

*Return to HED*

4 July 1972

Dear Harold,

For the past month and more, I have been in a medical crisis accompanied by severe episodes of depression. The origin is partly in the irresponsibility of doctors who treated me nine years ago, and even earlier than that, and partly in my own irresponsibility and stupidity in continuing to take prescribed medications ever a very long period of years, without understanding that I was becoming dependent upon cortisone and amphetamines which ceased to be available to me when the doctor concerned recently had a coronary and had to retire. The upset has been a medical and psychological disaster which has immobilized me for weeks, except for an occasional few hours, which made it necessary for my niece to come for me and keep me at her home in New Brunswick until yesterday.

Because of these circumstances, I could read your five-page letter only fitfully and under the weight of my own distress unconnected with the letter as such. I am nevertheless saddened by it, very much. I have spoken often with Jerry Pelicoff, Howard Reffman, Ed Williams about you, and through Jerry I think I also know something of Gary's feelings for you. I wonder if you really understand the profound loyalty and deep admiration every one of them feels for you? I think they would practically cut off an arm for you, if they could give you help or comfort by doing it.

Whether or not you can believe it, I too have always felt the most profound respect for your achievements in digging up evidence and in perceiving in the documents what others of us had completely overlooked. Why, then, have we not been closer colleagues and closer personal friends? Why have I not come to visit you after your repeated and generous invitations? Perhaps the time has come when I must attempt to explain. The truth is that I have found it difficult to converse and correspond with you because you take offense where I mean no offense, because you see things in a completely different way than I see things, and because I always find myself filled with anxiety that we will quarrel and that to prevent that I must walk on eggshells, become an obedient satellite in your orbit and concur in all your views and policies lest I am to be denounced and excoriated for words and actions in which I cannot feel or accept guilt.

On the issue of secrecy, I think we have a semantic conflict or misunderstanding. You have absolutely no obligation to share your discoveries with me. I have nothing to gain from access to the evidence which you make available under conditions of confidentiality except frustration and moral conflict, because I cannot use it or let anyone else use it and yet I feel that if there is one overriding moral duty it is to put all the evidence before the public as fast and as effectively as possible. In other words, I would honor and esteem you if you never shared any secret material with me so long as you made it public and made it count, whether in a magazine article, a press conference, or any other way. After the passage of years, your withholding of the Burkley death certificate and the withholding of the classified documents or the spectrographic findings just add up to withholding of vital evidence, granting of course the complete difference in motivation and ultimate purpose.

If I have criticized you for secrecy, it has not been for secrecy from me—for I knew and have always regarded as sincere your offer to share your findings with me if I came to your home—but for keeping your findings from public disclosure which would at least offer some chance of achieving what we have all labored and striven for: the destruction of the official case and its retraction by the government and thus the exonerating of Oswald. The things you have said about me, behind my back, have been mere personal and mere Freudian. They are not only wholly unfounded (except that I do admit to being middle-aged) but they are wholly irrelevant to this case. I am only sorry that you read such sordid and virtually obscene motives into my conduct, for it betrays your own need to disparage and destroy others.

Even from a superficial and distracted reading of your letter, one has to be struck by your bitterness toward a long list of people and your sense of having been betrayed by them—Gary, Jerry, Wecht, Crosby, Epstein, Liften, Ferman, Mary, Maggie, myself. This is not a list of paragons. Each is, at best, fallible;

some may have more serious and sustained weaknesses of character and judgment. A few may be really rotten apples, as I believe Lane to be, and Epstein, as you sensed long before I did (in the case of Liften, I believe him to be unstable and at times deranged).

But is everyone in a long-term conspiracy against you? I am not and I have never been. I can stake my life that Jerry and Gary love and revere you and have never wished or intended to hurt or disappoint you.

I agree with you that it is a time to be dispassionate and objective and to take stock of things anew. I am not angered by your letter, although I am truly sorrowful that you see me the way you do, for I knew that I have tried in good faith to be ethical toward all the critics and that I have tried to maintain our friendship, even if I could best protect it by keeping distance between us and breaking that endless procession of long letters in which almost everything that I did, or failed to do, was certain to bring your wrath crashing around my head.

Harold, I am not well and not my usual self at this time, but I knew that I am not a martyr and not a victim. Whatever my bed is, I have made it myself. My friends and my family are being wonderful and supportive toward me now, as indeed they have always been. I have no reproaches against any of our fellow-critics on grounds of personal injury or betrayal. With many of them, I am on the warmest terms, as I should like to be with you. With those with whom I have broken off relations, it has generally been on matters of principle where no reconciliation was possible rather than on any personal quarrel in which I felt that my interests had been violated. This is a generalized and perhaps simplistic description which does not go into qualitative or quantitative gradings and distinctions; but my and large, it is valid. I knew that you have suffered great inner torment and much material deprivation; this case has mutilated and crushed many who were or became involved in it, as it has also hurt innocent by-standers.

If only you could believe how much you are respected, admired, and loved, you would be comforted more than you knew. But you must be ready to see that for yourself and no one else, however eloquent, can make you believe it until you are willing. If you persist in thinking that Jerry or Gary—leaving aside myself and others—deliberately set out to hurt or betray you, then I can only tell you that you are doing yourself and them a bitter injustice.

I am, as I have always been,

Your friend,

