

7/7/69

Dear John,

Years ago I covered basketball games with a lapped typewriter, which did not in any way improve my hunt-and-pecking. I did not then enjoy this fancy Hermes portable ("The Cadillac of Portables"), a by-product of what happened as a consequence of a May 1968 baggage interception that rendered my new Royal almost unrepairable. I've had no use for this machine since, but I like its feel, even on the lap.

To these seemingly unrelated things I add that something strange happened to me yesterday, strange and a little frightening. At the local hospital it was diagnosed as heat exhaustion. I've been thinking since the ten-hour induced sleep and believe the diagnosis verbose. I've not been uncomfortable from the heat. So, I'm taking it as a sign hence taking it easy today. Thus I can tear myself away from creation (about 35,000 words thus far on the addition to COU, for which I have a few bombshells).

What follows you are to keep entirely to yourself. If you phone me (not a hint) I'll speak in ellipsis. From what I say you may be able to fill in the gaps.

One of the principals of my recent writing is alive. My efforts to get in touch with that person were frustrated. Interception. There are those so close to this person they also can be considered principals. One of these has asked me to ghost a book. I've neither agreed nor disagreed, have offered to help short of this and to counsel on this. It could easily be more commercial than what I'd do instead but, in my opinion, would likely be of less ultimate significance and less immediate service to what I seek. This judgement is subject to change as I learn more.

It is not ego that makes me feel I am indispensable to such a work if it is to be honest and complete and to have the maximum possible meaning. This means I would have to be part of the fact-finding and organization of the book and its correlation with what this person does not know, which is much. Lounging around this morning, with time to think because I'm keeping my mind off of the work I've been on, an idea came to me. If your school schedule permits, why do we not do this jointly, collecting the material on tape, then talk it over, and then you do the writing? Please read the first part of this sentence ~~z~~ again, beginning with IF.

I am assuming a certain amount of saleable material from the other person, letters and documents of various sorts, etc, aside from knowledge that would have to be checked out (I think this would in every case be possible by mail). I am also assuming that in two or three hard days I can extract all the information that will not be held back and have clues on what is and that this person would thereafter be able to fill in some gaps. There are some disadvantages to doing it here, but I think this may be best, if ~~we~~ agrees.

There will be some fascinating challenges for both of us. When you learn what you can about this person, handling the central character will confront you with a real one I think you'll welcome and profit immensely from. The association itself will be one!

I do not visualize a long book and do not regard it as necessary--perhaps erroneously. I can only guess what the material will be, and Erskine Caldwell has exhausted some of it.

= If Ron would act as agent, that would be a real switcheroo. Until he returns I cannot broach it. This person wants me, which is quite unusual. It may not be possible to involve others. And it might involve you in hazards to which I will not subject you if I am satisfied they exist. Also, when the time comes, I may be able to do it myself. So, I'm writing to find out if you could be interested and if this is yes if your school work would then permit it. You do not have to answer right away if you want to take time to ponder a response. If you come down with Ralph (and if you bring Sonia and he brings Joan, I think we can accommodate both couples), I'll tell you both the entire story. I've had a polite note from him. He says he is no less interested after thinking it over. This has the potential of electrifying him and his people, as it also has the potential of a lead balloon.

Best regards,