silent, and when what he and I regard as theft from my work was dignified by such things as description as the requirement of "good conscience". I suppose the back-breaking straw was this and Sylvia and others accusing me of sitting on things, suppressing things. For one who comes here for weeks at a time, goes through my files without supervision, takes what he want without even being asked for a list, this was a bit too much. He knew that I had always twice duplicated everything outside my possession except for color pictures, which I couldn't afford, and that I couldn't afford the cost or the time of copying what I did deposit in other

hands so that if anything happened, none of my work would be lost to the rest. He knows that this extends to my government correspondence, of which he has copies. He also knows how I work through others when I fear that inquiry in my name will be counterproductive. and he has personally checked out some of the things I have done that he didn't like, the results of some of my more pointed correspondence, the kinds of letters the intellectuals do not like. So, telling him that I was sitting on things and suppressing them when he had read my written invitations to those making the accusations to come and see everything + have, told him more than he needed to know to have doubts about what these people were really up to, whether or not they themselves realized it. He knew they were lying to him in areas of personal knowledge inside his own noodle. And although I have never put it in so many words, I think he realizes I want him to know my files because I think he may be, so to speak, out next wave. He is not only 19. He knows some of my files better than I do, better by far.

As you know, you have a couple of my files that I haven't even read. I had no reluctance leaving them with you. You know that nothing happened in my work there that I kept from you.

So, I suspect that ^{because} he is a very quiet type, Howard's resistance if not his direct confrontation was something Sylvia did not expect. It may have been the first thing that made her sit back and think, if anything did and if she ever did.

I don't know all the conversation(s). I know he was dismayed when one of Sylvia's ~~chief~~ chief concerns was that Cyril not be "humiliated" by asking for help or acknowledging it. There are in my view, too, things that should concern us more. And Cyril, who has never done anything on his own. If he has read the basic literature, I'm not aware of it. And some of the stuff he has said in public and that was recorded makes some of Jim Garrison's farthure-out commentaries as conservative as a bible-belt unday.

At this point I'd had breakfast ready and after that "I went for a walk. My thinking time is what little non-working time I have, walking the one certain time when the weather permits 'it is like March here and in less than three weeks we've had half a normal year's rain.) I am making but one carbon of this, for my own files. But that makes part of the record we owe the future. I think one of the more effective ways of defeating what we could have done collectively; what we owe the present and history, has been this nasty, selfish behind-the-back businesses. So, on the apparently fairly widely believed propaganda about my sitting on things and suppressing, I'll here make a record for the future that you, of course, would endy were it not true. When I was in Dallas I opened up two ~~potential~~ potentially valuable archives and in each case the first thing I did was make arrangements for you to go through them. Of the things I got when I was there that could be copies, I have them to you for copying or made one for you. ^{Everything} Everything I learned, including what was in confidence, I dictated to you when you agreed to act as a confidential secretary, which is a role that does not breach confidence. And to this day you have not typed this up and I've not needled you about it, although I did not until you phoned me about a week ago know of the serious problems within your family that precluded it. When I met new people down there your group didn't know, I attempted to bring you all together. When I went to Dean Storey's school office, where he keeps his files, I asked Sue to go in with me. In my opinion, I could not possibly have been more completely opposite these self-serving vilifications and if in your opinion this is not the case, my files and yours will so show when you have time to record whatever it is you would. More, I believe I told you all I could about my work in New Orleans before I got to Dallas.

As you may not be able to confirm, but as I want to record at this point in the relevant files, this is not the exception but the rule. When I turned Hall and Howard on, after they had gone to court and didn't have to go to New Orleans, I turned them over the the L.A. people even though both had asked me to accompany them to N.O., hall to have a connecting room with mine as one of his conditions. I turned the tapes I made of these interviews and that of one with Dean over the the Newcombs. I turned Dean over to Fred, who thereafter either got nothing that Dean had promised to give Fred for me or kept it to himself. I turned the pictures I got over the Burton and if he ever went back to go over Howard's files for me, again a promise that should be on the tape, access to me, I have never gotten anything. There are at least three cases where I turned over to the San Francisco people those with information I turned ob by radio, and I turned Dean over to the L.A. people in 1966. Not trusting themselves, they got Bill Turner in on it and he not only didn't send me any information or notes but didn't when he was asked to. As a matter of fact, although he is

supposed to be and makes it clear he thinks he is a pro, he got nothing from Dean that Bill O'Connell hadn't earlier by phone although there was much more to get, some of which I did in 2/68, at the Newcombs, where Dean was quite willing to come and talk to me. This was in the presence of both Newcombs.

When I was in Dallas in 11/68, I asked Penn to go with me everywhere I went. I took him with me to the Paines, to Father Machann, who he couldn't even find, to the hospital, to Zapruder's, where he declined to go, to radio and TV broadcasts-everywhere it was possible. Other places Matt Herron was with me, sometimes including John Gilger. Again, there were no secrets, no suppression or sitting-on.

and there are other cases, many of them, where you may have no knowledge. I believe this is enough to make a record.

Often but not for long enough periods of time I have wondered at this nasty stuff, asking myself why. It may be that Sylvia did some of it with you. I don't really care. Aside from what might be called jealousy, I have often wondered if some of it is not political. I don't care what belief people hold, as long as they believe them. I like or dislike people because of the kind of people I think they are, not because I like or dislike their beliefs. My own do not fit any form and vary with the subject. An example is my liking for Sue, although everybody who had ever spoken of her to me said she is a rabid nut. She was nice to me, pleasant, and I like her. I don't think anything more need be involved in personal likes and dislikes.

Oh, yes, the first time I met you and Arch, at Bud's, I invited you both to come and go over whatever you wanted in my files. Arch never accepted, but you did. And chided me for the opposite of these slanders.

Well, I'll got to get to other things before Jim gets here. I began with a more limited purpose, to tell you what I now can about Sylvia. If it is the illness I suspect, I regard it as no more culpable than having a broken leg. But I can only conjecture about these things for I don't know enough to go further.

It is too bad we have come to this point, but I suppose it was inevitable.

We do hope your daughter comes through her surgery well and that the rest of you come along fine.

Sincerely,