

6 a.m. either in the city of \_\_\_\_\_

# Fortas sees no plot against him

By BENJAMIN C. BRADLEE  
Executive Editor  
The Washington Post

WASHINGTON — Abe Fortas sees no sinister plot in the sudden events that cost him his prestigious job and reputation.

"It's just as if an automobile hit me as I stepped off the curb," he said late Thursday. "I wouldn't think the driver is a fiend or an evil man. I'm not the kind of man who looks for that kind of thing."

"This was something. . . . a quick simple series of events that occurred at a moment in time, June '66. The return of the check — I really delayed there just as an act of humanity. I had closed my mind to it all. No hits, no runs, no errors. And here it comes back to haunt me."

Fortas decided to resign "as soon as I became persuaded that this thing was going to go on and on."

Fortas could not pinpoint Thursday night the exact moment of decision. Was it Wednesday, when he actually submitted his resignations to President Nixon and Chief Justice Earl Warren?

"Hell, no. Before that," Fortas answered quickly.

"The days have merged. I can't really say exactly when I decided. It was not until I had made a statement to the court, a conference we call it. I didn't think of announcing my decision until I had made this statement. Not because the court had any jurisdiction or any power in the matter, but because the court is a sacred institution — like a collegium."

Fortas now thinks it was "a mistake" to delay a detailed public explanation until other members of the court could return to Washington from a short recess.

"Instead of being so damn duty-stricken," he said, "it would have been better to have quickly made a detailed public statement."

As for the future, Fortas said

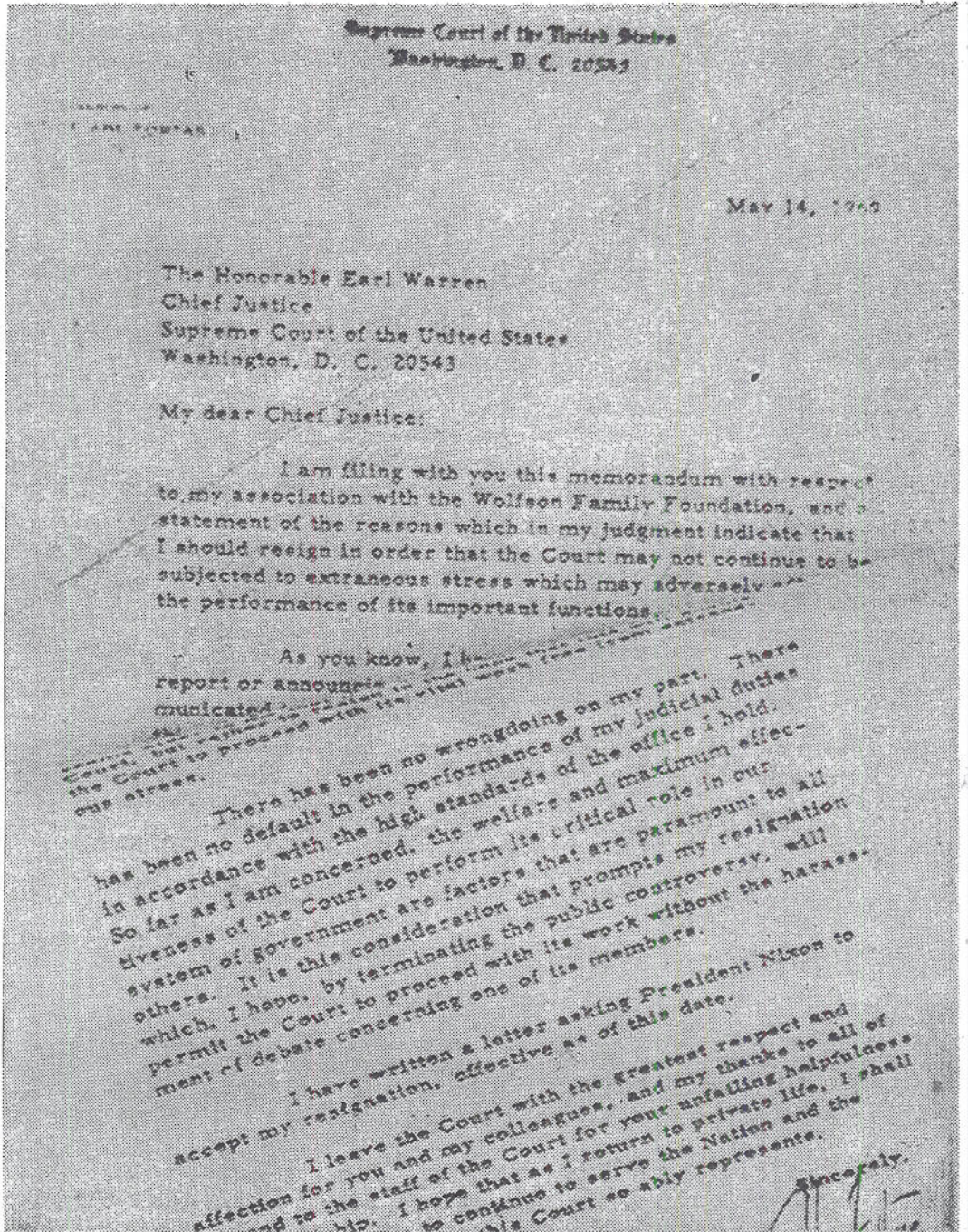
Thursday night "I just haven't the vaguest idea."

Reports have him visiting Israel, now instead of on a planned trip this summer, and

returning to his old law firm. He declined to comment on either possibility.

With a small smile, the former justice, an accomplished

violinist, said that Sascha Schneider, violinist in the famed Budapest String Quartet, had offered him a job as second fiddle.



A LETTER OF EXPLANATION  
Justice Fortas sent it to Chief Justice Warren.