

From: [David Kraemer](#)
To: [Covid Affiliate Archives](#)
Subject: FW: One Person's Response to Communal Fear 6.24.20
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From: Morris Allen <mojo210al@icloud.com>
Sent: Wednesday, June 24, 2020 8:48 AM
To: MOJO210AL <MOJO210AL@aol.com>
Subject: One Person's Response to Communal Fear 6.24.20

WAGON WHEEL CENSUS 5 Cars 1 Dog Walker with 2 dogs RAIN

Have to be quick today. Have an 8AM meeting and was going to send out a notice last night that I wasn't going to write—but after an earlier than expected end to my night's sleep, I was able to get a full walk in. And when I walk, I think. So, here is today's quick thoughts. As some of you may remember, last Friday I included a fragment of a letter from an individual to his wife that was written on December 29, 1944 from Ft. Benning, GA. It detailed this Jewish soldier's first opportunity in life to speak with an African American about his experiences in addressing racism. Yesterday, my friend wrote me to both thank me for the use of the letter and to pose a question to me. They wanted to know what obligation they had to pass these letters onto their parents' grandchildren. "There are some details about my parents' life together that may not be necessary for their grandchildren to know about. Do I have an ethical obligation to pass them on?"

It caused me to ponder this question from a variety of frames. Indeed, I am asking those of you who are readers of these musings to share with me your own thoughts. Since I will probably pass any of them on to my friend, please let me know in advance if you do not want me to share your thoughts with them. But I am interested in your thoughts not for them so much—but for Phyllis and me. You see from 1970-1979 we wrote many letters to one another, and as I think I have shared already in these musings have many of them in bags downstairs. Indeed for Phyllis' 40th birthday party, I went through many of these letters to find the one where she took on Shulamith Firestone(zl) from her book "The Dialectic of Sex". Phyllis was aghast that an otherwise serious researcher and articulate spokeswoman for her cause, would have so mangled a Mishnaic source that Phyllis wrote her a letter to correct her reading. Oh to be young... I am not sure Firestone ever fully replied. But I digress.... These letters are mostly bland recordings of daily life written by folks who initially couldn't wait until summer camp and then in later years couldn't afford long distance calls while in college. But there are details in them that probably neither of us fully remember sharing with the other and that our children may not ever need to know. They hold no special research value, other than as part of a serious study of adolescent thinking in the 1970's if collated with thousands of other teens living through the same period of time. But they do detail pieces of how we decided to put our lives together both as individuals and ultimately as a couple. For many years, we had no intention of ever being a couple, so I imagine the letters beginning in the fall of 1976 take on a different tenor than those that preceded our initial decisions to see if this friendship should change course. In some ways those letters might be the most interesting to share and the most troubling to read. And truth be told—I have no idea if our kids have any

real interest in knowing these details.

On my parents' 50th Anniversary, they wrote their version of their story and printed copies of it for each of their children and grandchildren. It is a treasured volume, but it is a well varnished piece of work. It describes their version of their telling of their story. For example, my mother had a brother who died in his 20's in his barracks while serving in WW2. My mother never spoke about him—always saying that it made her too sad and that she didn't want to talk about him. Just recently my sister found news clippings on top of a cabinet in one of my mom's rooms in her Jerusalem apt. that my mother had about his death and the life he had led up until his passing. In addition, she found a letter from the base sergeant that detailed his belongings that were being shipped back to his parents. She held onto these clippings and letters for 70 years, and she never shared them with any of us. In finding them, my sister was given an insight into the depth of my mom's life-long connection to her brother that couldn't ever be shared with us. It makes me grateful to know that there must have been times during her life when my mom retreated to her room and re-read these clippings and letters and cried her loss out. These printed mementos of his life/death sustained her in ways that must have mattered—for she kept them. It has been a long time since Phyllis and I have read those letters and gone through them to laugh at our naivete and innocence, our dreams and hopes. But keeping them has provided a certain type of reassurance about the arc of our relationship and the paths we have taken to make it work (pretty well all things considered) Moving forward, my friend suggested that they wished somehow that their parents' had disclosed what they wanted to happen to those letters. Indeed, my friend suggested a course of action not so dissimilar to what my parents did for their 50th anniversary. "tell the story you want them to know, save the letters you want them to have and discard the remainder so that your children don't have the same problem I am now facing." So, friends—tell me----what should Phyllis and I do with this treasure trove of personal letters that were mailed from Lincoln, NE to Highland Park, IL; from Madison to Waltham, from Jerusalem to Chicago and probably from other places as well? They cover our lives from the time we were 14/15-to 23/24. If you like share your thoughts. If not, that is also ok!

Once when teaching a Bat Mitzvah student, I asked her about her day in school. She told me that she had had an assignment to ask her parents about the what they did during the Viet Nam war. She had forgotten to ask them the night before, but she said it was ok—"because I told my teacher that they were living in New York at the time and they didn't know anything about it." I love that story-not simply for the people it involves and the affection I have for all three of the players in it—but because it frames this entire piece. What should our children know about our lives and what are we obligated to share? And do Phyllis and I have to shred those letters or not? Morris

Sent by my iPad