

April 11, 1969

Frank McNaughton  
7202 Hilton  
Takoma Park, Maryland

Dear Mr. McNaughton:

I am addressing this letter to you in connection with a book on Whittaker Chambers that I am writing under contract to Simon and Schuster.

In Witness at pages 530-2, 535, 545-6, Chambers writes that you accompanied him to hearings held by the Un-American Activities Committee in August of 1948. These hearings, of course, were decisive in the evolution of the Hiss case and, to the degree that the Hiss case changed the face of this nation, are of historic significance.

Is there anything at all that you recall and are able, and willing, to pass on to me about these hearings? ~~or other broadcast~~

~~(Chambers, et al.)~~  
Mrs. Margaret Sherrod has told me that, quite apart from the Washington hearings, you would be a good source for information about Chambers during his years on Time. Since I gather from Witness that you had known Chambers for a decade before the Un-American Activities Committee hearings, and since he singles you out as the first person who raised his voice in his behalf, do you have any impressions or recollections of the man that you'd care to share with me (either for or without attribution)? For anything at all that you can tell me to help broaden my understanding of Chambers—your impressions of him as an editor, journalist, writer, poet, raconteur, luncheon companion, or whatnot—I assure you I shall be most grateful.

Yours very sincerely.

William A. Reuben

WAR:od

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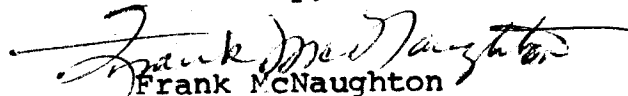
Dear Mr. Reuben

Your letter of May 19 was very kind; I appreciate it.

Please give me a little more time. I am going to answer it in some detail because I want to be as helpful as possible. If you have not read Walter Goodman's THE COMMITTEE, particularly on Chambers, I should like to call that section to your attention. It contains some information that, of course, was unknown to me.

I shall soon answer your inquiries with a memorandum directed specifically to each point.

Sincerely,

  
Frank McNaughton

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MSay 12, 1969

Mr. William A. Reuben  
37 East 63rd Street  
New York, N. Y. 10021

Dear Mr. Reuben:

I am glad to learn that you are doing a book for Simon & Schuster on Whittaker Chambers. There are at least two men in New York that you should interview, as both knew Chambers very well, both are wholly reliable, and both will give you a wealth of information. One is James R. Shepley, Publisher of Time; the other is Duncan Norton-Taylor of Fortune. I think they would be most helpful.

Let me begin with precise details of the famous hearings, and then proceed to more generalized observations about Whit.

I got a call from Robert E. Stripling, Executive Director of the Unamerican Activities Committee (I had covered it since its inception in 1938), stating that there would be a press conference in , I believe, a 3rd floor room of the Old House Office Building, that an official of Time Inc. would be involved, and suggesting that I be there. I was Congressional correspondent for Time Inc. I went. Present were reporters and Congressmen Mundt, Nixon, and a member from Pennsylvania, ~~as I recall it.~~ It was announced by Stripling that a subpoena had been issued for Whittaker Chambers, a senior editor of LTime Inc., to appear the next day. He would testify on Communism, or be asked about it. There was no mention of Alger Hiss, although the town was crawling with talk (underground) about Hiss and others. Much of this talk, I am sure, issued from the committee staff and members. Reporters (I recall in particular Willard Edwards, a sharp reporter for Chicago Tribune) wanted to know "Is Chambers a Communist?" Stripling hedged, it seemed to me, on his answers. It was then that I spoke up.

I stated that I knew Chambers and had known him for years, that he was a former Communist who had broken with Communism, that he had written some of the strongest anti-Communist articles in Time, that he had cooperated with any request of the authorities, and that he was a loyal citizen. I was asked and described his job at Time, his appearance, his responsibilities. Stripling pulled me aside then and told me that U. S. deputy marshals were on the way to Chambers' office with the subpoena.

I went to the public telephone booth on the second floor of the building, called the Time Washington office and had them get Chambers on the New York teline.

I told him what had occurred, that marshals were then on the way to his office, and not to try to duck the subpoena because they would send the FBI after him wherever he was. Chambers thanked me as if he had been expecting something like this. Then he said he was "terribly afraid" he might be killed in Washington. He asked me if I were going to the office and I said yes. The Russian General Krivitsky (check name) had been murdered some two weeks before in the Carlton Hotel, and I suggested that Chambers have his secretary reserve a room in that hotel. He seemed puzzled but said he would agree and would call me on the ~~the~~ tieline in one hour. I went to the office, and in an hour he called.

