

10/27/71

Dear Cyril,

Your letter of the 25th reflects some misconceptions I want to correct, does not reflect the thought I hoped my letter would trigger, and is separated from the context I had in mind, whether or not it succeeded in conveying it to you. Please understand that I am not accusing you of a lack of genuine interest or integrity. Also understand that I am aware that with the conditions of my life I may succeed in conveying the opposite of what I intend from haste, from fatigue, from emotion, or simply from the length of explanations.

To date, I have neither mishandled you nor anyone else. I go as such a pace, I can't recall what triggered this reaction from you. But the fact is that rather than seeking a subsidy from those able to make it, if only in return for what they have asked of me and I have done ~~from~~ them, they have not paid what for me today are considerable sums. You'd be surprised at who some of these are and the extent of their wealth. When I have been forced to borrow, I've only once asked any critic to lend me anything. I'll never do it again, not with the humiliation I suffered as a result. I think you are entitled to an explanation, for you seem to have misunderstood (and I intend no subtle crack here, I mean it straight). I have to pay my bank, which holds most but not all of my indebtedness, \$1,250 a year on principal and about \$400 in interest. There came a time a year or so ago when moneys due me had not reached me and this money was due. Knowing this time was near and being with Bud, who wanted to talk to me, instead of leaving to go to see old friends who had always and would then have loaned me money, I asked Bud for the \$400 for less than a month. Part of this was then in the mail to me and lost, the other part due to be sent for some minor writing within a matter of about two weeks and was then in the channels of payment within that corporation. Bud told me he didn't have it. You and I both know that is false. I said no more, not even about the money, unbelievably, Bud actually owed and still owes me, which is another story I'll no burden you with, but it has much to do with my attitudes. Well, I felt I had to stay and consult with Bud as he then desired, for a reason I do not recall, and thus I was not able to see the old friend from whom I had always been able to get the help to get over these recurring emergencies. As a result I had to make an extra trip to Washington within a few days, only to borrow the money. Coinciding with that, Bud again asked me to meet with him. I went first to the place of business of this friend of many years. He has a restaurant. He was ill and resting in his office. I waited for him to come out until the time I was due at Bud's, then I left and rushed to Bud's office, a fifteen-minute walk, getting there out of breath. He asked why, I told him and also said I'd have to leave by a certain time to get to see this friend, who I knew would be up for his noonday trade. But asked me how long I expected to need the money and I told him about two to three weeks, depending on how long it took the lost check to be found and the other to go through bookkeeping. He offered- I did not again ask him- to lend me this sum, I accepted it, and without having to rush back to my friends, stayed for the conference he desired. About 10 days later I got one of these checks. I deposited it, drew a sum for the exact amount, for my account would then cover it, and a day or two later, when Bud was not in, left it with his secretary, telling her that as soon as the other came, I'd pay the balance. Bud returned to his office, returned the check with a most insulting note about subsidies, and if you want to see the kind of humiliations over and above the poverty I elect to which I am needlessly subjected, I'll send you a photocopy. When, within the time I had estimated, probably no more than three days after this insulting letter, I got the second check, I mailed Bud the repayment in full. One or two other cases can expand this, but I regard it as unnecessary. I recall no other case in which I have asked a critic for any financial help I can show you thousands that are owed me by critics, literally thousands in the plural. But I ask for no money, and I do without. This also means that the work I do is thus wanting. Infrequently, a few friends send me minor contributions, when they can afford it. To the best of my knowledge, of the critics and friends of the critics, these are those least able to afford it and to put it on a different basis, these contributions do not begin to cover my actual costs in cash alone of providing for those who chose to come here and consult my files or for the copies of documents they ask of me. So, let the record be clear, I have asked no financial help from you. Let it also be clear that you have no obligation to help me financially. Whatever I said did not have this as its purpose. In a seven-and-a-half page letter I said much. The one thing I can

say and expect you to understand is that if I took this much time I had to have some serious purpose. You appear to have not detected it or to have avoided it or I to have made it unclear or hidden it with an effort to put other things into a context you also appear not to have correctly divined.

What I did repeat a request for, what you repeatedly promised me and have not given, you ignore. It is a couple of pages on spectro and n-a tests. I leave you with that, but whether or not you promised it, as you did, why if you have all this great sympathy for my plight, have I had to write you so damned many times without getting it to this day, after I have completed that writing? As I said, your telling me how great I am is something I do not need and can't serve the same purpose.

