4/16/71

Dear Gary,

With the end of the tax season, while it means we will live closer to constant financial crisis, I think we'll live a bit better in some ways. Certainly I won't feel I have to be close to the phone and will be able to get outside more. I sorely need it. With the lengthening day, I've gotten a little work in. Yesterday I transplanted a wheelbarrow load of Daylilies, of which we had too many near the house. They went along the road, where they'll hold the bank and where they'll make a pretty display as others drive by. Tulips will go where they had been. I've got two or three more loads of them to move this way. These twill come from the northeast side, where Lil can then plant an herb bed, something she wants. I've cleaned the road drain for the country and strained the dirt, putting it where I need to fill and the stones on the lane. I'm continuing the long-term project of making a full turnaround near the house and have it to the point where I can, really have begun to, eliminate the flagstones which can be treacherous in slippery weather. Where I'll put them I haven't yet decided.

Jerry phoned last night. He was working late. He'd have phoned you at the free clinic if he'd known the number. I didn't know if you have time to take a call there, so I told him to ask your schedule when he speaks to you again. I presume you are quite busy when you are there...The more I see of Jerry, the more I like him. He has been much help and has done everything well. He has a good sense of p.r., something entirely lacking at my publishers, who have blown more good chances than most books can expect to have come their way. Their persistence in refusing to do anything meaningful I find disturbing, especially because I can't understand it, I have difficulty thinking they've been reached, but if they have been, they would have done what they are. It is difficulty to believe they are this incompetent, this arrogant; or that they can have failed to learn, if it is merely that they do not know how to promote a book, that we do, and turn us loose. What is most difficult to reconcile is their financial dishonesty. Yesterday I finally got the check for less than a quarter of the remainder of the "advance" that, under the contract, was due at the latest 2/8, by which time the contract guaranteed pub date. It had been promised for the week before. And that only when I phoned them to say that is they were in a bind, I could understand that, but their silence I could not. They promised it last week, didn't send it, didn't phone to say they wouldn't, which is utterly unconscionable.

To date I haven't had my nominal expenses repaid. To this moment they've arranged not a single promotion, rejected all I suggested except the two trips to N.Y., and need I tell you that with a book like this, without some appearances it is doomed? This has been hard to live with, for with the PW review, they knew what they had, if they played it right. That in the SR assured it. Now the book will be met with the lined-up whores, who have already begun to fall into ranks. First Barkham, now Elmer Gertz, to whom I wrote yesterday. There will be more. They do not understand their adversary or his influence and means, and not because I didn't tell them. I was as forthright and as completely honest as I could have been a year ago when David was here. He then also agreed, as I believe the contract specifies, that they make their maximum promo effort. We did discuss a cross-country trip for me, and it was agreed to. Without such assurances I'd never have signed, and I was quite explicit on this. But because there seems to be nothing meanindgul I can do about it, unless I had the backing for taking the book away from them, and then some assurance of both distribution and promotion, this would accomplish nothing. And with this they are pretty much assuring that it will not go into reprint. This not only means it will not be available on a mass market and at prices poor people can afford, but it also means there will not be that revenue.

This is further tragic because I am convinced that this is the book that had a chance of doing the job for us, of recapturing the credibility the Garrisons and others had lost us, of turning on those hung on on the Ks. It is not a vulnerable book; it is solid, rock-solid. I havemet the acid tests. Foreman fled, and even with a corrupted format format and a gangup, Huie and Co. are done. Even Gerald Frank was husterical after that one, where he was with Huie. All of this does not mean I've given up, but it means there is little I can do. That little, and under great handicaps, chiefly of time and money, I will continue to do. I've made an opening in Congress, a weak one with a weak one, but an opening. By the way, letters from you to Mondale (Jasper), Nelson and Frazier might help. Jerry can supply all the PW and SR reviews you want, and I think Foreman's terror would be meaningful in writing them.

My knowledge and understanding have increased. This is the one we can crack, one where there are living guilty, and they can be found. The question would be of surviving it. But I am satisfied I know the general outlines now. And I have established a rapport with the pidgeon nobody else has.

But beginning early last week I had to do some rethinking and reprdering. I've reached a tentative decision that writing must again become top priority, and that litigation, with which I must persist, even if the nominal filing fees will be a real burden, must be ordered to fit with that. I've shifted the sequence of the writing from what I'd preferred and planned to what has the better commercial possibilities, have made a tentative exploration, it is so far encouraging, and if the proposal I've made has the commercial prospects I see in it I may yet come up with an ordinary publishing venture, where before the book is written there is a contract, with a large house, covering both hardback and paper, with agreed editing and I ream out an ms for professional editing. If there is no major intrusion, and if I can still evaluate my physical capabilities, I think I can now do AGENT OSWALD in a month, a little longer if I can make three trips that would help (perhaps all in one) after finishing the draft. It would be a lot safer to have the book done first!

Today I go to Washington for an eye checkup. When those headaches hit a while back and the eyedoctor checked to see if it was a restricted vessel behind the eye, he said I need refraction. The appointment breaks up the day because it is in the middle, Congress is in recess until next week, so I'll spend the morning with Jim going over a number of things that have accumulated in the past two weeks, and perhaps will check with a few silent TV possibilities on the way home. Tomorrow but has a nut party to which he has invited us. I'm going not only because I do not want to turn the invitation down, but because Mayhew will be there. Bud represents him in some legal matters, which may account for how that hot wind suddenly stopped blowing. Now it is almost vreakfast time and my mallards, my you will ~~xxxxxx~~ note, have just come demaning food.

Best,