

Dear Sylvia,

2/3/81

Lifton has apparently added me to his list of personal personal attacks and he tried to do the same thing in a call to me last week. As usual, full of misrepresentations and distortions. Because he really did anger me by his viciousness and dishonesty and because I had the feeling he was making a self-serving tape for self-serving misuse, I hollered at him constantly when he would not give me a chance to talk, so he won't have much of a tape to use. I also berated him on the glaring fault in his time reconstruction: he does not account for the time required for the initial X-rays and pictures. If he did he'd have no theory of pre-autopsy autopsy. (Which if one tried to reason did not serve its purpose anyway.) So he has now switched to Ebersole, as I was sure he would and told him not to try, that the autopsy did not begin until 10:20.

I've done a bit more checking. The Manchester account of what happened on the plane, while not unequivocal, makes it clear that all the people on the plane were not away from the casket, that Lifton's insanity. So it could not have been toyed with then. If anyone would have dreamed of running the risk of getting caught when nobody knew who would be where and when.

At Andrews Manchester's account is definitive. There were two ceremonial guards, the one not used was between the plane AF1 was to be and the two helicopters (the one that took off had to have held LBJ, not the cadaver.) ~~xxxx~~ On the side of the plane toward the field there were so many people, including 50 dignitaries. On the opposite side nothing - and 3,000 people looking at the plane. So how much chance of any kidnapping? None! and nobody does any checking in the media.

If I didn't tell Roger, I have this coincidental destruction of the Lifton theory: the back gate through which he says the body was spirited in was locked. I learned this way: I have a neighbor who stays up late. He is my age and also has medical problems.

I asked him, if he were staying up that late, to tape Lifton on the Tom Snyder Show. That afternoon he brought the tape over and told me he was impressed the wrong way by Lifton. He also told me that he had been at the hospital that day because he worked there. He was an Air Force colonel. He is a vet and was then attached to the Air Force Radiological Institute, which was there. He said that the word went around about the assassination but he did not know the body was coming there. When he left work he noticed that the helipad was all lit up. When he got to the rear gate, the one he customarily used, it was locked - and there was no guard to open it. This was about 6:30. So he turned around, used the front gate which was delayed somewhat by all the commotion, and went home.

He volunteers that there was a forensic pathologist at Bethesda, said his recollection was unclear, but he'd have the name at home. He phoned to tell me - Pierre A. Finck. But then he admitted that rather than being AFRI Finch was AFIP, where he knew him.

If one takes the time, there is no point in Lifton's creation that stacks up factually. It is an enormous deception and misrepresentation and cannot be unknowing.

I think he'll not be happy about the Rolling Stone review that is coming. I don't know if Gardner is going to do one.

I don't feel badly. I'm just not able. My leg and foot are swelling more but I can also walk a little more and I can exercise fairly well. Yesterday 30 miles at the equivalent of 15 mph. I guess only time will tell.

In case Gardner wants to do a review and if you have it, the names of those who were with LBJ when he was sworn in and of those who were on the plane would be helpful because it will show a number of people on the plane and not with LBJ at that time and thus able to see the casket. I'd like to be able to refute even one of the swine's fabrications.

Excuse the types. I just got a batch of legal records to read and I've just finished skimming 6,000 pages on the destruction of records program for another suit. Nothing about the assassination is there. Best to Roger,

Sincerely,

28 January 1981

Dear Harold,

Thank you for your letter of the 23rd and for the copy of your letter to Charles Hinkle.

That Lifton tried to paint a very negative picture of me in his book came as no surprise. What did surprise me was that he then proceeded to describe his progressive disenchantment with Liebeler and to show that in fact all my warnings were justified -- to show that he gave Liebeler ammunition to use against the critics, and that Liebeler was determined to defend the Warren Report at any cost -- without even acknowledging that my advice was right on target. But what else should one expect from a slimy despicable bastard like Lifton?

I agree that his book will be harmful to the critics and harmful to any rational reasonable reexamination of the assassination. He is becoming a "star of stage screen and television" in his effort to promote the book. But I feel pretty sure that the book will fail, out of its inherent weaknesses and the preposterous nature of his over-all hypothesis. Indeed, Roger and I had a wonderful fantasy of reenacting the three-vehicle, two-coffin, exits and entrances sequence, with the Marx Brothers playing the parts, and laughed ourselves into aching sides and streaming eyes.

If George McMillan or anyone else of his ilk calls me, I plan to say merely that I haven't had time to read the book yet. As for the earthshaking discovery -- you may remember that he told me in 1966 that he had taken it to Liebeler but that he would not share it with any of the critics, which shocked and outraged me and caused me to break off all contact with Lifton for a long time. I deduce from his book that the "earthshaking discovery" was the alleged "surgery" reference in the Sibert-C'Neill report, which was hardly exclusive, since you and Fred Newcomb had already discovered it and written about it.

Much of the "disguise and deception" was carried out by Lifton himself, and no one can read the book without learning from his own narration that he was consistently dishonest, nasty, and self-serving. His own rope will be sufficient to hang him.

Harold, I do hope that you are beginning to feel better and more comfortable -- as you must know, all your friends including Roger and myself are concerned about your well-being and wish you renewed health. With warmest regards and affection,

Yours as ever,

*Sylvia*