What does concern me is that you did not consult with me prior to initiating a request to see the pictures and X-rays, while you did consult with others who to your knowledge lack the knowledge I have. What also concerns me is that your attitude is like Haliburton's on climbing an app just to spit from the top, it was there. You are, perforce, doing little original work in the field. This is not to fault you. Your life and other commitments have precluded that. But ~~xxx~~ as a responsible man, after the passing of all this time, ought you not be asking what will happen if I am accepted and allowed to view this film? Can it be that you are so lacking in political understanding or the realities of modern life in the U.S. or the problems faced by those responsible for this monstrous miscarriage that it might be just a bit more than your being able to come out and say they do not support the official fiction or what I know if you see the genuine stuff you will be able to say, it destroys it? I have been telling you for more than a year that I have just this proof and these readings in my possession and I have been asking you, fruitlessly, to come and see it. So, aside from personal publicity, which all humans like, and a bit of public relations, what are the other possible consequences? I think you have given this no thought, I think you should, and I think, regardless of the odds, which can be argued, you run the risk of making of yourself another Garrison. This I would like to avoid for you and for us. You just haven't thought this through and perhaps may not be in a position to. But what is lacking in your letter is any inquiry about what I was driving at. So you neither understand it or, from your letter, want to. It is real, not imagination on my part. What the odds are can be argued, but are there any odds worth the risk if your seeing them can be counterproductive?

I will not again take the time of the first letter or that of this for further correspondence on this. You are a free agent can do or not do whatever it is that you want to do or not do. But you are now aware of at least one man's opinion that unthinkingly or for whatever other reason, which can include so unworthy a motive as an ego kick, you persist in doing what can be wrong. And hurtful. To this I add that I don't think you can name anyone as conversant with the political ramifications of this in the overall or specifically, from what I have already communicated to you, with the detailed knowledge of the medical evidence and what relates to it. I therefore ask myself why does Cyril consult with others and not me, and to this I can find no comforting answer. Hence on this basis alone, can you understand that I might hold some aprehensions?

I can't continue this indefinitely. There is much I'd like to address but each thing I do is at the cost of another, and at my age I have for too many years been working too long a day under too many adverse conditions and severe nervous strains. There are a few phrases you used to which I will make specific comment. "On the contrary, I feel that I have always been friendly and cooperative toward you during these few years." How about the converse? You have given me no information. I have given you much. You have been friendly in saying nice things, but of the things within your capability, this was the least helpful. Sneaking me this simple thing I asked and had to write for repeatedly without getting would have had some meaning. I repeat, to date you have not done it. In this context, I skip to what I saw at the bottom, "However, I never thought of insulting you by offering money." Come, now, Cyril. It insults a drowning man to point a pole at him? It insults me to ask if you can pay for some of the xeroxing I get done at the Archives that benefits us all, for some of the pictures I have shared with you, not the other way around. Let me add that

should, you now "insult" me by sending me a check, I'll return it promptly.

My reason for suggesting that you refrain and think is not at all because, to paraphrase your words, I think I am onto something big. It has to do with the consequences you have not considered and appear to be determined not to. I also suggest that it is not what I am onto but what I have and have in a written book, so you should also understand that it will help me, not hurt me, should you see this film and come out and make a stink. I have that book all written. Thus my reasons are the opposite of selfish. To the best of my knowledge I am not only the only one who has such a book, but the only one who can.

I don't think you want to think. I am more than ever convinced that you seek glory. But on the chance I am wrong, let me suggest that you ask yourself another question: is there anything that makes you different from all the others who may ask, and I assume that not Nichols will? Is there any basis for believing that there is more hazard in one whose credentials are as unique as yours and whose position is? Is there one other of your discipline who can duplicate you? I think this is part of what you should be assessing.

There is a question of whether or not you will or can be deceived. There is no question but that if you see any of the real film, you will appreciate at least enough of what it shows. That you can fully appreciate it is another matter, and can you wonder that I wonder that you have not taken the steps required to be in a position to derive full appreciation? There is but one possible source, and that is the one of which I know you have not consulted. You have been in consultation with those who can't give you this information, including one for whom my respect and admiration is without limit, but these are no substitutes for specific knowledge. Now, put yourself in my position and ask yourself if you would be without the question I have? On even the overly-simplified basis of motive?

If I have said I expect others to subsidize my work, your words on page 2, I am not aware of it. I think you misunderstood something. I can show you letters in which I returned checks from people I thought might not be able to afford what small sums they sent me. Nor do I think it relevant to say that because you have made no money from your work on the case, that is the sole basis for being able to help, as with making it possible for me to buy prints and xeroxes. And as I have been beseeching you to come and see what I have, as you well know, I have made my work freely available to others, in only a few cases with any restrictions. But in no case have I ever refused any serious critic access to all that I have, I have at my own cost supplied all copies asked of me (as very few others do) and also at my own cost I have arranged for the depositing of duplicates with those I have felt I could trust. So, in real terms, the question is not at all either of a personal subsidy, the offensive basis on which you put it, or of others helping the genera, cause with only profits from what can't be profitable work. But so that the record can be further clear- and this nobody owes me anything for, it is my own election- recently when I was preparing an affidavit to be recognized in forma pauperis I stopped calculating my debt when it exceeded the assessed value of my property, when it was something over \$30,000, and then did not include all of this debt. I have been without income for seven years. Do you doubt that like you I could make a decent living, could pick a few of the crumbs of life along the way? The one thing anyone, including you, who pretends any serious interest in the case does owe me is not to give me genuine insult, not the fraudulent one you suggested.