I believe he was more agitated than ever. He had been to my home on a number of occasions. I told him I would meet him at union station, but preferred not to. I advised him to take a compartment on the train to Washington, and told him how to find a quick cab at the Washington depot. I told him to drive straight to my home at 7102 Sycamore Ave., Takoma Park, Md., a suburb of Washington. I suggested that he carry a topcoat and briefcase, in front of him. He agreed. He arrived by cab at about 11:30 p. m., highly nervous, in fact somewhat unnerved. My two sons, Sam, 7, and Bill, 13, waited up to greet him and then went on to bed.

Whit had coffee and we talked about the committee. I gave him a thorough briefing on all members and on Stripling. I knew from Whit years before about the Hiss associations and he suggested that this was the target of inquiry. It was evident from his talk that somebody within the FBI had leaked to the Committee much of what he had told the FBI years before. There was some post-Yalta reason for bringing this information out at that time--reason that I never fathomed, unless it was to discredit all of FDR's postwar plans.

Within five minutes after his arrival, Whit asked that I pull the drapes over the picture window fronting on Beech street which led into Sycamore, and also that I pull the blinds on the other windows. I did this. He walked the floor a great deal, smoking an "underslung" S curved pipe.

He tried to type out a statement he had written longhand but was a hopeless typist. He asked me to copy it, and I did. He asked me ~~what~~ what I thought of it, and I said I wouldn't change it at all. It was the one "we are both victims of a tragedy of history" etc., his opening statement.

Since it was about 2 a. m., I suggested he get some rest and showed him his bedroom. He was back in 5 minutes or less and asked me if the windows were locked. I said No, they never were, but I'd lock them. I locked all windows. Then he asked about the doors, and I ~~was~~ locked them.

The house was a <sup>one-floor</sup> ranch style, and I could hear him pacing the floor and striking matches as he smoked. Within 20 minutes or less, he was back in the front room, saying that he couldn't rest. He seemed laboring under an overwhelming fear; he mentioned the Krivitsky murder several times; also that an old-time Communist party associate had been run down in the New York streets by a car. Finally, I said:

"Look, Whit, you're not going to be worth a damn tomorrow, if you can last that long. I've got a 45-caliber revolver here in this desk. It isn't loaded, but to relieve your mind, I'm going to load it and put it right here on the desk. I know how to use it. I can have the police here in less than five minutes. I'm going to sit here at this desk in the front room, and I'll stay awake. ~~xxx~~ You go to bed and get some rest of some kind. Nobody is coming in here, I guarantee you that. Were you followed on the way out here?"

"I don't think so," he said, "but I can't be sure."

"I don't think you were," I said, "or they'd have tried to kill you before you ever got in the house. Now go to bed."

He ~~was~~ lay down until about 5:15 a. m., but was restless and finally came back out. He said he couldn't sleep. I fixed bacon and eggs and plenty of coffee. Whit talked a lot about his early life, (see ~~Witness~~), about "enemies" in Time, Inc., about his fears, and his pervading sense of overwhelming defeat for the U. S. and all of its policies and freedoms. He also asked that I stay right with him at the hearings. After sending the boys to school, we took a Takoma Park taxicab the 8 miles into the Old House Office building and went straight to Stripling's office at 9:15 a. m. I asked Stripling if he had heard from Chambers, and he said, "No, but we're expecting him." It was clear that he didn't know Chambers, who stood right beside us. "Well, here he is now," I said and introduced Chambers to him. (I suggest you read Stripling's book of about 1950)

On the way to the hearing, Chambers saw a person whom he declared he knew as a Communist and asked me to sit between him and that person in the hearing room. I did so., over at Chambers left, slightly to his rear. On the way out, he asked me to walk right behind him and I did. We looped Washington in a taxicab, following the hearings, and wound up at the National Gallery of Art, where we spent the afternoon. Chambers then went home with me and took a late train back to New York.

The rest is fully reported in his book and the committee proceedings.

Two nights after this, I got a telephone call at home. The voice was strange, and the person said, "I'm calling from a public telephone, Number xxxxx (I forget it.) Go to a public phone and call this number." I then walked up to Edith's Delicatessen on Flower Ave., Takoma Park, and dialed the number; the man answered instantly.

