

messing p. 2. Full copy under red

3/10/72

Dear Jerry,

I hate to take time for this but I must. And I ask that it be confidential, between the two of us only. I think the reasons will become clear.

From the time I get your letter with the statement that the Times had asked to be able to send its own pathologist in I have been both fascinated and worried. The fascination comes from the fact that although I can't be sure, I am of the belief that the idea did not originate with either the Times or Marshall. I knew this before Lattizer was ~~stuck~~ permitted in, the week he was ordered and two days before he went to the archives. It is one of many things that made me so damned mad when you just refused to stop trying to pump me over the phone and then continued with Howard. You must learn about such things that there may be things you do not know and if you know may not fully understand. This kind of thing, let me tell you, has forced me to stop informing people I have told as much as I could for years, and I may yet withdraw entirely into myself. I haven't time to cope with kid notions and I can't assume greater work or emotional loads.

However, your version was in essence the fact, and the variations in it could have come from several things, one an entirely different source, the other the number of hands through which it passed. If you recall that I wrote you on this, you can in prospect perhaps understand I was hoping you'd come up with more. I realized you had a confidential source. I didn't think it was tap-management of the Times, where something like this would have to be cleared, and I didn't think it would be on intermediate levels, and I was reasonable certain it was none of my three sources, none of which is accessible to you. So, as I think you can understand, this helped limit it for me. And I think you can understand that I was glad you called last night.

If you think back over our conversation, I have you one opening, if my hunch is correct, that you didn't take. I did not connect it with this, but I gave you the opportunity to say one of a variety of things. That you didn't say any of them means one thing to me. I am aware that this can be an error, but I don't think it is. I think for example, that you might have said you hadn't seen that person for a while, hadn't heard from him, etc. I know he gets to NYC regularly, I know he has connections with Yale, and one of the conditions of our relationship was that he do absolutely nothing at Yale. Do you realize now that this, in a different way, is what I was referring to in my letter to Duke?

I have had to learn much about Ned. In part this is because of the pain he caused us, the great amount of work and time he wasted, and in part because I am much more naive in many areas than those who know me through my work realize. I am too trusting. There is almost nobody I won't begin by trusting. I took Ned first of all on Gary's word, then because I and I both liked him. What I didn't realize until too late is something you probably do not know, and that is that he has deep emotional and ego problems, the probable origin of which are quite decent. But it drives him to the incredible. You have seen but a small sample. You have not had the super-arrogant display of ego I had here the night he blew, and that only because he had come to realize and had had to face what he was really up to, what was bugging him, and that he is not all he thinks he is on this subject.

The break between us, when it finally couldn't be avoided, came over exactly what I have long believed he would do, which is one of the reasons I have been insisting that he give me written assurance that he had not and would not break his commitment to me. That he has failed to respond to this in any way is not normal for an honest man, and I do think it is his intent to be honest. I think it is possible he has done this in more than one way, the one you can't talk about being only the more recent. The initial condition and one of the few I imposed it that he would in no area do anything with anything related to the content of this book without my express approval, and that he would talk to nobody. He asked and got my approval for one man, with the understanding that if he could attract the interest for which he hopes, he could then go to a second. That is 100%, and that was to be in confidence.

I don't think anyone, least of all you, has the slightest idea of what an appreciable part of my time has been wasted in preventing what is worse than what happened. You'll never know what I went through with Garrison, for example. There was a different approach, Sylvia's. She felt good fulminating against him, but it did absolutely no good at all, had no possibility of it, except to make her feel better, and it made the problem of coping with him more difficult. I did prevent what is much worse than anything he did do, and all that is good in the record he made is my work. In court in DC and in his own record of the trail in H.O. I consider this did us more good than nursing him and giving money to his enemies.

My record on anticipating these kinds of things is fairly good and I have been able to contend with a fair proportion of them. I don't think any critic can say this much. It has to be done with some effort and cost, by somebody, and in these things I have done not one single critic helped in any way, except Gary by encouragement when he discovered it on his own on his first trip to H.O.

I have to get to other things, and I'm expecting someone. There is one other thing I will address, briefly, for I've said most of what there is to say before. I didn't read your revised ~~version~~ ^{immediate} thing. The reason then is that I wanted to complete the Epilogue and editing it, as I now have, and your letter did not solicit further criticism. The other reason is, as I told you to begin with, I take this personally and will continue to and I not only will not argue about it but would consider that demanding. Something has happened to you, and it is not your understanding, for that you made clear immediately. I don't want to know what changes, if any, you made. You have to say what at the time you say it seems honest to you. But you also have to stand on it. I warned you of the kind of thing I have had to face in the past, where things said by alleged friends were quoted directly with omission, to my considerable hurt. If this happens, be prepared. I go further and I tell you that in my opinion your original handling was not based on any assessment of the ~~relevant~~ record. In my view it was deliberately unkind (which is not to say that you deliberately intended this) and dishonest. I will have nothing further to say on this, but for too long I have hoped I could find fewer friends and more enemies, for the most meaningful help I ever got is from enemies, few of whom have ever really done any great hurt. The kinds of things the Marx and Sparteins have done openly and a few others not openly have been real hurts. I don't know what brought about your 100% turn around, to the point where I felt you were straining with yourself to reduce the potential harm to where you had it in that version. I do have a few ideas, but there was no change in the fact available to you, nor any in your understanding. The change was in what you said, and I think you should be doing some thinking about what brought this to pass. I have had all of this I propose to accept. And more than I will ever again without some kind of response have I'll suffer. You handled this differently than you did anything else, you omitted earlier history that you did not omit in other cases, and you should be seeking an understanding of why.

Perhaps some of the letters I sent you disclose it. If not, many others I can show you will reveal that I have from the first expected what I am now satisfied is probable from Ned. One reason I have been able to develop as much as I have is that I do analyze as others do not take the time to or can't escape their emotions long enough to. And I had to be prepared to cope with it, as you should know, I started that before he had time to do anything at all. There is such neither you nor he understand about Marshall. I hope the ultimate learning is not too painful for both of you.

Anyway, thanks for calling, good luck with your piece, and I think your judgment is going for Barth now is the correct one and that you haven't begun to realize the problems you would have with the other publications you mentioned.

Best,