

4/8/72

Dear Jerry,

By all means send the enclosed letter to George. If he is a man and wants to recapture what he can of his reputation, he may try to do a different and honest book. Although I don't think his publisher will go for it, if George is a man he may try. Don't try to persuade him. If it is to happen, it will have to come from within him. Also, don't expect either, his making the decision or his publisher going for it.

However, there have been a few changes. Former Department of Justice people are showing some doubts, from Ramsey Clark down. It is not hopeless on that score. They will have to realize what Hoover did to them first, and I think it is still beyond them.

Incidentally, the things about my past that I say are true. Those 20 kids did know that with 20 to one odds, and really more because some of them were pretty big and pretty rough, they had had enough when it was over. I was a terrible mess, and I ached for days. But I was back in school the next day and not one of them even bothered me again, nor did any ever make another anti-Jewish remark to me.

It is like I told you with Stoner, he leaves me alone, I leave him alone. Field's started it and you saw what I did. I could have gone further. Actually, before editing, I did.

Now, on the show where I did really mess up, for I should have gotten indignant early and forced them to cut me off or let me cut Frank up, it is not as bad as I indicate, for I didn't want George to know, if you send him the letter, that I did get as much from Frank as I did. I got him to admit that the FBI helped him in both Memphis and Washington, for example. All those reports he said he read are not Memphis police reports but those of the FBI. Bud is due here tomorrow and we'll see what he thinks. I got enough so that if I want to take the time I can sue Hoover for ~~xxx~~ them under the Freedom of Information law. Whatever was shown Frank must, under the law, be shown to me. Unless Bud wants me to I'm not going to even ask. And I will not make a fight for this stuff without knowing what I do not know that is being held from me not by the FBI because it would cripple my fight for the stuff. You see, I have already made such a written request of Hoover, long, long ago, and I can proceed any time I want to. The suit I filed and won is only one of those possible. I have wasted too much time in futilities and the time has come when I must stop wasting time. I've got to know what there is to know first.

And I've got to get to other mail on which I am behind.

Sincerely,

4/8/72

Dear Jerry,

Ordinarily I try and answer each day's mail as it comes to keep it from accumulating and interfering with other work. As you also know, I try to explain things to you as best I can. I may not always be right, but by now you know that for the most part I have been and after all this time you have your own ways of knowing whether I try to be honest.

The interruption in this case was a strange and unexpected one, one I did not expect and one in which I not only did not do well but made mistakes that three or four years ago I would not have made. In part it comes from recognizing an obligation to an old friend who was decent when most in the media were not, a man who is or at least was when I knew him and still think is a good man.

As you know, Doubleday has gone out of its way not to send me the copy of Frank's book. They know me and Frank does. He was, as I told you, quite hysterical when I took Azie and Dwyer, together, apart on that NYC TV show. They know I'm broke and won't buy the book, that I am into too much, and the longer it takes for me to get it the less familiar I can be with it when -IF he does - Frank confronts with Fields. So, I hadn't seen the book. They I got a call from WBZ, Boston, to ask if I would confront Frank on the Jerry Williams show. This is the guy I mention above. I knew him when he was on WBBM, which is a station you know, and I was actually offered a talk-show job at the station he left in Boston but decided against it. His producer said he'd airmail me a copy of the book, but I knew it couldn't get here in time and that if it did, with only one full day in between, I'd not be able to read it. So, when I went to Washington on the fifth to do a TV show I borrowed a copy, skimmed it by the index, by subject, and had enough ready if the show were to restrict itself to the fact of the assassination.

