

2/12/72

Dear Pearl,

Glad to hear from you. Silence fathered fear you returned to troubles. Save for the fatigue of the (tax) season in Lil, we are as we were, my finger not well but not as inhibiting (I finished working up that same tree today, with the same machete). I can type with less concern, less discomfort, less guilt.

Striso: remain with misgivings on all but daring and intelligence. He could well be a good source, but I urge independent checking and confirmation on everything...Has Hinkle returned to California? I suppose, else why would Striso seek counsel there?...There is one area in which you may have something to lose, and that is getting tied up, esp. with wrongies. Play it not cool, but very, very cool AND independent. You need nothing for a good book but the application of fingers to keys and some thought. Anything else you get is +++ but not nitty-gritty. So be careful, please. And when you have finished your Digest piece, try to find time to work on this. The time is NOW. Do not await perfection and totality. Here let me tell you the tale of a friend of mine in Chicago who had a good contract for a good book for which he has a good title, CROOK COUNTY (Chicago is Cook County). He had most of it done. It is on crooked politics, esp. mob connections. He kept delaying finishing, now for at least two years. He kept telling me he was getting close to a case on the famous former Judge and Presidential Commission Chairman Otto Kerner. I kept telling him two things: if he got it, the book couldn't come out before the news broke as new; and a paraphrase of Che: the duty of a writer is to write. So, the Kerner story broke, he can have it in his book or not, it now makes little difference, for all the rest he had, no less sensational, is in the news. He'd have had a helluva book that would now be enjoying a second life. But a year ago the publisher wrote the advance off.

I am no lawyer, but if you have a case against the coming book, it may be better to await its appearance. Any suit against it may sell it better and reduce the market for yours. Too bad you didn't find out from your literary-lawyer friend, to whom I'll write soon about my own troubles. There may be more. I'm told FRANK-UP is largely plagiarized in the current Esquire. Plagiarism is no easy thing to prove. I hope I can remember my own work well enough. Back in 1966 I was sharp enough to catch the carelessness with my typosé I do not know if I will try and do anything if it is provable. If I had a book to sell, I would. But I have resigned myself to what I fear my role must be and to the degree possible devote myself to it. Unless there is a firm legal need either way, you should, if I may suggest, decide what best serves Pearl's interest. Here a good agent could be invaluable....If you have none, there are people in publishing I know who might be able to help. And I may be in NYC soon, so let me know....You should be sure your deal with the Digest does not preclude book. If it does, try to get that back, with the offer of first turndown of secondary rights to them on what is not to be in piece. Fine print can be hard on more than the eyes....Wait a minute. I just noticed you may have a deal cooking. Great if not with the kind of small crooks I've been dealing with. Big crooks steal more- but they have more to steal from, so you get more. If you do not want to keep it secret, let us see what I know bad about them. Who knows good?

Glad your children's father is trying to help at least. If you didn't have that to worry about, you could get started. You do have some promising properties. That Cortes-Never-Had-It-So-Bad deal could be great fun.

From your description of "the book you did on J. Edgar", I suppose, since that could refer to any of them, you mean the latest, which is a rather finely-drawn delineation of the superior qualities and professional perfection he enjoys. It sort of got that reputation, not unearned, from the Publisher's Weekly comment that it was pure TNT on him who I called in it Ot. Edgar The Indispensable. But the funny thing is I have one with that sainted word in the title yet, and nobody calls that one one on him. I'll send. But surface mail.

I do look forward to your nosing that grindstone. All alone. You neither need nor want collaborators. And publishers do have editors (wait till you see what they did to FRANK-UP!). With such a subject, your native flippancy of expression could be zingy.

Glad your boy is back (does he hate being called a boy yet by someone as old as his grandfather may be?). Hope he sinks his teeth in proper preparation for whatever it turns out he wants to do with himself. Good luck!

Feb. 9, 1972

Dear Harold,

Spoke with Sylvia Meagher in NY who knew nothing more than your files revealed re Striso. However, did meet with him in NY and he's not that bad. He's very complex, pretty bright, could be violent (although he admitted he has others do that sort of work for him), and I feel a valuable source of information. At the moment he has contacted an attorney in California as he is furious with Warren Hinckle for having milked him of knowledge, and used his ms. which he claims was the first inkling Ramparts had of the Joel Kaplan case. In any event, I'm playing it cool. It may or may not be worth something and I have nothing to lose. He also mentioned the disgusting Edgar J. and the power he has been wielding over the U. S. for too long.

Meanwhile, I'm getting my kids in order. ^{their grandfather} My son got back a day after I did and his father told ~~me~~ to pay all necessary bills until he returns. I'm still trying to find out if I have a case against the forthcoming book, before I do something about it. I'll have the info any day now. My Readers Digest ms. must be in around April or so, and then there is a great possibility I can get a publishing firm to give me an advance to write a Kaplan book.

Jerry read some of my files and is very interested and said he'd do some sleuthing for me if necessary.

Do you have a copy of the book you did on Edgar J.? Is that the one the NY Times killed? I'd appreciate having one if possible.

Best to you and Lil and thanks again for your warm hospitality and very informative info.

Best,

Pearl