"Frank," he said ~~XXXXXX~~ "you don't know me, but I know you. I don't know how much you use that telephone. I don't know what you talk about. But be careful. Be careful."

I said: "Listen, there are no secrets in that house. You must be FBI. There's an extension on that line, and you can put one or ten agents on the extension to hear everything that is said. I've got nothing to hide."

"Be careful!" then click. Two weeks later there was a similar call, a request to call a number, which I did and the same voice said, "Your phone's okay now." I was told later by a person who did work for the FBI that I was tapped.

(as a side angle: nearly 10 years after this, I was talking with ~~an~~ ex-Senator Gerald P. Nye of North Dakota, who conducted the Munitions Investigation of the early 1930s, which gave Alger Hiss his first job in Washington. Nye told me that his committee received an anonymous tip that Hiss had Communist connections; that he personally confronted Hiss with this information; that Hiss flatly denied it, but said "I regard this investigation to be so important that I would rather resign my position than see its work jeopardized." Nye said this convinced him of the untruth of his information, and of Hiss's reliability, and that he told Hiss ~~that~~ he would not request his resignation. Nye is now dead, but I assure you this conversation did occur. I was then handling ~~as~~ a TV program, Washington Exclusive, for Martha Rountree, and Nye was a regular panelist, among other ex-Senators.)

I happen to know that Hiss was an object of G-2 (military intelligence) attentions from the mid or late-1930s through the war years. Whittaker Chambers had made a full disclosure ~~xxx~~ of his prior connections to Time Inc at the time he was hired, and to Henry Luce, and had taken information to A. A. Berle of the State Department and to the FBI.

I always liked Whit, as a person. He was a brilliant conversationalist, with a sort of dry, sly wit, and as a writer he was almost without peer. As I recall him, he took a long time to organize ~~his~~ his thoughts, and then wrote effortlessly and smoothly with little or no revisions, not fast but steadily and clearly. I didn't know him as a poet at all. He had a catholic interest in books and world affairs, and a very all-encompassing viewpoint. I have no recollections of him as a raconteur. He talked only ~~once~~ a very few times about his underground experiences, but these talks would last for an hour, amazing in detail, deathly in their defeatism, freighted with fears and what was clearly a lack of hope.

If you have ever read Dostoevsky's Notes from The Underground, I think you will better understand Chambers. He believed, it seemed to me, that the U. S. and its people would not make the necessary economic and social and political sacrifices to stay free--that we had already lost the battle with Communism. It was a dreary lack of hope. A feeling that everything was lost.

It seemed to me, too, that there was a broad streak of paranoia in Chambers' makeup, and this is understandable. He had lived for years in fear; he had slept with a loaded shotgun; once, visiting his home at Westminster, Md., Pipe Creek Farm, I noted a 22-rifle and two shotguns ~~xxxx~~ standing within arm's reach of the kitchen table. They were loaded. It seemed that Chambers was convinced that "they" whoever they were would "get" him some day. But he would go down all shotguns firing.

It seemed to me, too, that he had lost some of the sense of reality, he had lived with the unreal so long. He ~~se~~ seemed inclined to view everything in ~~xxxxxx~~ terms of conspiracy. He seemed incapable of a rational, calm judgment of liberals and liberal policies. Instead, he looked upon liberalism as something of a conspiratorial offshoot of the Communists--a sort of a plot ~~to~~ to begin the "takeover" by indirection and subterfuge. He was right in that a lot of so-called liberals are too willing to excuse policies that are impractical; but what Chambers couldn't see was that it is ~~xxxxxx~~ possible to be a socio-economic liberal and still be ~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~ rational and ~~xxxx~~ sincere. He had the same virus that I noted in witnesses like ~~xxxx~~ Louis Budenz and others--they had swung from one extreme to the other.

I felt very strongly that Whit had lost his ability to make an objective judgment on liberalism and liberal policies, or liberal persons. He suspected all such as offshoots of ~~xxxxxxxx~~ conspiracies or of persons being "used" by evil forces. Not that he was a complete reactionary. I think he was just as muddled in his thinking about such matters as is the ~~xx~~ use of common terms to describe intricate thinking. ~~xx~~ He was undoubtedly sincere, but I think the conspiratorial virus had settled into his bloodstream and poisoned his outlook.

