

George Lardner  
5604 32 St., NW  
Washington, D.C. 20015

8/2/91

Dear George,

Sixty years ago I had <sup>no</sup> illusions about how Catholics, at least some, feel about the confessional. I had Catholic girl friends who regularly confessed the same sin and Catholic boy friends who laughed about what they interpreted as the priestly acceptance of their phony contrition.

I see no point in rearguing the Vietnam part of your outline and I'm sure - do not recall all the things we each said. I am certain, however, that the basis of my objection was because it played into Stone's hands <sup>to</sup> his strength, and that he would love it and make use of it over and over again. And get away with it. I also believed it was not necessary.

Thanks for the Sciambra memo. Was it the only one? Was there a shorter one of about a page relating only to Garrison's planned fifth-anniversary commemoration?

As I told you when I phoned, I had no recollection of your return of those memos. I do not believe you would lie so I do assume I have them. They have to be in the basement somewhere. I searched only my office. I've been avoiding the stairs because about six weeks ago the orthopaedic surgeon diagnosed spinal <sup>by</sup> stenosis (approx.) as the cause of my weakness in my less damaged leg. Then in walking about three weeks ago I sprained the other foot. Then I got the same spinal diagnosis. We've not been very active or using stairs.

You may not have had occasion to notice it but when we age and memory fails it does not fail all the same way. I recall the distant past clearly but my memory fails me on the recent past. I have friends of my age of whom this is also true. I've been told this comes from inadequate circulation to a particular part of the brain.

The last sentence of your letter of the 28th asks if I'd like all the xeroxes returned. Only those, as I think I said earlier, that relate to Garrison and to my own work. You are welcome to keep all those I got via FOIA.

Again the recent past and my unclear recollection - did I tell you I would be getting the script of a Ruby movie? If it interests you or the Post, as it does not in particular interest me, it was in today's mail. It is titled "Ruby," written by Stephen Davis and starring Danny Aiello. The only other look I've given it is to learn the length, 115 pp. If you(pl) or anyone else you know would like a copy I'll take it in town and get it xeroxed. Only I want not to be identified as the source. I do not want to be involved in any controversy about it.

When I find a suitable notebook to hold it I'll probably read it while resting during my early morning walking.

Sincerely,

*Lardner*

# The Washington Post

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Harold Weisberg  
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Dear Harold:

I got your letter a few days ago and was tempted to call, but I didn't want to get your blood pressure up. I've been preoccupied with the Gates nomination and this was my first chance to write.

You are wrong again in your conclusions about what I might say or write about Vietnam. I do not say Kennedy didn't want to get out. I do say he was not irrevocably committed to it more than one year ahead of doing it. If you think that, then you must take all Catholics literally when they go to confession and vow never to sin again. The McNamara-Taylor report, which Kennedy approved, did not recommend absolute withdrawal. It called for withdrawal of most forces, once the South Vietnamese had been trained properly, IF this could be done without impeding the war effort. LBJ wanted to get out of Vietnam, too. He approved almost identical language following a spring 1965 trip to Vietnam by McNamara: He campaigned against sending American boys to fight Asian wars, remember? But the situation deteriorated and Johnson did what he did. You can argue till you're blue in the face about whether Kennedy would have pulled out under the same circumstances or whether he would have sent more troops or some other option. The fact is that when Kennedy was killed, no one but mythmakers can say what he would have done. What Gen. Gavin told you he said could not have been locked in stone (as in Oliver). And I strongly doubt that Kennedy was as absolute as you have Gavin saying he was. Historian William Gibbons told me McNamara, for one, used to talk to the generals a lot about withdrawing just as a ploy, to keep the generals from asking for more troops.

I'm enclosing my copy of the Sciambra memo, but I find it hard to understand how you have been hampered by not having the xerox. I returned all of your papers to you, including the Sciambra memo, in a bag that I left at your doorstep months ago. If you want all the xeroxes back as well, let me know.

Sincerely,

