

Dear Mr. Stamm,

2/15/74

Remember, please, that you have not walked a mile in my moccasins.

If this letter offends you, that is not my purpose. If it makes you a little ashamed I will think more of you for it.

You conclude a letter of factual error and questions the proper answer to which would be almost book-length by asking for extensive access to and permission to use my work - free - and conclude that "Any help you can give me will be very much appreciated."

Would you ask me for my car or my home and say you would appreciate it, too? Or would you shame at this?

What, pray, is the distinction?

That a minor industry of stealing my work has ~~grown~~ grown up does not make it proper, moral or ethical. and what if you were as genuine as your sanctimony pretends, you would also recognize, does not make it helpful to what we all supposedly want.

You may not have intended arrogance, but I can imagine no greater arrogance. Or insensitivity.

You people who long for answers and have none, who long for accomplishment and can point to none, who have done no original work and can't abide your failures; you who have limited yourselves to the printed word available to all, something thing you have proper and proprietary rights to everything on the subject.

I have spent ten agonizing, poverty-ridden years in which I got no significant help or support of any kind from a single one of you developing what you either steal or blantly ask for, for all the world as though it is your right. Or what is worse, for all the world as though you are capable of doing anything of real worth with it.

So you have "begun a study of the controversy surrounding the autopsy." Big deal. It hasn't been done, huh? And what, pray, will you do with this "study" when you have completed it? Circulate it without discrimination or judgement to those who also lack the knowledge for the task and include among them those with the most blatant record of thievery and misuse of the stolen? Help them hurt more than they have?

You may have confidence in your intelligence and ability to put it all together but what you lack is an understanding of your limitations with regard to fact. As an example I take your reference to what you say you have "come across." Indeed, you found a xerox of my work lying on your Bronx sidewalk? "Come across" indeed! Why do you fear telling me which of the crooks gave it to you? Do you think I know nothing about what happened? What I don't know is what those who got possession improperly did with it AFTER I made clear that I wanted no use or further distribution and why. There is no single reference you make to this that is accurate. I will not take the time to persuade you but I do tell you. In any context you are not accurate, beginning not only with how you got it but how I got it. It was NOT in the Archives. Nor was it merely "signed" by Burkley.

Getting this represented more than five years of hard work for me, including the filing of a number of lawsuits for suppressed evidence, endeavors in which you and others like you, who in varying degrees were better able than I, were silent and without help of any kind. Not even spiritual support. It is part of a very large and extraordinarily definitive book, by far the most definitive any of us has done, begun long before Sylvia's and Lane's were even out. It is three books written over the years, the first completed before Sylvia's and Mark's were out. Perhaps this accounts for some of my problems. I was so far ahead and made others secretly envious. But can you begin to understand why I do not want any part of a major work tampered with, or any use, honest or other, out of context or other, to dilute it? Can you understand that when those who are responsible for this theft from me and its subsequent distribution have read all or part of this book I have to have the most serious doubts about their intentions, recognized by them or below the level of consciousness?

I have no intention of answering any of your questions nor have I of helping your "study" or of giving you further explanations in the future. I will try to give you an understanding of how I feel and why I feel that way. And I assure you that I have answered these questions in what I have written and that they are the greasy kidstuff of the subject. We are far past such points except for those of you with longing, those who have lived comfortably and well instead of going out and doing the work that needed doing.

There is a side to all of this other than my resentment at being abused and exploited. It has meant that I have had to isolate myself and my work from those who were unworthy of trust and proved it, including several for whom I had had the warmest feeling and highest regard. Because I am not comforted by unimportant publication in insignificant journals and know it means nothing except to ego-trippers I do want this work to have context and meaning and impact that is impossible in publications like The Texas Observer.

I look at all of this other than as immoral and unethical, which I do in fact consider it to be as much as if others were to take my typewriter or my wallet. Property and rights to property are not divisible, undiminished by the character, whether it be literary or scholarly or any other. So, I do consider that I had a stolen property right and it was stolen first by one who accepted it in confidence, as a trust in the event something happened to me and who then, on at best childish whim gave it to others who had my wishes before them in writing before they made further distribution. The latter category includes Sylvia and Jerry Policoff. Jerry gave it to Sylvia after getting it from another. In an aside I also tell you that Jerry took some of my files and then denied having them, something we discovered only from his carelessness when there was later and urgent in-court need for them. I don't know what or if he has anything else but I know much is missing, that he had unlimited access and did ~~ix~~ lie about this in the past.

