

Dear Dick,

5/31/91

Please keep the content of the enclosed letter confidential for now and also what I say about it below. What underlies it is the apparent insistence of the Post's lawyer that they do what is close to unethical. Stone had written a letter to the Post he requested it to publish. Lardner wrote a response. The to me incredible deal that was made yesterday is that Stone would have a chance to eliminate the errors in his letter as shown in what Lardner wrote and in fact to read Lardner's memo and adapt his letter to it. Lardner was quite surprised to learn this yesterday and under pressure he has had to agree to the elimination of some of it and changes in other parts. The net result, inevitably, will be to make the bastard Stone look good and the Post and Lardner (perhaps also me) look bad.

When there is a reported \$40 million of Warner money in the film the amount that can be demanded in a spurious suit is considerable and I believe the defense costs also would be. ~~any~~ book publisher would face the same possibility. What a helluva pass when evil-doers have this kind of ~~possession~~ ^{money} merely from their wealth!

My own situation is that right now I'm hoping the family doctor can squeeze me in this morning so we may perhaps determine whether the troubles I'm having with the left foot are dangerous or ~~of~~ an emergency nature or of something like mechanical origin.

Just before this development in talking to Lardner I encouraged him to ask for time off to do the book. His response was that he had to have an agreement first because he cannot afford two months without pay with a son just entering a college, yearly cost \$20,000. He was to prepare a summary for Macmillan but has not had time.

I guess the real question is does this abort the book? Will any publisher run the risk?

another is do you know one who might be interested knowing the potential risk.

With what Stone has done and said after Lardner's story appeared, which was effective and is more than what he did at the Post, he has, nonetheless, made an honest book even more of a sensation. He ^{is} ~~is~~ The New Orleans papers his movie is really on Vietnam and that in effect it is fiction, quite the opposite of his earlier and definitive statements that it records history and will tell the people who killed their President and why.

He also says he is not basing the ~~book~~ ^{movie} on the Garrison book. This is the opposite of his earlier statements. He is using Garrison and his book and he can't revise the script to eliminate that. This can make for a safe formula for a book, ignoring the script except for what has been quoted, and centering the book on Garrison's, which is ~~so~~ bad and dishonest you'll have trouble believing it. You've seen a couple of samples. I know of no basis for any suit other than the ~~plain~~ right of confidentiality and property. With so many copies around - Time, which is to carry a story in the coming issue, got its from a N.W. literary agent! * reportedly thousands, it seems like there is no confidentiality to protect. Whether or not "property" taken from what is public domain ~~is violated~~

I've just heard that I have an appointment soon so I knock off here to be able to mail this as we leave. If you have any thoughts or suggestions I'd like to hear from you.

Stone's lawyers did threaten the Post with a suit, in writing. Me, too, and reportedly others. I have their letter to the Post, Stone's original letter to it and Lardner's original response.

Thanks and best to all,

Walt