It didn't, nor did it go the way it was promised. Frank was there, along with the traditional publicity man, and in the last minute he cryballed on them and said he was afraid I'd make personal attacks on him. So, in the last minute, they asked me to please restrain myself and restrict myself to short answers and not to cross-examine him. At this point, and in the last minute, I had the choice between telling them to go to or seeing it through. The deck is stacked enough when one is on the phone and the other live in the studio. For the first 15 minutes my phone wasn't even live, so when I tried to say something it couldn't even be heard. By then he had gotten so many lies on the air that had I had the rest of the show uninterrupted I could not have caught up with them. Then they let him make long speeches about what had nothing to do with the killing, and when I got to ask him a question he couldn't answer, he wandered and they let him. What he says about the rifle is really far out. He knows nothing about it or its operation after all that great labor and investigation he describes. So, of all the things that for about 10 minutes he rambled about, beginning with "let me explain", I recall that Portugal was included and nothing about the rifle was mentioned. He actually says of a pump gun that Jimmy had it entirely unloaded awaiting his shot and then, to save time, he put a single bullet in the breach by hand and, because it takes longer, would have put the clip in later if he needed another shot. You know enough to measure Frank's inner desperation from this. And I'm telling you that although the station's eltered him effectively, I know for sure that the old whore was shaking during the entire show. He has been afraid of me since the New York show and since reading my book, in which there is, despite the cheap trick McMillan tried to pull, no real error.

When I saw how it was going what I should have done and what I have done in the past the few times this has been pulled on me is say look, we talk about the subject or we don't. To this minute we haven't. If we don't from now on, I'm wasting my time. I won't be part of deceiving the audience. So do we get down to it or do I say goodbye. And hang up if they still crap around. But I don't think my being patient and taking it this time will fool Frank. He is a pro, he had a pro at public relations taking him around, and I really think

he will not face me, even indirectly again, despite agreement. I think he lack the guts and knows how crooked his work is and I think his flack will know better than to run the risk. In any event, there is only one man still in the talk-show business to whom I feel the personal obligation I do to Jerry Williams and I have written him to tell him that if he invites Frank (as the ~~flack~~ flack will undoubtedly seek) and then invites me to confront (strict compliance with FCC regulations requires that or a separate show for me), I will accept subject to two things: fair division of the time and his keeping Frank on the subject. If he tells the flack this, they'll give that show up, mark my words. And as of today, I think we'll not see him in May. I so hope we do.

George, Frank and the others don't understand me or what drives me. I don't have to be broke and in debt. I think these assassinations have been a major part of tearing the country apart, that all the subsequent crookedness is part and parcel of the corruption of government, in the political sense, that has become so permeating, and that it is my obligation as a writer and a citizen to do what I can to help restore a decent society. Even the curse on me in publishing for various reasons, including making a success of the first underground book, can be overcome. I have turned down two offers in the past year, and one of them could well make a movie. It doesn't suffer the curse of political assassinations, which gets to the guts of society and government and, of course, of the saintliness of Hoove the Indispensible.

Doubleday's people as well as Frank know what I did on that show, Frank was so hysterical after it that he came running up to me. It looked so menacing to a kid in the audience, who had a tape recorder with him (and the audience became mine and lined up to shake hands after the show) rushed up behind Frank and turned the machine on. Thus I have that conversation, in Frank's voice, and at the proper time I will give Jimmy's lawyers a dub for it discloses a gross official impropriety. If he doesn't, they know me from other debates. After one on radio with Louis Nizer, four hours repeated four times, or sixteen hours, Nizer first got me kicked off a TV show to which we had agreed and since has been totally silent about political assassinations. He is a kind of New York Foreman. And Frank knows that after flying all the way to New York for the publicity. Foreman fled the studio when he learned for the first time he was to face me. They also know of earlier shows I did there. So, if they know in advance, I expect them to give up whatever show they seek on which I will appear, even though they need enormous exposure to break even on the deal.

There is nothing we can do about that. There may be nothing we can ever do, but I think not. I think they major nets will worry about the FCC and I have two letters from two of them so indicating, for I have raised the question in advance. We'll see.

Anyway, don't send me your copy of Frank's literary whoredom. I have a borrowed copy and Fields has gotten after them for not sending me one after a month. He told me yesterday they have promised to do it immediately.

