

Dear Jim,

12/1/81

Between affidavitting, getting all the firewood up to the house and under the overhang and just plain loafing by reading for fun for a change I've gotten behind in correspondence. Now that I've unloaded the most recent affidavit I'm catching up.

As usual, we enjoyed your letter of the 5th much, particularly spelling out that I'm sure you did for Howard and his associate, one of the things I had in mind when I made the suggestion to Howard. (I've heard nothing from him since before he went to the hospital and I've not gotten the copies of Oswald in New Orleans he'd gotten for me.)

While I do know what can make me any kind of expert, I think that simple common sense should indicate exactly what you say about artistic control. (Didn't I mention that to you? Hope so.) I can't imagine the Chinese not exercising at the very least enough to avoid being embarrassed. But as I remember it Howard seemed to think, or said that his people think, this was no more than something the Chinese could raise in order to avoid raising other objections that would be of more consequence.

I did write Howard after he was hospitalized but he is silent.

Nearest news from the Hartford Courant front: they've fired my friend who sent the story from the regular staff in Hartford but are keeping him on as a correspondent. This followed a 40-inch piece to commemorate on 11/22, used and subject of much praise. The explanation given has nothing to do with that. He missed a police story he should not have missed, first booboo, too. I don't have the story. Just learned yesterday.

Nothing new on Marina. I suppose she's backed out, which suits me, although I'd rather have proceeded with that simple request for tax records. I can't lay court and wouldn't if I could.

I recall the name Jessamyn West but do not recall her article on Marina and kids.

Not much new here. Drought breaks today, when I'm without car for three days while body work is being done. Good, soaking rain lasting all day. We've had one light snow and it hasn't gotten below 20 any night yet. At this rate my wood will be enough for the season. If it gets colder, may not be enough.

My cold was light and cleared up fast but Lil finally did go to the doctor, who gave her an antibiotic, which did the job. She's also had a trip up to Wilmington to see my mother (91 in February) who is just out of hospital from something her doctor did not expect her to survive. She's doing fine and not now thinking of even a rest home, which she can't do anyway because the pension and Social Security she gets are a few bucks over maximum permitted, at least in Delaware. Remarkably tough woman!

Things are nice and quiet. We were given an exceptionally good and large turkey by a friend who raises a few for himself and friends. (If he gets a deer, his wife told us yesterday, he'll work up half for us.) It was so large Lil had to measure to see if it would fit into oven. Over 14x19" or a big one.

Nothing new in FOIA cases because when the courts follow the line you see in the papers that isn't new and it is happening. The only hope for saving the Act is the House, where indications are that no amendments will leave the committee. Maybe there will be some kind of rider.

All the best from us both,

5 November 1981

Dear Harold and Lil:

Thanks for yours of Oct. 28, and hope your colds are better ~~than far from the same~~. Thus far I've escaped any suggestion of one, and am relying on our relatively mild winter to carry me through except for an occasional snuffle, which never has been serious.

With your word that Howard had had a tonsillectomy, I called him at his home and we had a nice talk. He seemed well but was still suffering some pain. He thinks they messed up his tongue somehow during the surgery, but it certainly didn't affect his speech. He was almost comically grateful when I told him I knew exactly how miserable one feels after this particular operation, how I had suffered far more from one in 1937 than from a major operation the year before in which they lifted my gall bladder, gallstones and grabbed the appendix while they were about it. He agreed it was better to have the tonsillectomy behind him and appeared to believe me when I assured him he eventually would recover from its after-effects and live happily ever after.

The Lucas man to whom he introduced me is not a writer, as I understand it, but a law graduate who is some kind of a planner and arranger for company operations. I think it was Howard who said during the conversation that the only thing they would insist upon with the Chinese was artistic control. So it's interesting that this point still seems to be unresolved in view of the fact that in the meantime this man, who seems to be Howard's boss, has been to China and returned. According to Howard he had a great time, got the red carpet treatment from the Chinese movie people, but I gather got no clearer idea of what they were willing to do than before he went.

Artistic control is an extremely vague term, considering what Hollywood is capable of doing in its name, and I must say I'm not surprised that the Chinese may be holding out on it. The last Lucas movie, Raiders of the Lost Ark, is one I haven't yet seen, but I understand it concerns a macho American archaeologist who cuts a swath through the Middle East in a search for the Ark of the Covenant, with a good deal of violence and bloodshed along the way. I simply can't see the Chinese turning an American crew loose to film that kind of yarn in their scenery and sets. Even if it were set in the pre-revolutionary past, when foreigners could get away with almost anything because of extraterritoriality and Chinese susceptibility to bribery, the present regime can't be expected to allow such an image to predominate in a film made on their soil. So unless Lucas is willing to use a story which will not reflect unfavorably on the Chinese by exploiting their backwardness and other weaknesses -- even those of the past -- this movie may never be made.

I hope to see Howard and his boss (his name's Mike Leavitt or Levit, I not sure how he spells it) sometime fairly soon in order to introduce them to a China travel expert who might be useful to them, and may emerge with a less murky idea of where things stand.

I was glad to see the piece you sent on the Hartford Courant, although it seemed less informative they it should have been. However, I felt between the lines an undercurrent of dismay among the Courant's staff and a definite impression that the new crew from LA were blustering and confused. Passed it along to Libby, who was glad to have it as she used to read it when she was in college. Haven't heard her reaction yet.

Glad you're keeping a file on Marina. Someone should in view of her lack of citizenship regardless of whether that lack has been of her own choosing. You may be right that no one is going to get serious about deporting her, but that doesn't mean someone could not get serious about needling her with implied threats to do so. Her independent behavior is fascinating. I suppose the question is whether it's spontaneous and genuine or whether someone has got her to adopt that posture, say one faction still trying to do another in. She is an intelligent Russian woman who has learned her wisdom the hard way. She does her own thinking and that cannot help coming through. That's not the same as being fully in control of her life. I suspect a big factor is her children. There's a writer up in the Napa Valley, Jessamyn West, who did an extraordinary portrait of her and the children several years ago which stressed the unusual beauty of the children. Ms. West ordinarily writes syrupy novels and articles for women's magazines (I think the article on the Oswald-Porter family was in McCalls) but she obviously was sincerely moved by Marina and the kids. She made it quite clear that Marina, at that time anyway, was a fiercely devoted mother and that the eldest child, a girl, was stunningly beautiful.

Everything fine here. I use two or three days a week for Hospice work and the rest of the time try to keep up with the house and catch up on things that have been neglected, sometimes for years. Time never hangs heavy. How lucky, as you well know.

All the best,



jdw