

2/16/71

Dear Phil,

The mail was heavy this a.m. As always this time of the year, when my wife has our only regular income, as a tax consultant, I picked the mail up at the post office. Unlike most days, when I usually get to work, this was a day of letters from friends. There is no conflict, for all of which whom I work are friends. But this was a day when only one of the letters had to do with work. So, home by 8:15, before resuming work I read and this time enjoyed the mail, then glanced at the papers, then back to work for which my head is not now sharp enough, no insult.

I'm deep in pretending I'm a lawyer. No lawyer ever had a more non-lawyer approach. I'm editing the draft of an original response of several kinds to one of the trustee and another lawyer's proposals. The length may be enough to cost me the case, but it will be a case judged in enough interest to read a third of it, even as a response/criticism. But, I don't know if the trustee will be interested enough to go, but. However, I will make a report, and if there is a conflict, that is my choice. I also think that the permanent Bushmeyer, by the Department of Justice, will make it a suitable appendix for the book in which that for which I see will be used. So, it can't be a complete waste.

You will give me some comfort in the story of your younger friend. The things that perhaps most of all have troubled me as with a few repeated operations and steady-aging aging. The trouble is not a long way in the past. It is of the day. Until the weather got bad, every other day I'd get a bit of exercise, 15-20 minutes of periods of walking, a few minutes with every morning. The ground has made it too unsafe and the winter weather has been consistent cold for me to even think. Infrequently I get around to the gym, doing odd and ends of household chores, but they are not real exercise. Last night I went to the gym (and immediately preceded the second spell of dizziness, but I'm going to again.

I generally do despite of poverty and the strong belief that I must do what I must, and that's enough for the other reasons. If I don't it will not now be done and because I've learned that I see more of what others do not than others do of what I don't. I believe it's important enough to have no misgivings about the cost, of which I am aware. The poverty precludes an expense of such kindnesses as your offer (one of two).

While I'm aware that such things are not to be dismissed and of the difficulty of isolating the cause, I do not feel it is caption I'm origin, and I suppose that is one of the reasons I'm a little bothered by it.

On the other hand, as I near my both birthday, I know, whether or not I'm happy about it, that a certain amount of this kind of thing becomes more inevitable and not unusual. Maybe my problem is that my mind is so much younger than my body. Less flippantly, that if one has basic mental health, the mind ages more slowly under the weight of heavy work and rough schedule.

Strange that you should mention a year off. When we gave up our farm, that promising operation having been ruined by lowflying military aviation (I set one of the legal precedents in this area), we dreamed of the day when the government would pay for the damage. We then planned to go to Baltimore, walk along the docks until we saw a ship (freight) that looked promising, ask if they had accommodations, and once aboard, ask where they were bound! But even then I planned to take a typewriter, for there were two books I planned before this subject hooked me. Now we can't dream that dream.

Probably I'm more fortunate than most men with similar problems and situations for what I suspect would be the greatest problem is not mine. I'm satisfied I'm doing something significant, socially useful, important, and that fairly well. Aside from the more external things, can't man want more? So, I've got a kind of tranquility through it all.

Speaking of satisfaction, I saw, as a copy of the pre-press review from the current South Beach South. I suspect tranquility as well it seems in the phrase, being in the mind, I saw, as a large house who told me of this review by phone and sent me this copy was then reading the book and went out of his way to dispute that (alone) and to say he had to go back and he had to put the book down. Which, match, I liked very much. He told me he was recommending the next day that his house make a reprint offer. I asked him if this might not be premature (and said I was content in his hands and with his judgement) on the matter: that I'd get a better offer if the book goes in paperback and I'd rather that and up, who takes the decision have the facsimiles in his hand and eye. I do not expect that to happen, certainly not now, the attitude toward the subject not having changed. But I can't have to tell you that makes me feel good.

Now I'm going to go to bed and go to bed an hour early.

For I hope you will feel good. Thanks. I presume from your silence that you've healed well. Love to you,

Sincerely,

H.L.

Omaha
7 February 71

Dear Hal....

If I were a physician, & you were a patient of mine...well, my nervous system would probably have more anxiety attacks to deal with than yours ever would have time for. Yeah.

