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Nov. 18, 1973

Dr. Allen Weinstein
Dept. of History
Smith College
Northampton, Mass. 01060

Dear Dr. Weinstein:

I noted in the N.Y. Times of Nov. 18, 1973 that you have at last obtained or will shortly obtain, the FBI files on the Alger Hiss case.

There is, I think a bit of information that should be preserved and considered that I will pass on to you. However, I wish you to treat this information, minor though it might be, with confidentiality. The background of the situation is of importance in a number of counts so let me as briefly as possible sketch for you how things came about.

After World War II, I attended the University of Chicago on my GI Bill. The university was still then in its helycycin days. Enrico Fermi was around, Edward Teller was about, Harold Urey still taught there. Stagg Field was very much in evidence and the first atomic pile in history had only recently been removed from the castle-like structure on Stagg Field.

In my undergraduate courses I found myself in several classes with one individual. This student and I would never normally have been friends. But we had several things in common that drew us together. Perhaps most of all we were both weekend boozers and enjoyed the rounds of pub crawling. We were both veterans and while the University was alive with veterans for some reason there were very few in a couple of my classes. Furthermore, John and I were older then average and both of us married with children (he had

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just recently been divorced). But perhaps most of all we shared to some degree a common political outlook. To put it simply we were about the only conservatives on campus. I must say that my conservatism was of a far more leftish and moderate variety than Johns' who sounded rather like the worst elements of the Chicago Tribune. But in that climate, there were many Henry Wallace progressives around, we naturally gravitated toward each other. John was John Lindop, a former air force man. Anyway, we also both suffered at the hands of the liberal establishment.

After I knew John a while I became aware of the fact that he was mixed up with a girl named Ellen Flanders. He had in fact got her pregnant. To make a long complicated and stormy story short he finally married her. Right from the start, Ellen became good friends with me and my wife and children. First off, she was an ideal babysitter. A big girl who loved children and cooking food, she was much in demand at my place. But, there were other reasons also. She was a brilliant girl, an intellectual but one with a very mature insight and experience. Many times baby sitting turned into bull sessions and we all stayed home to talk and visit. Ellen was brilliant enough that Dr. Edward Teller (later called "Father of the H-Bomb") wanted her working for him and she did for a while.

After a while I met all Ellen's family. Her father had several claims to fame. He was a brilliant theoretical mathematician who had worked on the bomb and who was close friends with the greats of mathematical physics. Dr. Flanders was also the brother of Senator Flanders, then a power in U.S. politics and a pillar of New England respectability in the U.S. Senate. Also Dr. Flanders had another claim to

*Donald Flanders M. Sara Murray; who was the sister of Mr. friend Roberta Murray
Ellen, Donald Flanders' daughter*

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notoriety. He was married to Mrs. Alger Hiss's sister.

For a while this and some other discoveries made me feel a little awkward because my anti-Communism was of the student militant variety. Unlike many Americans I had in fact seen international communism at work first hand. But, it became clear that Ellen, while very much a liberal was very anti-Communist. Also in time I was at home enough with the Flanders to speak my mind and I often met with a surprising amount of agreement. The only thing that seemed to pain them was John and his marriage to Ellen. It has in honesty to be said that John was a loud mouth and a bore. The Flanders were gentle, quite extremely cultured people.

I came in time to realize that Ellen shared with me a belief in the guilt of Alger Hiss. Eventually the issue came up in the Flanders household when I was there and in a most significant way. Mrs. Hiss was visiting her sister. I don't recall how it came up except that it was tactless remark of Johns. But Mrs. Alger Hiss did say, and say right out that her husband was guilty. Then she went on to say something more. She said that she had been forced to lie reportedly and in occassion under oath to protect her husban, she eluded to much more activity for the party than had surfaced, she said she could not go through it again, particularly the lies.

Looking back on it, I can see that this was an important admission and I should have made a note of all details, dates, times, addresses, etc. One reason I sketched in so much of the background of my association with the Lindop-Flanders was in part to explain why I did not do more at the time. I was hearing only what I had taken for granted to be the case so it

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had the "so what else is new" quality. I also felt very sorry for the Flanders. I also felt and still feel that I was privy to a private family trust.

After this event Ellen and I had further talks on this and related matters usually avoiding the subject when John was around in order to avoid listening to one of his outbursts. At no time after the evening in question did I even talk about the Hiss case to Dr. Flanders. On a couple of occasions Dr. Flanders came to my apartment, once to play the violin and other times to talk about cybernetics and the philosophical issues in science. I was touched and honored then as now by a visit from so fine a man and scholar. I also used to ask about the great figures of the atomic age that he knew personally. Naturally I came to know all the Flanders family.

Shortly after this, perhaps a year or so later I left Chicago. A few years later Dr. Flanders killed himself. Shortly after that Mrs. Flanders was killed in an auto crash so severe, unusual and unlikely that Ellen called it some sort of suicide.

I never saw John Lindolp again with one exception. I saw him on a street in Washington so old and ravaged looking that I passed him without recognition until later. John died suddenly one

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morning a little while later in his office. I paid a visit to Ellen in her home in a quiet little town near Albany, N.Y. a year or two after John had gone. I am convinced that neither Ellen, her sister or her brother have any idea of why her father killed himself.

Mrs. Hiss' admission is the important thing to get on the record. Now, with considerable reluctance I have put it there. I especially want to ask you to be careful of feelings. Ellen's life has been a cruel and hard one. She should be hurt no more if that can be avoided.

There is also an observation I would like to make. As far as I know Sen. Flanders was never hurt by his family association with the Alger Hiss's. It is noteworthy that Sen. McCarthy (much reviled these days) never attempted to hurt either Sen. Flanders or Dr. Flanders in anyway.

I personally do not believe that Dr. Flanders suicide was in anyway connected with politics. However many people loved and trusted Alger Hiss and have been unable to accept his role. Perhaps, however much I doubt it, that will turn out to be the case for Dr. Flanders also, I profoundly hope not. If in searching the records any such implication should arise, and it

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would explain many loose ends, I do not believe any good purpose could be served by hurting so fine a group of people as the Flanders children. I am certain you will weigh considerations of kindness in the balance along with the needs of historical objectivity.

You will, and future historians even more so, confront another troubling problem, more and more an agent such as Alger Hiss is of value not for the transmission of technical information or even state secrets in the usual sense, but rather for the influence he can exert on policy and also because he knows your strategy, your limits and the bargains you will make and settle for. It is a dangerous kind of espionage and one hard to define in law.

Good luck with your investigation.

Sincerely,
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