

14 April 1952

Colonel Wm. W. Bessell, Jr., USA
Professor
Head of Department of Mathematics
United States Military Academy
West Point, New York

Dear Colonel Bessell:

Receipt of your letter of 29 March 1952 is acknowledged.

First, as to the official presentations, I am sorry you had difficulty in scheduling my talks and am glad to learn that you were able to eliminate them by cutting down the proposed two fifty-minute periods for each lecture to one of eighty minutes each morning. The arrangements you indicate are quite satisfactory and I think they will work out nicely. A 5-minute break about midway in the lecture should be sufficient to give the cadets and me, too, a brief rest.

Second, as to the extra-curricular talk on Tuesday evening, 27 May, I am glad to find that you think it will be of interest to the officers and ladies to listen to a talk on the subject of the cryptographic aspects of the Bacon-Shakespeare controversy. I think some of the members of the English Department would also find it of considerable interest, if not of practical use in their field, because, as you have already ascertained from previous correspondence, I am probably counted by the Baconians as being among the unbelievers and infidels.

I have examined the draft of the announcement you propose and am returning it with some changes, which I hope will be acceptable. I thank you for the title "Dr." but I am not entitled to it, although the custom has grown up around here and it is difficult to suppress. I note that you refer to the talk as constituting "an hour of unusual entertainment." I flatter myself by accepting the characterization of the talk as being "unusual entertainment" and therefore writing to ask what sort of cruel and unusual punishment I might anticipate if I ran a bit over "an hour," say 70 or 80 minutes, because there is so much interesting ground to cover. You might give me a hint or two soon, so that I may "tailor" the talk accordingly.

General Irving's request that I be authorized to give the lecture has been received and I enclose a copy of the reply, for your information.

Very sincerely,

ENCLS-2

WILLIAM F. FRIEDMAN

P. S. I am a bit doubtful as to what might constitute suitable attire for the extra-curricular talk and would appreciate your suggestions. It would obviously simplify matters for me if business attire would do, but in case precedent dictates otherwise, I could, of course, appear in a white or black tuxedo, whichever you indicate.

Also, as to travel arrangements, I will advise you in a few days, or at least in plenty of time to let you know whether I shall come by private automobile or journey to New York by rail and then on to West Point by staff car, as you were so kind as to suggest in a previous letter.

And, finally, if anybody wants to use a handle other than "Mister" (which is quite satisfactory to me), it is proper to address me in unofficial conversation or correspondence as "Colonel," since I was in the Signal Reserve for many years - until The Surgeon General, 1941, declared I was physically incapacitated for active service, whereupon The Adjutant General, in his wisdom, threw me out of the Signal Reserve altogether. But I fooled them all by making a rather satisfactory "come back."

D R A F TILLUSTRATED LECTURE.

Post Personnel are invited to hear a lecture on Tuesday evening, 27 May, by Mr. William F. Friedman, one of the world's foremost experts on cryptology. His talk will deal with the efforts which have been made to prove, by cryptographic methods, that someone other than Shakespeare wrote the immortal plays, and will show how these efforts collapse under professional scrutiny. The talk will be illustrated by slides, and promises to be an hour of unusual entertainment. The lecture will be held in the Electricity Lecture Room at 1900 on 27 May. Guests are urged to be seated by 1855; the doors will be closed promptly at 1900. Mr. Friedman is chief Consultant to the Armed Forces Security Agency, and is visiting West Point at the invitation of the Department of Mathematics to give certain morning lectures to the cadets.

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