He needed verities that are not forthcoming in life; he needed something to tie to that was not provided by his strong, admirable wife, Esther, or his very fine son and daughter. Something more was required. He didn't try to define it. I would say that he was a man tortured, both inwardly and outwardly.

I can not perform the psychiatric service of analyzing this most complex man.

6

All I can say is that in many ways he was tortured, and much of his torture was self-inflicted, part inflicted by his past, part inflicted by his (to me) somewhat grotesque fears of the future. I saw him shortly before he died, bedridden at his farm home. It seemed to me that he had less hope but more inward calm than I had ever seen in him.

He was my friend. In many, so many ways, he was an ~~in~~ admirable friend; not physically impressive, but short and fat and a bit ~~is~~ slattern in appearance. A character right out of Thompson's Hound of Heaven.

But in so many ways, he was precisely the last person I would ever want to ~~see~~.

I hope this material will be of some benefit to you. I would appreciate, if you like, having a copy of your book when it is published.

Sincerely,

  
Frank McNaughton

May 19, 1969

r. McNaughton:

Sometimes a cliché is the best way of saying something. In this event, I want you to know that I simply can't find words to express how deeply grateful I am for all the time, pain and trouble you took, in your letter to me of May 12th, to set down your observations for me about Whittaker Chambers.

My gratitude doesn't stem from the length of your letter; although six pages of single-spaced typing is much more than I could reasonably hope for in response to a query like mine, and I am terribly grateful that you replied to me at such length.

What makes your letter so valuable for me, however, is that it is of quite another order (and I want you to know that, although I have interviewed and exchanged letters with several other persons, your communication is far and away the best I have had from the point of unbiased facts and solid nuggets of information -- that I have had from anyone). And the value of your observations (and in a real sense their uniqueness), for which your ability to see Whit Chambers clear and whole, to see him with both virtues and faults, or foibles -- and to let the witness reactions you yourself had to the man speak for themselves, without embellishment, justification or apology for being able fully to comprehend someone who was, as you put it in your letter to me, "this most complex man."

Since your comments were so tremendously valuable, I am encouraged to write you once more, in the hopes you won't mind too much my trying to clear up for me certain statements in your letter which I do not fully understand.

1. In the first paragraph on page two, there are several things I don't understand. When you say you told Whit not to try to check the subpoena, was there any basis -- apart from his saying he was afraid he might be killed -- for your thinking he might do so to avoid being served with a summons? Similarly, in the second paragraph, I find the references to General Krivitsky (whose case occurred some eight years earlier) somewhat puzzling. Do Chambers actually reserve a room at the Hotel Carlton? If so, was this done merely to put any possible pursuers off his

?

2. In the next paragraph on page two, I am not sure I understand your reluctance to meet Chambers at the Washington depot, or your suggestion that he carry a topcoat (in August) and briefcase in front of him. Did he follow your suggestions? (The reason I hope you won't mind elaborating on your original comments is that, from my reading of Witness (pages [529-32]), I had gathered that all the turmoil about whether or not to testify had taken place earlier, in July; and that, as a result of Whit's conversation with a cab driver about bees, he "felt comforted" by the time he arrived at your home.)

3. The security precautions that Whit suggested that night — pulling drapes over the windows, locking the windows, the apparent fear of being murdered inside your home, etc. — seem, two decades later, to be somewhat exaggerated to me; and I wonder (mainly because I don't know the setting or the neighborhood) whether at the time they seemed in any way overdone to you?

4. The conversation which you comment on (in the middle of page three) that took place between you and Whit at five in the morning seems so strikingly different from the discussion the two of you had upon his midnight arrival that I wonder if you yourself can in any way account for such a difference, if it was in fact that? I am intrigued by your report of this early morning conversation, but I can't get away from the impression — his talking about his general fears, his "enemies" at Time, his political pessimism, etc., etc. — that it sounds somewhat like the confession of a condemned man. Do you have any additional thoughts on this, in light of my reaction; or is there anything else you can recall about this conversation?

