

Dear David,

9/26/74

I find a letter like yours of the 25th, despite what from your point of view is certainly intended as understanding and patience, deeply disturbing. So much so that while I'm awakened at 4 a.m. to be able to complete one of the last and a complicated chapter in my Watergate book, The Unimpeachment of Richard Nixon, I've laid it aside because I'll not be able to concentrate at least until after I've responded.

Without taking time to correct typos.

I have long been aware that I come across like a self-conceived Lyngian. There was a time when those of whom I was fond and we much younger than they had to be to be my children used to consider this avuncular.

But if you want what I believe to be the truth, it is not at all that I have this enormous self-concept. Self-assurance when I set out on something, yes; with a long substantiating record. But I do not regard myself as some kind of genius. All this would be so much easier if I did or could. The truth is more unflattering to you.

I appear to bethis way and to seem this way because there is so permeating an i competence in the field, and in no case of which I know is the incompetent that in the rest of his life. I probably referred to political infantilism. It is true. Not of people who are in other areas literature or politically sensitive.

It is true that to really obtain any kind of mastery of the unquestionable fact of the political assassination more effort than almost anyone will invest in his lifetime is required. I'd say that I have put in more time and effort than more than 10 PhD's would require and there is so much I don't know!

But it is not true that this kind of time investment is needed to see through your former friend Frow or Farwell America or so much more you seem to take at face value. People don't analyze any more. All have preconceptions and with enough self-confidence and enough imagination all can see what isn't there and be certain of it.

I had some advantages over anyone else (almost) in knowing PA had to be a fake because I was cognizant of its first pretendedly clandestine surfacing. I tend to apply simple tests. Generality. If I look out the window and see rain falling I don't have to wonder. But if I'm told the water is voluntarily running uphill, can I not?

Those matters about which I have been in disagreement with others in the past have almost without exception been elemental. It was frustrating beyond conveying to try to tell you the feeling when I knew that good minds believed stale horseshit. Or that others, also bright, were not also dishonest, sick, self-serving or a combination.

The surest way to unpopularity is being consistently right. The surest thing in my mind is that only political immaturity (where there was also honesty) blinded all others to what in all cases was too soon true. Not genius on my part. Prevailing stupidity, blindness, immaturity, or of this subject an inability to think things through, to be logical, even reasonable.

You kid yourself often, including in this letter, as describing Woodstein, both of whom I know, as "Two dumb kids who didn't have their feet on the ground." They are not dumb, they had their feet firmly on the ground, and they were ~~confidential~~ - bribed with leaks to them. I have written this, long ago, from my own experiences to begin with. You are not in contact with the real world. And I remain essentially naive and trusting, odd as it may seem.

Your problem is not that you lack inside knowledge. It is that you can't discriminate. Between what is reasonable and possible and what isn't; between what can and can be expected to be counterproductive and hurtful and what probably won't be.

I also hold other views you may find simplistic. When I scan the political horizon I have considerable difficulty finding politicians who today are better for the country than Teddy Kennedy. Fuck his past. His present counts. But if you take the worst possible view of his past, can it begin to be as bad as those who were part of so many countless murders and maimings throughout the world, esp. in SEAsia? So why badger him? ~~For~~ Periodically in the past I'd drop a note, saying it required no answer, to his AA, named Martin. I am sure all were unwelcome. But I gave good information and advice with the probability of correctness so great I recall no error. I have never been in his office. I don't think

take the time, either, because the prospect of being really listened to is so slight. But I guarantee I could blow his mind, if it is not locked closed. And that I'd say nothing about having even spoken to him.

Time is another factor that makes me as impatient as I am with inquiries like yours to which I reacted so strongly. You didn't learn from Trwo. How many hot irons need burn your hands? There are my shoes to be walked in, too.

I am 61. I've lived 10 of the most hellish years on the work of which you know and 20, of which 10 coincide over what you would not believe in a novel. Our famous farming operation was ruined by low-flying helicopters, with disastrous and continuing results. My wife is as conditioned as Pavlov's dogs. And as innocent. It was also financially ruinous. I borrowed \$500 for a down-payment to the printer on my first book. I've not been able to finish paying him for the last because of the fortune out of which I've been gyped on all of them. It could not be a more organized operation, if it had been organized. I've never been out of debt in all this time. As I've been able to collect some of what is owed me -- and I would not declare bankruptcy -- I've paid my debt off. It is not something like \$7,500 only, about 20% of what it was.

At this point I was interrupted by a lawyer who is making an effort to collect more than \$4,000 a single wholesaler owes me, plus interest.

We live below the poverty level, on two days of ^{min} wage income my wife has each week, plus the small income from books that in effect I continue to borrow from the printer I've not been able to finish paying off. In short, even a stamp is a real cost to us. At my age, and with 5 mountain acres, I mow by hand with second-hand mowers, when as currently I have pulled a muscle and when a bad back and arthritis and bursitis don't make it ill-advised.

But I persist. I sue, I research, I write and only infrequently as I abed after 4-4:30 a.m. I put in a day that would kill most people I know in an effort to complete what I think you can recognize as one of the largest tasks a man has ever undertaken. I ask nothing on anyone (and I get nothing, except slight help in the form of copies from a few friends). I have at least six books well started, more researched and read for writing, some going back to 1965. I do what at any time seems to hold the possibility of being most useful.

In short I got at an intensity of which few men are capable and after long, long years of it, trying to be productive, trying to accomplish what it might be, trying to get things on paper and trying to answer questions from people all over the world because I recognize their sincerity and feel an obligation to meet their genuine desires. It is rare when one is considerate enough to include a return-addressed envelope. This while broke and past 61. Can you understand my intolerance of what is really thoughtlessness, people like you not using your heads to really try to think things through and asking me to spend time doing their thinking?

None of this takes into account an amount of work, often daily, you would not believe possible to get where we are on the Bay case, without a cent coming in from it and without all my expenses being paid. We were the subject of an exhaustive tax audit. The auditor simply couldn't believe that I would travel across the country, go down to New Orleans, over the Dallas, back to N.O. and then come home and spend less than \$100 on myself in 30 days. Would you live this way? Or be tolerant when you have for years to be able to cope and to be able to work?

So, try my shoes for a while, David, and try stretching your own mind a bit, independently. What you swallowed from Trow should have made you vomit before he gave you a partial emetic. You stuff on Farewell America will make you ashamed if you are as bright and alert as I think you are. Sure you want answers, and you should have them. So do countless others. But how much of this can one aging, tired, overworked and broke one man supply and do anything else, including not losing his patience?

Sincerely,