



United States Department of State

*United States Permanent Mission to the  
Organization of American States*

*Washington, D. C. 20520*

September 26, 1988

Dear Mrs. Ford,

I have been away from Washington for the last three weeks and did not learn of your husband's passing until I returned to the office this morning.

When I was transferred to the USOAS Mission in the spring of 1985, I had the occasion to meet John on one of his periodic visits to the office. We had a brief conversation, but I was impressed enough to suggest that he return the following day to meet my boss, Dick McCormack, who was awaiting confirmation as U.S. Ambassador to the OAS.

What was intended to be a brief 30 minute meeting with the Ambassador, quickly became an all-day seminar on Latin America and the OAS conducted by John. The reality was that neither Ambassador McCormack nor me wanted John to leave. His knowledge and experience was superior to anything we had encountered in the Department or anywhere else.

The day after Ambassador McCormack was confirmed, he had me offer John a full-time position with USOAS. It was difficult to regard someone like John as "retired" and we had hoped he would accept it. When he declined citing his health, we were able to persuade him to become a consultant. This allowed him to regain his security clearance so that he could continue to give us his usual excellent advice.

It might interest you to know that we could never convince John to accept payment for his services. Although his letters, ideas, and counsel were worth more than all the money we were paying to other consultants, John always felt that it was his duty to try to help us rather than something to be done for profit.

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At one time, the Bureau wanted to discontinue John as a consultant, assuming we weren't using him since there was no record of payment. It took some quick maneuvering between John and myself to ensure that he stayed on the books - he was too important to the Mission and we convinced the Bureau that this was one unique instance where we were getting much more than we paid for!

As you know, one of the highlights of John's career was in 1951 when he and a colleague discovered a Soviet listening device planted in the Great Seal of The United States at our Embassy in Moscow. John had often wondered what became of the Great Seal after he had returned it to the U.S. After some research, I located it in the Office of Diplomatic Security here in the Department. John was surprised and delighted to see the Great Seal again, and it brought back some great memories of his earlier exploits. John was profuse in his thanks but he shouldn't have been. It was a small token of appreciation to someone who had given so much over the years to his country and to his colleagues without asking or expecting anything in return.

Please accept my condolences.

Sincerely,

*Russ Wapensky*  
Russ Wapensky