5. Also on page three, your recollections of his apparent physical fears inside the hearing room as well as what seems to me to be the implications of your saying that you "looped around Washington in a taxicab" before going to the National Gallery (which, as I remember it, is not much more than a five-minute walk from the Hill seems to me to indicate that even after his appearance before the Committee he was still fearful of some sort of ambush, or worse. (And this I find no recollection of in Witness, when Chambers talks of the sanctuary he found that afternoon with you at the National Gallery.) Or have I missed something? Did his anxieties disappear later on that day, or what? If there's anything else that you can remember about what, like it or not, is a very historic day, I'd welcome any other recollections you can manage to dredge up. (In this context,

4. e., my difficulty in getting any clear idea of Chambers's frame of mind later that day, after he had finished with his ordeal before the Committee, I don't know quite what to make out of Chambers's telling you he was returning to New York in contrast to what he said in Witness: that because his "nerves were spun tight" he "spent the night of [his] first day's testimony at the farm of friends at Olney, near Washington." [page 547])

6. I have trouble, also, figuring out the business of the mysterious phone calls you received two days and then two weeks after Whit had first testified (which you refer to at pages three and four). What puzzles me most, I think, is this sentence of yours, "I was told later by a person who did work for the FBI that I was tapped." I infer from this that it was the FBI that was tapping your phone; but what puzzles me about this assumption is that the FBI wasn't (so far as has been disclosed anywhere) involved in the controversy at that stage, and, assuming that it was the FBI that was tapping your phone, why would the tap have been taken off in mid-August, when the controversy engendered by the conflicting testimony of Hiss and Chambers was just coming to a head?

7. At the bottom of page four and the top of page five you talk about Whit's occasional reminiscences in "amazing" detail of his underground experiences. Would such talks have taken place prior to or after August 1948? Would he have mentioned, or even hinted at, actual espionage activities? (Prior to November 1948, when he produced the papers typed on the Hiss Woodstock in Baltimore during his pre-trial examination in the libel action brought by Hiss, he has testified he never mentioned that espionage was involved in his underground work. And Robert Elson, who is writing Time, Inc.'s official history, has told me, based on his study of the archives, that Time's executives knew that he had been a Communist but did not know, until it was brought out during the Hiss controversy, that he had been involved in any underground spy activities.)

8. The "lack of hope," feeling that "everything was lost" and "broad streak of paranoia in Chambers' makeup," which you discuss in the first three paragraphs of page five, are comments that you make without putting these observations in any specific time context. (My comment holds true for all of your observations on page five, including your having noticed the rifle and shotguns at his farm in Westminster as well as your expressed feeling "that Whit had lost his ability" to be objective about liberals, liberalism, etc.) I find all of these comments of yours exceedingly valuable -- all the more so since all of the "good guys" in Witness (which includes you) are either unwilling to talk at all about Whit or are apparently

unwilling (to me at least) to concede that he had any human faults of any kind. That's why I should be so especially grateful if you could tell me which, if any, of your comments apply to Whit during all of the time you knew him, which attitudes might, for instance, have resulted from his experiences as a public figure in the Hiss case, which applied to him on Time before all the public furore erupted, etc.

9. On page six, the "inward calm" that you saw in Whit shortly before his death -- can you make any guesses as to what might have brought him this inward peace?

10. Lastly, on page six, when you speak of Whit as an "admirable friend," I would hope you might be able to spell out some of the kindnesses he showed to you over the years. (From your letter and his book I find many instances of your friendly acts to him but little specific evidence -- although I'm sure there's plenty of it -- of the kind of reciprocity on which any real friendship must be based.)

My putting so many additional queries to you is, I know, a large order; but I have done so in the same spirit of your original reply to me: that it is important to get at the objective truth about this fascinating, brilliant, history-making and yet fantastically complex human being who was Whittaker Chambers.

I assure you that, whether or not you find time to reply to all, or any, of the questions in this letter, I am deeply grateful to you.

Very sincerely yours,

William A. Reuben

1948

# FRANK McNAUGHTON & ASSOCIATES

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## MEMORANDUM

To: William A. Reuben  
37 East 63rd St.  
New York, N. Y. 10021

Subject: Answers to specific inquiries in letter of May 19, 1969

1. Regarding the ducking of a subpoena. I had no knowledge that Whit would try to duck it, but I wanted to take no chances of his panicking. I didn't know how far he had gone before the NY grand jury, or indeed definitely that he had testified. But grand juries are secret, silent affairs; in the House UnAmerican Activities Committee, of which I was never particularly impressed (concerns relating particularly to procedure and fairness,) everything would be hauled out into the open, counsel would not be allowed, and questioning could be merciless and incriminating by inference. I was sure Whit was aware of these things, and I felt that he might try to avoid service of the subpoena. I was wrong. He was prepared to testify, a fact that I was not aware of.

