

5/22/71

Dear Ja,

Don't think I ever told you that at the time JFK was killed I was working on two other books, one titled "Everything Happened". Combination "Mr. Blandings Builds His Dream House" and "The Egg and I". Well, a new chapter got written about 2 a.m.

By the strangest coincidence, I awakened at just that time, for no apparent reason. Wide awake. But it seemed too early. I'd been getting up about 4, even though I shouldn't, to work on two chapters I'm submitting as a sample of Agent Oswald, but it seemed earlier, so I looked at the clock, moved around a bit, smoked a cigarette and went back to bed. As soon as I did, I realized that at some time during the three hours I'd been in bed I'd sweated like hell. Cool night. Pleasant. So, I wandered briefly and was asleep, very fast, which is usual.

A little before 5 the phone rang. It has been my custom, since we started getting threats (none recently), to take the call in my office, where I can tape. I hurried out there and about the time I reached it my wife took the phone at the bedside.

It seems like there was about \$10,000 damage to our home at the farm, whence I had to move Lil on doctors' orders because of the associations with the helicopters that ruined our poultry operation. When we first moved (the house is large but incomplete), it was vacant for a while. Then there was some vandalism so on the suggestion of a neighbor down there, a businessman who employed the wife, I let a black man stay there in return for keeping the place up. Something far out happened, she died, and he left. Through the county welfare people another black man in need of a home learned it was empty, asked for it, I agreed to let him have it for \$10.00 a week, with the understanding that he keep the place clean and neat. He started out fine. Then his oldest daughter by a first marriage moved in with a shiftless husband, then this guy hurt himself and couldn't work for a while, things like that. That rent lasted almost two months. In 18 months we haven't gotten a cent, little as it was. That would have paid the taxes, etc. He has said he felt badly about irregular work and an alleged inability to pay. Such things as I'd asked, like moving Lil's flowers, always seemed to be impossible, so they never got here, either.

Last night he phoned me to tell me that there had been an accident the night before. A young man had driven a new car off the road and into a tree that in turn fell across the adjacent outbuilding closest to the house. It had been a broader house and was a well-built building, in good shape. He then said he'd come up tomorrow and do a little work for me here, like mowing grass.

Meanwhile, my sister phoned yesterday morning to tell me that my mother was in the hospital for surgery, pretty clearly some kind of fast-growing abdominal tumor. From noon on, with the operation scheduled for a little after that, I couldn't really work and I was afraid to go outside and do some of the many things needing doing because Lil has a

trick knee that has been bothering her, and I didn't want her to have to come for me when my sister called back. That didn't happen until after 8 for a variety of strange, largely mechanical reasons. Remember how we used to kid other countries where we said the trains didn't run on time? She couldn't get through. The surgeon seems optimistic, but until the biopsy they will not know.

First time the phone rang a bit before 5, some thing similar. Nobody on the line. But I was wide awake and thought I'd better get back to writing. One of my fine young friends is coming down from NY for the weekend. Great kid, 23 or 24. He was going to have one of his girl friends and a couple where the man, who had planned for the priesthood but felt he could not live with celibacy (his girl friend is as good an argument against it as I've ever seen). This second young man just wanted to take counsel with an older man. They'd been among the company we'd had for the big peace demonstration, and the kids kind of liked us. These three had minor emergencies come up, so this first friend was bringing-is, I guess a younger man, the fellow who went to Penn Station when I went to NY for the show from which Foreman fled to meet me. First kid's idea, because I had a sprained foot and he felt I needed a native bearer. When he didn't recognize me at first he wound up tailing my tail

as far as the subway, which there is quite a walk. Perkofin apparently had no monopoly on strange proceedings. So, having to go to the post office this a.m. and with these young people coming, I felt I'd better get to work or I'd get little done today.

I was up and about in second and the phone rang again. It was a considerate policeman in headquarters in the next county, where our farm is. He just told us about the fine, which, without knowing, I am certain was caused by some carelessness on the part of the tenant. In turn, that makes no wonder if he invalidated our insurance.

I'd been intending to write you because, with the things I've sent lately, I didn't want you to get the idea that with the hours you keep there is any special rush in responding to the few things to which you might. There is no need for response to most of it, and you may find the book of which I'd asked your independent judgement boring, or you might have no independent recollection of the few characters in it in whom I had interest. In fact, when I put my robe on and walked to the kitchen to make a pot of coffee, just before the phone rang the second time, this is what I thought I'd do before starting work, for there really is no need to respond to those things. And don't now to commiserate.

I'd have done most of this for a note for the future "Everything Happened" anyway.  
Like the title?

I think it could not have been more appropriate.

Best,