

Dear Paul,

12/28/76

After writing you about story possibilities in the files on me - nothing was farther from my mind in seeking them - I sealed the envelope and was about to take the mail out when I heard the teaser for Sterling Hayden on the Today Show. I took it in.

It was a promo for his book Voyager.

Interesting personal story, interesting character.

(Aside: my first OSS assignment was with a shop of Hollywood types. One of them stole the TOP Secret last job I did in that shop. It came out with Jimmy Cagney, OSS.)

As I was walking out and back through the snow I was thinking about Hayden and the others who were spy types and who were not hurt. They risked their lives in the sense of being killed, the end. Hayden was sent to Yugoslavia. Red. Countless others were in that area of Europe and in contact with the real reds in Western Europe. Some of them were actual Communists. OSS was wise that way: it recruited Communists because of what they could do.

I recall no case of real suffering by any of those who survived. I'm confident most by far did survive.

They lived or they die and that was it. And of course they are heroes, some passing the hilt in living it thereafter.

I had to fight to get overseas. By a fluke I had then a very brief tour of duty when that fluke kept me out of the invasions of Sicily and Italy. Once I was back in the US and bored and frustrated by the chickenshit of it all and getting constant extra duty by trying to get my overseas furlough - which I never did get - I finally wangled as I recall it six days. I went to Washington to volunteer for OSS, as a spy, to go to Europe. I was a Nazi expert, a cartel expert and I had a considerable labor background, including in dealing with the labor bureaucrats. I was not accepted. Then I got the mumps and was hospitalized. While I was hospitalized we invaded France. (They had me in a labor battalion for a while so I knew something like it was coming.) I started insisting that I be put to a useful wartime task. I threatened the doctor in charge of my case that if he did arrange this I'd drive him crazy by pretending I was crazy so I'd get a discharge and fight the war as a civilian. When he, worried because my back made me unfit for hard military life, did nothing I did. He saw I meant it so he arranged two things: a medical board to go over my records and for me to be sent to the personnel office of the Military District of Washington. It was when a red-headed lieutenant named Robinson saw my service record and my background that I got into OSS. It was his idea. He was offering me choices. I expressed a preference and the OSS personnel people agreed with it after interviewing me.

I see an irony in this, where the lingering cost of patriotism is with those who silently fought the silent war of the non-heroes. For those who survived I am certain we paid the ~~greater~~ harder price, had the greater suffering. It is still used to plague me behind my back.

Best,