

2/22/74

Dear Gerry,

It is unfortunate that those at Hood who will make the decision and I have not been able to get together on the project of establishing an archive at the college based on my files and work and what can and should flow from them because something I started working on months ago is now coming to a head.

It seems that the financing is possible and I will be meeting very soon with those who seem to be more than willing. I hinted at this before your break began but I could not do more than hint that it would be good if the beginning of an assessment could be made during the break.

Early next week - I hope Monday - I will confer with two friends and then, by phone, make a date to confer with those who have the money and the interest. This will require flying south, I do not know for how long. I may have to make a side trip to Houston and possibly Dallas before returning. If I do what will occupy me in Houston begins on April 3 and may last several days.

I may know later today if there will be this Monday meeting. If I do I will include a note. It will mean I will not be home until after you leave.

Tuesday afternoon I will be at your seminar. Perhaps before or after or both there may be time for discussion with those at the college who make the decisions. I can also have until about 2 p.m. Wednesday, if I do not have to leave then. It seems likely that if those with whom I will have to meet are then free, I may have to meet with them sometime toward the end of next week. If I have to do this Texas work, it will have to be then or after Texas.

I do not need a binding agreement but I do need something to go on. I have a definitive offer from Wisconsin, where my work is well known and where the preliminary exploration has also been made. I think I showed you the letter. (I have made appearances and participated in seminars at three branches of the University of Wisconsin.)

Prestigious as Wisconsin is, you know my reasons for preferring Hood. I do believe that as a beginning, your people should know this because I may have to make a very fast decision. I would hope not, that I could keep the institution open. However, because this is so important to me and to the work I will yet do and am doing, I don't dare be too vague on the first meeting, which may bind everything.

Actually, I have stayed too busy to begin to make an appraisal of what there is in my files. On the assassinations there is nothing like them anywhere and I have no doubt that I can add materially from those of others. I have on Watergate what others do not have. If you went over those of my notes I was able to segregate, you will only get an idea because they do not include what I was able to obtain when I started to write. I also have a complete account from newspapers, several file drawers full plus several boxes to date. And I have files going back to my investigative reporting days before World War II.

It will not be difficult to make an assessment of the assassinations files. While I do not prefer a sensational approach, I can flash enough documents in a few minutes to establish that the stuff is here. None of it was obtained improperly. I don't know how professional historians and political scientists evaluate but I would think that you can get an idea of the volume of such materials that I have from the fact that I have more than 2,000 pages of FBI and CIA materials that I have not had a chance to look at. More than the file drawer of them Judy is to go over. And this is a volumetric measure only. Most if not all the research for a large number of theses and books is already collected.

It would be wrong to consider that this is no more than a factual archive that can't be equalled on a major turning point in history, valuable as I would hope this alone is. The other kinds of things, I believe richly, will become apparent in any in-depth discussion. There is much here for social scientists, for one example.

And it is really an archive on government in crisis. Is there another one anywhere else?

It is also an archive on federal investigative agencies. I don't believe any college has one.

One on how the press works and performs in crisis.

The same for the law and the Department of Justice.

What I want out of this is simple: preservation of the work for continuing use and to be able to continue my own work without the harrassment of poverty.

And with a few bright young people helping, what I have can be considerably enhanced.

There is another factor that I think can be advantageous to any institution. Attitudes and interests are changing. I have two expressions of interest from Hollywood on my work on the King assassination. (There is no other archive on this for I have done all the original work.) I solicited neither approach. I expect a visit from one of these competitive interests shortly after April 15.

What I am suggesting by this is that entirely aside from scholarly values there is the possibility of profit from these materials in the future. They can be used to finance other academic projects. If the college would want it.

These files are also a literary treasure. My plans for mining it are limited, probably to the books I have already commenced. Two of these will, I think, interest you. There is one and I think the most definitive of all assassination books that, if I had the money, I could print in almost no time. (The text is camera-ready, it is indexed and all that remains is deciding what can't be included in the appendix, there is such incredible documentation, as you can see.) An enormous amount will remain for the use of others.

So, I do hope we can have whatever kind of meeting on this is necessary. If your people would like to tape it I would have no objection and it might be helpful for the future for despite the volume of my files there is much that is in my mind only. Wisconsin, you may recall, wants to go in for interviewing heavily.

Sincerely,

Harold Weisberg