But I'm not a doctor (of anything), and for once I rather regret it—because I would like very much to try and advise you in best way possible.

As it is, all I can offer is bits & pieces, some "maybe" kind of notes or remarks.

OK. But I do want to repeat my earlier proposal about your making a trip here to see our doctor, a man of unusual ability. I would prefer this arrangement to any other. So you tell me again you can't make it. So I tell you again that if you change your mind, just call me & say so & we'll arrange things here.

Blackouts, dizzy spells, or any similar experiences should not, in my opinion, ever be treated lightly or indifferently. At the same time, a precise explanation of why one may suffer them is often a very long time in coming. What I am trying to say is that a good deal of professional skill is sometimes spent without achieving adequate answers, but unless the best skilled men at hand are sought out and consulted...then perhaps not even a chance of success may remain. Now. Read again the paragraph I'd written immediately above this one.

One thing we've both experienced, you and I, is severe fatigue. Not just having a too long day, a rough week or month or three months—but what may gradually become almost a way of living, year after year. (I can't help remembering how surprised you were when I told you my age. Your response that I looked rather older than that, was obviously quite true. And nothing very mysterious, tragic, romantic, etc. about what you saw. In large part, it was the result of, the more-or-less logical result of, chronic fatigue.) I think I know something about what sort of performance you have in recent years expected of yourself, and I'm sure you know, and have long known, that severe or chronic fatigue was an affliction of sorts but that in any case one had practically no chance at all of doing the work you had set out to do without contracting this at times debilitating 'side-effect.' Quite so. No sure way to beat it.

But I've noticed, too, in your letters sometimes you mention that you don't understand it when a little rest or slowing down of your usual pace doesn't clear everything up. (Sometimes, of course, it does appear to do just that—then one is the more puzzled if at other times it doesn't!)

A friend of mine who for several years worked with me at the hospital, and on the same night shift, described his feelings and

experiences regarding this exact problem, in a long conversation with me last year. The "wearing out" (or, at least, "wearing down") of mind and body had been quite gradual. Indeed, it was only after he had left the job completely that he began to pay attention to such a curious phenomenon as began, then, to be defined. Even after weeks and months of change from the old routines he still tired easily, physical coordination was at times slightly uncertain, eating habits improved but didn't help him to feel any better, etc., etc. In other words, long after he had left the job he still seemed to suffer from those things, those forms of malaise, that had finally made him decide to quit the job in the first place!

It took him six months or more to begin to feel the weight of the old habits lifting. The process is still continuing. The fellow I've been describing is about 27 years old, no more than that, and he has never pushed himself the way you have.

I don't know how directly a story like the one I've just mentioned can be made into the story of any one other person. I will say that I believe what my friend told me, and ~~that~~ I myself would very likely have similar experiences if I were to do as he did. And, indeed, my own doctor has on several occasions recommended at minimum a change of work hours. The only time I took this advice was when my ribs were broken and I was unable to work anyway. And I know I'm being careless. The string will have to run out eventually.

The trick, as I see it, is to finish the work with enough time to spare. Or to throw up the work altogether, the moment it becomes less than absolutely essential to work at it.

Or maybe we should simply think about whatever we mean to ourselves a bit more often.

Hal, I don't know if a year off from everything connected with all of your investigations would help. I don't believe you would take the year, my friend, in any case. But I do think you should work a bit at convincing yourself that chronic fatigue does have marked long range effects, that it can deceive one (especially someone with so little time to dwell on such things), and that carelessness does after all carry with it some formidable risks.

And when you say, as in this last letter: "...what I do not understand and cannot explain to myself does trouble me" I know you are being as open and honest as you can be about this whole matter, and I instantly take you at your word. I believe you. At the same time, there is the faint image of an auto mechanic, maybe, commenting on an engine. A new part, you seem to be saying, if I can just discover what new part is needed to clear this irritation up, then I can get on with the real work that I must do. Maybe. But the string will run out one day.

You see, it's just as I said: bits & pieces. I still wish you would come visit us...so we could cart you off to our medic. Think about it. And remember: you can't trouble a friend. You needn't ever apologize for writing me about anything. My only regret is that my responses are never as good or as useful as I'd like them to be.

Warmest regards,