~~Whit~~ Regarding Krivitsky. That was a complete fog up of memory as to date. I had heard Whit, in the past, mention what happened to Krivitsky, but I admit that I was wrong as to dates in my first letter to you. I believe, but I am not sure, that a room was reserved for Whit at the Carlton. I have a recollection that Whit told me that a room was reserved. If it was done, [this was to throw any pursuers off the track.

2. I was not reluctant to meet Whit at the union station, but I had two sons at home to look after (being then divorced) and did not see how I would add anything by going to the station. I suggested, on my own, that Whit carry a briefcase and topcoat solely so that if someone did try to slug him or injure him he would have something in hand to ward off a blow. I think, and I felt that night, that Whit was always concerned that some time or another his "enemies" would make an attempt to injure or kill him. As I recall it, he had some newspapers but neither case or topcoat when he arrived. I simply felt that he ought to be able to ward off a blow if one should be directed at him, and I knew of his concern that sometime others would attempt to injure him. I felt that if there was any cause for concern, this was the time.

3. The Security precautions. They did seem vastly overdone to me, but Whit seemed ~~was~~ vastly concerned and nervous. There was always a lot of cleak-and-dagger in this case, and it began right there. My home at Sycamore and Beech streets ~~is~~ in a quiet residential ~~is~~ section of Takoma Park, was

one of the quietest of suburbs. I never gave it an idea that anybody would be harmed, but Whit did. I can't say that I was worried that night, but I did what I thought would give Chambers a feeling of security, and what he asked that I do in regard to shades and locks and windows. Yes, they did seem overdone to me. They seem so now. My only possible explanation is that his tensions were building up ~~on~~ him.

I don't think Whit felt at all like a condemned man or talked like one. That rambling talk in the morning is hard to reconstruct in memory. But as I recall it, Whit felt that Communism was following out a dynamism of policy, that the U. S. lacked any central direction of policy; that the Communists would ~~w~~ stick to their policies and make ~~the~~ sacrifices to secure their aims, while the U. S. would not; that we were more interested in materialistic affluence and this would prevent our adopting policies that would insure our survival. I can't, in retrospect, recall that Whit himself had any formulae to suggest. I don't want to be unfair to him in this appraisal. I think he basically regarded Russia as ~~an~~ tough-minded and the U. S. as soft in their vis-a-vis dealings and in their approach to world problems.

4. Re looping Washington by cab before going to the National Gallery. The gallery is a 5-minute walk from the Capitol. (The hearing was in the New House Office Building Ways and Means Committee Room.) I suggested the cab ride and Whit readily agreed, for the following reasons: a) because he had mentioned seeing ~~me~~ at least one definitely unfriendly known Communist at the hearings; (b) because he was very tense after the hearings and I thought a ride would relax his tensions, which it did; (c) because I felt personally that if anyone were "after" him they would be thrown off thereby. He seemed fairly relaxed by the time we got to the gallery 20 or 30 minutes later, as I recall it; inside the gallery, he seemed completely to unwind. I recall that he particularly liked some Rembrandts and Vermeers; we saw the Widener collection of Sang de Boeuf and other Chinese vases. Whit had a monumental knowledge of art and artists, and gave a brilliant commentary (as I recall it) on various artists and their works.

The incident of telling me he was going to New York, and then spending the night at Olney is only an *example*

of the complexity of Whit Chambers. It seemed to me that he was fairly relaxed by late afternoon when he left my place. The primary ordeal was over. And it hadn't gone badly at all for him. What he did was to spend the night with James Shepley (now publisher of Time) who then lived on a farm at Olney. (Incidentally, you should by all means see Shepley. He will be a gold mine of reliable information and you can depend on him.) I have not read Chambers' Witness, though I have a copy; it is obvious that when I thought he was returning to New York, he went instead to Shepley's.

6. Regarding the phone tap. The FBI always kept close check on the House Committee hearings and witnesses. Chambers had given statements to the FBI, it developed later. Wiretaps were common in those days. The FBI was in constant liaison with certain staff members of the Committee, I am sure. I think when I was drawn into the case by taking Chambers to the Committee and introducing him to Stripling, they put a tap on me simply to see what might turn up. This was right after Chambers testified. I think the results were so innocuous that it was abandoned.

