

9/16/68

Dear Phil,

Thanks for calling me friend ^{and} for your thoroughly enjoyable letter of 9/14;

I'll read the poem when I can concentrate. As you know by now, I had formed certain impressions of Martin McAuliffe that are consistent with what you say. I believe him, which, I think, he indicated Garrison didn't (and I suspect he could be right, though I do not know). I also think there are some things he can do that could help what I want to accomplish for us all. Perhaps some day I'll be able to ask him, when he may be able to consider it.

First, unless I said something I didn't intend, let me assure you my reference to "Grady" was intended other than you took it. You asked me to get something from her, if she would. I had already discussed this with her. I think what I had in mind is the confession that ~~she~~ ^{she} had not had time. I've travelled quite a bit (though not as much straight up and down and side to side!) since I saw you and have written much. For my own purposes, I still want to do this, for tiny clues are sometimes very important, and contemporaneous writing often holds them. My own attitude is that the past is but prologue. Especially in such matters.

Omaha is a strange place for some many people to come from or be in or near. Should not a poet have a better explanation than a non-fictioner?

On Harber, why not, if you haven't, just phone and ask if you might see him in the near future, learn if he is the guy and is willing? I'll send you what I can as soon as I can. I'm seeing a colleague who knows more and may have a picture tomorrow evening.

Alan Courtney's name first came to my attention some time ago in reading some FBI reports. In this case, you can't imagine how intellectually exciting that can be, because they are all double-talk. The problem is decided what they really say, what they misrepresent, omit, or just deliberately say backward. I have met no one who knows him, and it suddenly struck me that perhaps, having essentially the same philosophy, he might be otherwise related to Kent. My major interest in Si, at the moment, has to do with an aspect of the case - have never discussed with you, whether he has part of the files of a deceased character much more extreme than he, Guy Banister. Alan tied in with the Harber past, but now I do not really know.

If I have a Harber picture, it will take more time to get a print made than if my colleague has one. If he has anything that can be helpful, he may send it directly. I'll ask him to, because it should save several days.

I've just noticed your reference to Martin again. I think your letter helped, but I also think he'd have seen me without it. I think he is an interested man and would have in any event wanted to know what I wanted to know and perhaps what he might know the meaning of which he didn't understand. He may also have had a clinical interest in one with my reputation!

Right now I've no time to bring you up to date on what I've written and been doing. ~~Some~~ Some day, with a half hour or so when there isn't time to start something new. I shall. Until then or my hearing from you again, best regards.

Sincerely,

Harold Weisberg

Boatright
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14 Sept 68 (AM)

Dear Hal,

Yours of the 12th received, this PM. Yes, I'll try and locate Harber/Harper for you...and, if successful, try and arrange to meet with him. Odd, isn't it, that so many of these people--even myself, for that matter--should at one time or another be in or around Omaha? Wonder what it is, if anything, that serves as a constant. Are they all originally from here (like myself: I'm from Council Bluffs, Iowa) and thus apt to return periodically, or does this city or area have some special attraction? Coincidence and nothing more, perhaps, but still seems strange.

(No listing for Dennis Harber or Dennis Harper in current Omaha telephone directory--I have no City Directory at hand, but can check tomorrow at the Univ. or Public Library. There is a D.E. Harper/RR #1/Papillion listed in the tele. book--Papillion is a quite small community some 8 or 10 miles from Omaha that might qualify as a "suburb." A more or less farm community as I recall, but I haven't been out there for years. Tele. # is 334-5654, which means that calls are handled by the Omaha exchange. Maybe Jean and I can drive out there this week-end, just to look around. But I'd want to be reasonably sure of just who this fellow (Harber/Harper) is and what his habits are, before approaching him. If you or Garrison have any more specific information--such as a picture, kind of work he'd be apt to seek, names of any relatives or friends he might have in this area, etc.--the job would be a lot easier. But I'll let you know anything I can find out.)

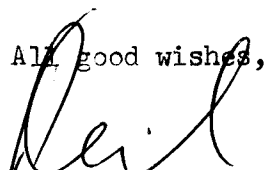
Alan Courtney I've not heard of; Si is, I believe, Kent's brother and was a lawyer in N.O. at the time I worked for Kent. He (Si) also did some work in the field for Kent--he was reporting to Kent about the way a local labor dispute (a strike, but I don't now recall what company) was being handled, the day I met him. I only met Si once or twice (at the Indep. Amer. offices) and I doubt if I would know him now if I saw him. I do recall, however, that his temperament was quite different than Kent's: Si is (or was, when I talked with him) not at all the forceful character that Kent is. He seemed shy, a rather quiet, good-natured fellow...perhaps used to being given orders by his brother. But that's about all I can tell you about him. It occurs to me, though, that Si hadn't the ideological committment(s) Kent & Phoebe apparently had...maybe he could be approached if Kent were not specifically the topic of conversation. Still, I suppose the Garrison investigation has made everyone with any political associations at all, especially of the Right and in N.O., pretty defensive. I doubt that any approach would be easy--I'm not even certain that McAuliffe would be interested in talking to anyone. I wrote him on your behalf, as you know, but neither of you has indicated any meeting took place. And certainly Martin would have less reason to avoid talking about politics than Si Courtney would--if only for the simple reason that Si would probably not want to risk unwittingly compromising his brother. (Incidentally, since you mention Lord Byron: I would say that Martin's interest in the Cuban 'Freedom' Movement--that is, the abortive attempt to overthrow Castro--was primarily idealistic...'Freedom should triumph over Tyranny,' etc. My friend was shocked and disillusioned by the failure of the ideal he had embraced. Catholicism turned out much the same way for him: it wasn't all that it needed to be for him. I'll enclose with this letter a copy

of "The Garden in the Sky," which was first published in the initial issue of Steppenwolf. Please read it carefully, and you will understand, surely, what I mean. Though at times gruff or seemingly insensitive in manner, now, McAuliffe is a deeply sensitive man who has understood the need for very high moral aspirations--and who has seen much that he believed in, or wanted to believe in, fail or be destroyed before his very eyes. Not a unique series of developments, I know--but each man responds in his own way to personal loss, and Martin has perhaps had to withstand more of this than most of us.)

I am, Hal, more interested in what you've written and in what you've been doing yourself...than in whether or not you've seen Brandy again. I'm glad she, in effect, introduced us because we've become, I think, good friends & I hope you agree. But neither Brandy nor I need to be reminded that this is 1968--not 1962. I should have made that clear, I suppose, when you stopped in Omaha to see me. Anyway, I should like to do so now: Barbara and Philip were a long time ago...and in their way beautiful. But to try and impose the past on the present & future is unwise. Let us leave the past to reflection. And, perhaps, to the poems I've already written.

Weather here cooler than usual for September, but we're glad to have it so. Great Plains summer heat infects the mind, I dare say, with a most dangerous lethargy. Almost nothing gets done. Hopefully, we'll not spend more than one more summer here. Jean has a M.A. program to complete, then we want to move elsewhere. Know of an El Dorado somewhere? Ain't none, you say? Shucks.

All good wishes,



Philip Boatright