

9-21-2007

Marvin Scott Warned Me That Goffman Did Not Like People Writing About Him, That We Should Only Write About Dead People

Andy Fontana
University of Nevada, Las Vegas

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalscholarship.unlv.edu/goffman_archives



Part of the [Politics and Social Change Commons](#), and the [Social Psychology and Interaction Commons](#)

Repository Citation

Fontana, A. (2007). Marvin Scott Warned Me That Goffman Did Not Like People Writing About Him, That We Should Only Write About Dead People. In Dmitri N. Shalin, *Bios Sociologicus: The Erving Goffman Archives* 1-1.

Available at: https://digitalscholarship.unlv.edu/goffman_archives/21

This Correspondence is protected by copyright and/or related rights. It has been brought to you by Digital Scholarship@UNLV with permission from the rights-holder(s). You are free to use this Correspondence in any way that is permitted by the copyright and related rights legislation that applies to your use. For other uses you need to obtain permission from the rights-holder(s) directly, unless additional rights are indicated by a Creative Commons license in the record and/or on the work itself.

This Correspondence has been accepted for inclusion in Bios Sociologicus: The Erving Goffman Archives by an authorized administrator of Digital Scholarship@UNLV. For more information, please contact digitalscholarship@unlv.edu.

Remembering Erving Goffman

Andy Fontana:

Marvin Scott Warned Me That Goffman Did Not Like People Writing About Him, That We Should Only Write About Dead People

Dr. Andreas Fontana, Professor of Sociology at the University of Nevada Las Vegas, wrote this memoir at the invitation of Dmitri Shalin and gave his approval for posting the present version in the Erving Goffman Archives.

[Posted 09-21-07]

September 21, 2007

Dmitri,

I only saw Erving Goffman twice, both times when I was a graduate student at UCSD. He gave a presentation on gender in ads to about 300 people in the auditorium. He walked in and immediately pointed to the video camera in the back and firmly asked that it be removed or he would not lecture. The second time was later that day when he came in the graduate students' lounge at the sociology department. He asked a graduate student to point out Paul Attawell to him and once Paul was identified Goffman went over and shook his hand. Paul had just published a seminal article: Ethnomethodology since Garfinkel and Goffman was in 'frame analysis' mood. I published my first piece, a chapter for the Sociologies of Everyday Life on Goffman. When I was at UNLV, might have been 1978, Marvin Scott, a student of Goffman came to visit us. He told me that he loved my chapter and that I should send it to Goffman himself. He warned me that Goffman did not like people writing about him, that we should only write about dead people, but the piece was so good that I should send it anyway. I did but never heard from Goffman.

One of the professors on my doctoral committee was and interactionist by the name of Murray Davis who was a graduate student in S. Francisco when Goffman was teaching there (must have been Berkeley). He told me the story of how he was in Goffman's office to ask him to chair his committee when a policeman came in to tell Goffman that his wife had jumped off the Golden Gate Bridge and died. Davis went on to say that at that point he saw Goffman's "backstage" and he could never now ask him to chair his committee – as you know The 'insanity of the place' is Goffman's bitter reaction to that tragedy.

andy