Thank you for warning me that George now says that instead of beating me up he is only going to slap me around. He won't and he doesn't intend to. I can't believe he has changed that much from when he was a young man and I knew him, as I am sure I told you as a pretty decent fellow. He is in a bad spot, perhaps he is talking like this to be able to summon a little more self respect. I'll explain this, as I see it, in a minute. The other thing you report, that he feels I insulted his wife, would be a legitimate complaint on his part if it were true. I think it is not true and this is part of his psychological device for getting himself on an even keel again. He is in a bad spot for an established writer. I intended ridicule, not insult. Not ridicule of her but of him. I used the stupid thing she got herself into for a number of reasons. George will ultimately come to understand that if he had then thought this through he would have withdrawn from his contract before the appearance of Frank's book made it inevitable. On the other hand, I'd have to admit that with the rush with which I do everything, including not taking time to correct letters when my typing from high-school days is so terrible, I may have said or suggested something I didn't intend. I do not recall ever in my life deliberately insulting a woman nor do I

recall every starting it with a man. I usually take a lot, or think I do, before I react. The last time it happened was in World War II and I stopped myself as I was about to throw a younger and larger soldier overboard. I have always abhorred violence in any form. But when I have had no choice, I have faced it. Once 20 big kids jumped me in junior high school. It was a religious thing. I was the only Jew, they were all Catholics. They really beat me up, so badly I was sent home from school. But I didn't run and by the time it was all over, I was still stabbing and they had taken so much they never again ever bothered me, for the rest of junior high or in high school. That city then had but one. After that, in college, I fought compulsory ROTC all alone. It cost me my degree, but those were my beliefs and I was willing to pay and did pay the price. So, this is not new to me. And, as you know, for you are my source, George started it with me by that rubbish that is a much an insult to his intelligence as it was to James'. More, really, for George has an education and is more sophisticated. I never start anything and I never run from a challenge. George started it and he is hurting. The reason he has not answered me is because he can't. What the hell can he say, poor guy? He got himself into the kind of thing he didn't anticipate and not only came to realize it was dishonest but then couldn't do it. The alternative is that he doesn't know his business and Frank, after four years of time, beat him to it. Frank has left nothing for George, and Doubleday will leave nothing for George's publishers, here or abroad. About this I do not feel sorry. George deserves it. That his reputation is hurt I am sorry about, but that is his own doing and he has to stand on his own feet. His problem will be getting over it, and that will not be easy.

I don't think he will ask or accept help and if he does, I don't think his or any other major publisher will go for it. So, he is in a bind. But, if the time comes when we want to do an honest job, as I think I wrote you, I'll help him. You have no idea what I got when I continued my investigations after my book came out. It is one helluva story, thoroughly documented where documentation is required and more than reasonable justification where conjecture is called for, so powerful that I am not really spending any time pursuing that part. All this is Greek to you but believe me, aside from the story of the killing, it is a major sensation.

I'm trying to remember your letter without getting it out, for I am pressed for time and this is my (59th) birthday. I think you also said that George said I insulted him. If he did, this is a fair statement. I not only did, I intended to. It was the only fitting response I could make to what you told me he told James about me and my work and it was the only means I had of trying to get him to stop and think this whole thing through., not to rush blindly down a blind alley. He earned the insult and ridicule I snatched him. I have no apology to make for it. On the other hand, if I insulted his wife, then I do owe her, not George, an apology. Ridicule is one thing and with the commercialism she either originated or couldn't resist, that is one thing and warranted. Gratuitous insult of a woman, on the other hand, is not warranted. If George ever tells you what I said that really is insulting to her, I will write her a personal apology. I don't think I did this, I am so certain of it that I'm not going to take time to read the carbons (and besides, different interpretations are always possible), but if George ever gets down to specifics, not the crap I think he has been feeding you, I will not only write an apology to her but I'll send you a copy. If and when he calls you again, if you'd like, tell him this.

Meanwhile, even though he has been trying to con you and James through you, as I see it, I repeat what I said before, try and understand the bad position in which he is in so many ways. If he is rich compared to you and me, feel sorry for him, too, I wouldn't change positions with him for anything, happy as it would make my bank. And thanks for the warning I don't think George meant.

P.S. He did refuse to accept the letter I wrote him when he called me early in the morning and I think ^{sincerely,} pretty stinko. It has post-office stamps and his initials and I'm keeping it just that way. There was ^{Harold Weisberg} nothing insulting in it. It was really, as I recall, rather an expression of sympathy and a willingness to talk to him. But I can't pay the phone cost