7. Re Whit's reminiscences. These came after his original testimony. He never even hinted, much less mentioned, espionage to me. I knew nothing about any espionage activities until he testified in Baltimore, in the Hiss slander suit, and produced the so-called Pumpkin Papers and microfilm. And I don't think anyone in Time knew anything about the full nature and extent of his involvement until that occurred.

8. The comments (see your page 3, bottom of page) were made after the several original hearings and the production of the papers and microfilm, as I recall them. It seemed to me Whit was much more communicative after the original hearings. I left Time, Inc., in 1952 and the ~~part~~ discussions occurred intermittently between 1948 and 1952. I can not say that I was as familiar with all of Whit's opinions and viewpoints as many others in Time, and this certainly includes Shepley. What I am ~~trying to~~ giving you are my own impressions based on what I can recall of attitudes and viewpoints expressed by him. Here again, I do not want to be unfair to him. I don't think he had a devil-theory regarding liberals or liberalism; I think he looked upon liberals as misguided in many instances, and incapable of drawing the line between where liberalism ends and regimentation and repression begins. What I am trying to say is this: I think liberals were

somewhat suspect and somewhat misguided in Whit's opinions-- in other words, that he had reservations and doubts about their ability to see the end consequences of being liberal and supporting governmental social service programs and administrative law regulation of economic units. I don't know how the hell to express it. I think it should be said in Whit's defense that ~~on a~~ ~~streak~~ should not be wholly condemnatory of this streak of conservatism in one who had the history Chambers had. Here was a man who started out to be liberal; who latched onto Communism as the vehicle; who saw his dreams crumble into dust and who reacted by leaving the party and informing on them. Isn't it to be expected that he would lose a balanced perspective? I expect that term is the right one---he lacked a balanced perspective. I have never thought that Chambers sought to deliberately injure or destroy anyone. I personally am convinced that he hoped and expected that Hiss would make a public acknowledgement and recantation after his (Whit's) initial testimony, and save himself (Hiss) thereby; that he was shocked when Hiss did neither; and that he only threw in everything he had after he realized in the Baltimore trial that it was a duel to the death, between himself and Hiss. I don't think Whit had any clear view or understanding of the difference between his making a voluntary (albeit under subpena) public recantation, and Hiss making a similar confession of error after having been publicly named by Whit. But you or I can see the difference quite readily.

I do not think I am competent to chart which attitudes of Whit's resulted from ~~various~~ various aspects of his life. My own personal feeling, which I can not document, is that the greatest break in his life was when he broke with the party, and that that fact colored and influenced all of his thinking (and actions) thereafter. I look upon his testimony as the attempt of a tortured soul to purge itself of its demons, and ~~an~~ an indirect exhortation to others in similar torment to do likewise.

My personal feelings and impressions are that Whit's illiberalism grew more pronounced, more unyielding after the Hiss case.

The inward calm I noted in him was in ~~1954~~ <sup>1954</sup> when I visited him at Westminster. I think it came from (a) a realization that he was a very sick man & whose time probably was quite limited, and (b) the feeling that he had done the right and honest and decent thing by giving the country the benefit of his views of and experiences within the Communist movement. I think he felt that he had rectified, at least in part, any damage he might have done to his country; and finally, that he had at last come clean with his better nature. He had, in effect, stricken down the past.

10. Whit was a kindly, helpful and thoughtful editor who treated me well, who counseled me wisely in relation to Time style <sup>and</sup> Time requirements. He was very friendly and helpful to my sons, whenever he saw them, giving them small lectures on history and national affairs and books and such. There was no occasion when he was called upon or had the <sup>opportunity</sup> ~~for me.~~ opportunity to perform dramatic acts of friendship. But he was always a warm and kindly friend, even though we both knew that we had wide areas of disagreement in relation to national affairs.

Whit was one of the most complex men I shall ever know. He was absolutely, totally, irrevocably honest in the clutches. He was not two-faced. He was plain spoken when he did speak. He was inwardly tortured, no doubt of that. He was deeply sensitive, and most of all toward his errors of the past. If you can explain why such a brilliant person would swing wildly from one extreme to the opposite, then you can explain Whit. I think at some point, after many years of hoping that he could submerge his past or that it would just be lived down and go away (probably at the point of the grand jury proceedings or maybe precisely at the time of the House committee hearings), he decided honestly that his only salvation and the nation's welfare lay only in putting the whole matter bare. I don't know.

