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Dear Mr. McIver:

Thank you for your letter of August 2 which, I must confess did not surprise me. For years, I have warned Al Seckel that he was misrepresenting himself but he paid no heed to me.

Let me set the record straight, unequivocally, on Al's "career" at Cornell. He came to me after having dropped out of Engineering before the end of his first term with the explanation that he simply could not take examinations. My colleague, Prof. Will Provine, had told him that I had a wonderful collection of rare books in the History of Science. He immediately latched on to me like a puppy dog. It is an absolute lie that I ever said, publicly or privately, that Al was my best student. In fact, he was never technically a student of mine at all! He never took an examination from me, he never wrote a paper for me nor did he even show me through oral communication that he was anything but a dilettante who could fake knowledge of the history of science fairly well.

He certainly never graduated from Cornell University; never to my knowledge received an undergraduate degree and never, again to my knowledge was either a bona fide graduate student or received an advanced degree in anything.

I was also not surprised to hear of financial irregularities. As you probably know, he worked for a while with a rare book dealer in Los Angeles whose name I now forget but who, I think, may now be dead. I know Al had difficulties with him, and I suspect that these were not all the other person's fault. For a while Al served to buy rare books for me and I also used him to sell some from my library. It was like pulling teeth to get money out of him. One of the reasons I broke off contact with Al was that I began to suspect that he was defrauding me. I know for a fact that he has withheld money that he owes one of my children for some seven years now. Not being a lawyer, and being rather simple-minded, I would call this theft.

You may use this letter in any way you wish and have my permission to show it to anyone. I hope it has been of some use to you.

Sincerely yours,

L. Pearce Williams
John Stambaugh Professor of History of Science

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