There is no way in which my work can be profitable for me. I have done what others have been unwilling or unable to do. "Others" includes a large number of people whose personal situations range from comfortable to great wealth. By "comfortable" such things as annual, two-month vacations. By "great wealth" I mean multimillionaires. Not only has not one of these people done anything to help me, not one has even thought to repay me my costs in getting documents for them when they knew I was without income and broke. I was actually deep in debt. (At its greatest, more than \$35,000 from this work.) So, when a fairly large number knew of the work, when some had read it and raved (Sylvia called the smallest part a remarkable tour de force of which no one else including herself could have been capable), and when for any the cost of getting the book printed was an insignificant cost, I find myself wondering about the great dedication all profess. Especially, of course, those of greatest wealth. If everyone is so anxious for that which you have to be known, why not have it in context, with an enormous amount more and the most painstaking documentation? A printing of 5,000 copies of the book of more than 600 pages (much more than a quarter of a million words) would when completed have cost about \$10,000. It would now be more. But for people of wealth is this a real factor?

It is for people of secret jealousy but not for the rich.

But even their time some of these lordly one of self-proclaimed principle and dedication would not give. I am aware of at least some of my shortcomings. I asked for help with editing. I identify none who refused, but I can recall five offhand. And the poorest had no problem going out and buying a new car. Three were millionaires or multimillionaires.

I believe that what bothered them was not the money or the time editing would have taken. They were galled by envy and would die rather than see someone else - not just me but anyone doing what they had been unable to - get any kind of public credit.

And what makes you think that this is the only area in which I have, in your unfelicitous description, "uncovered a nugget?" Do you really think that one stumbles on these things? Have you any remote concept of what each requires, if only in time and effort? There are other areas of importance and I have gone far in them as I have with the medical evidence. Some of these people whose purposes they will tell you are pure and exalted know of some of this work. They would steal it but they would not help bring it out.

I take this time not seeking your sympathy but in the remote hope it will deter what I assume has the possibility of being counter-productive. Whether or not you believe me it is a futility, hopelessly dated and based on misconceptions and inaccuracies which tell me how little you really know of what there is to be known. I also presume that you do not recognize this. However, your letter leaves no possibility of doubt about this. You don't understand either Cyril or Lattimer. You dismiss Lattimer's evaluation of this certificate as of little or no value. But if you make any use of it you will prepare the Lattimer's to prepare a case for public acceptance of it as of little or no value. I have it in context, with an enormous amount of new evidence. In context it simply can't be dismissed that way.

You also do not understand Cyril's limitations. Had I, my relationship with him would have been other than it was. But if you were not turned off by what he said after he saw the stuff you simply can't be turned off. I tell you this in addition, separately: he didn't understand what he saw and he knew much less after he saw it than I did without seeing it.

I write this in haste, with emotion, and when I really ought not be taking time for baby-stuff with all that others are not doing that can be done. Now you will take it I can only imagine. But please don't be using my work and please don't be so self-important as to ask the kinds of questions you ask when decent answers to them would require an inordinate amount of time that could be used for what might have some prospect of serving constructive purposes.

You might want to try to understand some of the causes of this emotion. I alone of the so-called critics have been without income for a decade. I began broke and with a small debt. Our circumstances are such that regardless of the weather, when my wife is not home the furnace does not run. Today, at noon, it is below freezing. I have moved my typewriter near the fireplace and I am using only twigs and branches for heat. The larger pieces are reserved for my wife's presence as long as I have the brush. Can you begin to understand the work required to trim and save this brush and then to cart it into the house for use? Or the frequency with which I have to stop to refuel? There is no night, no matter how cold, when the furnace is not entirely off. I get up several hours before my wife and have the house warm enough for her when I awaken her. I work those pre-dawn hours. This is a way for a man of 60 to live? You toy with this kid stuff of the past but on a day when I sleep late I am working at 5 a.m. I do not buy clothing and I am content to wear the castoffs of others, as I do. I do not tell you this seeking help and I want none. In recent months I have collected some of what I had been gypped out of. I have applied it to my debt instead of spending it on our need. This was my own election. I have never asked anyone for any help except in editing and then I was refused.

Perhaps you may find this kind of living not cause for feeling strong emotion when I am robbed of my work. Or of resentment at what you undoubtedly did not recognize as a self-important, arrogant letter. You undoubtedly feel you have decent and pure purposes. What you do not understand is the lack of knowledge you suffer or the possibility of hurting rather than helping what you are interested in. We are far past the appearance of the report and the political situation in which we now are is generally ignored.

The timing of your letter is particularly unfortunate because it coincides with independent efforts to steal other work for commercial gain. You are not responsible for this, but it does make me a little more impatient with sanctimony, self-importance, insensitivity and plain ignorance.

I have made no effort to sugar-coat because I want you to think all of this and all the ramifications through. What you do and do not do is your own affair and there is no way in which I can control it. What I can do is warn you. If the past tells me that this also is a futility, I have taken the time. I will not again. And I'm sorry that I can't justify the time it takes to correct my bad typing. Sincerely,