I hope this is of further help. I am trying to be honest and be fair to history and to Whit. How much good his public testimony did for the country only history can judge with finality. Have I now answered all of your points?

Sincerely,

*Frank McNaughton*  
Frank McNaughton

*I think Whit's book, from scattered reading I have done in it, portrays a very complex family situation in his youth. I wonder how much that had to do with the course of his life. Certainly, as a boy and a young man he had a pretty dismal life and some very traumatic experiences. How far did they go in making him the complex person he was?*

June 12, 1969

Mr. Frank McNaughton  
2615 Lake Ave.  
Wilmette, Ill. 60091

Dear Mr. McNaughton:

This is to acknowledge, with my deepest gratitude, the five-page memorandum in answer to the queries I had put to you in my letter of May 19.

You have indeed now answered all of the questions that were in my mind, and, once again, I am appreciative beyond my powers of expression for the amount of time, and especially for the thoughtfulness, you took in this, as in your original letter to me.

If you get to New York City at all these days, I should certainly consider it a great favor if you would give me a chance to buy you lunch or a drink. Among other things, this would enable me to thank you in person and also would afford the opportunity of exchanging views with you about a highly complex man whose personality apparently intrigues you as much as it does me.

With all good wishes,

William A. Reuben

WAR:cd

# FRANK McNAUGHTON & ASSOCIATES

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(312) 256-5066

December 17, 1969

(312) 256-2280

Mr. William A. Reuben  
37 East 63rd St.  
New York, N. Y. 10021

Dear Mr. Reuben:

If I am not too late, I should like to offer a couple of additional thoughts and one bit of information about the Chambers case. These came to me since I last wrote to you, and as I reviewed the case at odd times in my memory.

1. I believe, in retrospect, that Chambers expected that Hiss like himself would make a public confession and a recantation of the alleged associations. Chambers did remark that that would have been the best way out--doing what he had done. Chambers, I believe, couldn't see how, while this worked in his case, he being an editor employed by a private corporation, it might be ruinous in Hiss's case, the latter having staked out his position as a public servant in the field of international affairs. By a curious kind of myopia or something, Chambers couldn't see the difference and particularly the psychological difference in their positions. Chambers viewed Hiss's situation as if Hiss's position were the same as his own. I simply have the feeling that this was a large part of the whole case. And I do think that there was a world of difference in their relative positions.

2. I forgot completely to tell you of an incident that occurred in 1955. I was handling (monitoring) a television program (Washington Exclusive on Dumont network) for Martha Rountree and husband, Oliver Presbrey. It was set up like a U. S. Senate chamber and featured debates between ex - and sitting Senators of that time. One regular panelist was Gerald P. Nye, ex-Senator from North Dakota. He headed the famous Munitions Investigation of the early 1930s. Hiss's first Washington job was as committee counsel. Nye told me the committee received reports of Hiss's Communist connections, and confronted him with the charge. He said Hiss' stoutly denied it, but said that he regarded the committee's work as so important that, rather than jeopardize its work, he would resign. The Committee, said Nye, was completely convinced by Hiss, and rejected his offer.

Now---you have only my word for this. Nye is dead and can neither confirm or deny it. I don't know whether he was "imagining" the incident or not. I do know that he related it to me, on an occasion when we had Government Security as a debate subject.

3. My third point is--and this is in defense and support of White Chambers--that (unlike a number of others) he did not become a "professional witness," testifying before a spate of Congressional committees and bandying names around. He testified only in response to a sub pena, before only one committee.

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I think the No. 3 point should be made in Chambers' credit. He did not ask to testify. He told his story to the State Department (A. A. Berle) and to the FBI. The subpoena was the outcome of a "leak" to the UnAmerican activities committee.

With regard to Nye, it may be that his imagination was working on him after all of the lurid disclosures of the Hoss-Chambers confrontation, the libel suit, the pumpkin papers, etc. I don't know.

I offer these additions only because they may be helpful to you. I do hope the book is proceeding well, and let me know please when it is published.

Do not underrate Chambers as an intellect. He was brilliant and a brilliant writer. On many things he seemed to me mysterious, ironically cynical in some respects, but he had a fine mind. I think he had never really escaped from the hell that he went through as a boy and a young man. The furies still stirred him inwardly.

Sincerely,

  
Frank McNaughton