You know, it also comes with poor grace for you to protest how busy you are when you pretend a genuine interest in discovering truth. For example, in refusing to be a technical expert in a suit when I asked you, simply because you are busy. You are not as busy as I, nor is anyone else of whom I know. I say this not for credit, for that also is my election. Yesterday I worked almost 22 hours. And I've been doing this for seven years. So I have to tell a doctor the probable cost? I also wrote you and told you I had hit upon a formula with which we could both break the case wide open, and to date you have not responded, not even called to ask me what it is. Reverse the positions and ask yourself if you would be without question.

Without doubt I did personalize, but my purposes were not those you attribute. I cannot fairly say you are without some justification in taking it the way you seem to have. Unfortunately, I can afford the luxury of taking time to reread what I write, I work hours no sensible man would or should, and one of the inevitable consequences is a risk of mis-speaking, unclarity or giving the wrong impression. When yesterday I began working again an hour and a half after I had gone to bed, I ran such a risk. When I start work at 4 a.m. as often I do, which gives me only slightly more sleep, the same consequences are real, as I can understand. This can, as I also understand, lead to giving wrong or false impressions. My purpose, as best I can now recall my addressing that part, was to ask a searching of the soul, to ask if all the consequences could be only positive, if all those things others have done, including with their money (which each, without doubt, has the right to spend as he or she will) accomplished the purposes intended and whether, in fact, they could of. I also wanted and want you to know that I have not ruined my life for the future and for these many long past years for a futility, to have the whole thing ruined by anyone if I can do anything about it, regardless of the purity of motive of anyone. I think I used the figure of paving roads to hell. We have too many already.

Cyril, you are as strong-willed as you are intelligent and will do what you want. There is nothing I can do about that. I have, whether or not in the way you would like, undertaken two things: to make you the beneficiary of an enormous and costly labor by me (without asking for a cent in return, despite your gratuitous insult on this score), and this I have declined; and I have undertaken to alert you to what you will in time come to regard as a serious mistake if it achieves the potential that is possible. I can and I will do no more. This includes going without another minute of sleep to carry either forward, to give up constructive work for the same purposes. You will do as you will in any event. That you have not undertaken to even suggest you might be interested in knowing what I fear I read clearly one way: you don't care. Hence expect no more letters, even if solicited.

But this will not be my last word if you do accomplish what can in even the slightest degree be hurtful to what so many of us have sought for so long, for what so many have made real sacrifices for (and I think you do not fit in this category).

I do not know if you can understand my sorrow and regrets that it has come to this.

Sincerely,

Harold Weisberg

CYRIL H. WECHT, M.D., J.D., F.C.A.P.  
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OFFICE OF THE CORONER

October 25, 1971

Mr. Harold Weisberg  
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Frederick, Maryland 21701

Dear Harold:

I was rather surprised to receive your letter of 8 October 1971. I do not honestly believe that I have done anything to merit such a strong attack by you. On the contrary, I feel that I have always been friendly and cooperative toward you during these past few years.

If I did not inform you that I was submitting a request to the National Archivist to review the autopsy materials, it certainly was not because of any deception on my part. In fact, now that you have brought this matter up, I must say that I would have simply assumed that you, or any other knowledgeable critic with whom I have maintained some contact during the past few years, would have realized that I would be making such a request at the appropriate time.

Whether or not I will be deceived or fully appreciate what I would be reviewing, assuming that my requested is acted upon affirmatively, remains to be seen. In any event, I do not think that it is reasonable or proper for you to request that everyone else refrain from making any moves to review the autopsy materials at the Archives, simply because you believe you are "on to something big".


With regard to your impoverished condition, please be assured that I am truly most sympathetic. However, I would never have thought of insulting you by offering money. While it is true that I make a good living, I am not in a

Mr. Harold Weisberg  
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position to subsidize your investigative efforts (or anyone else's) in this or other related and similar matters. How you have come to believe that other people should subsidize your work is beyond my reasoning. This is particularly true insofar as I am concerned, for I have made no money from my activities re: the JFK-WCR issue.

I certainly continue to wish you the very best in your exhaustive investigative efforts, and I regret that you have seen fit to personalize this matter in the way that you have.

Sincerely yours,

  
Cyril H. Wecht, M.D., J.D.

CHW/mg