

11/15/72

Mr. John Hooker  
900 Nashville Trust Bldg.  
Nashville, Tenn. 37201

Dear Mr. Hooker,

When I read of a law firm like yours suing a lawyer with Percy Foreman's reputation for what among lawyers is a pittance, I find it possible to believe that something more than a small sum is involved. Even knowing from first-hand accounts and court decisions how Foreman is about money.

Although I have made and prefer to make no public use of it, I am James Earl Ray's investigator in his quest for justice. This fact is well-known to officials but I have refused to use it publicly because I have written a book on the case. I have a confidential relationship with him that I regard as lawyers regard their obligations to their clients, by which I mean those lawyers who observe the traditions of their profession.

In the course of first my research for my writing and then, after publication, helping prepare for the habeas corpus petition, I have developed some information about Foreman that might interest you. In particular I have in mind what I would hope you would regard as misuse of your name. He did this with five separate people with whom I tape-recorded my interviews. Each of these interviews was unrehearsed, each was independent of the others except where I interviewed a man and wife together, and in no case did I indicate my interests in these interviews, only the purpose. They are all on continuous tapes, which will show that they are unedited. It is only because I take time in such interviews and explore in depth that I developed this information because it was unknown to me. I was, in fact, surprised when the first of this series of witnesses told me what he did.

All these accounts are consistent. There is no disagreement in them. Some of my witnesses remembered details others did not, but otherwise the accounts are identical. In the order in which I conducted the interviews, they were with John Ray, inside Leavenworth; Jerry Ray in a St. Louis hotel; their sister and brother-in-law, Carol and Albert Pepper, in their Maplewood, Mo., home; and James, in the Petrus jail.

What it boils down to is that Foreman claimed you were going to join him as James' counsel (James agreed to it), that, in effect, you would do Foreman's bidding, that this case would get you elected governor, and that once elected you would pardon James after about two years if he would agree to plead guilty. It is not known, but James resisted this to the end, and to the end, although James seems not to have understood it, Foreman feared James would fire him publicly, in court. Foreman did not hide this from the two brothers, with whom he spent considerable time. I do not recall the exact language of these interviews but it is to the effect that you had, in fact, committed yourself to this deal, not that it was only Foreman's opinion of what you would do for James once elected or how you would exploit racism.

There is also a precious account of this wealthy man berating a woman from whom he had rented a portable typewriter for a month in his demand for the return of a couple of dollars of the rental fee, an incident I think you might find attractive if you were to examine Foreman were he to be a witness. I don't think he'd enjoy it.

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These, which are only some of the things I developed about Foreman, were not central to the purposes of the interviews as the lawyers regarded it when I returned. They are not, to the best of my recollection, included in the affidavits that will be appended to the petition, but if they are, it will not be in the detail in which they are preserved on tape.

If this information is of any interest to you and you desire a lawyer's appraisal of the information or the credibility of the interviews, James' junior counsel listened to every word of all the interviews. He is James Lesar. He is doing most of his work at his home now. His phone is 202/484-6023.

You may listen to and copy the appropriate parts of these interviews if that interests you. If your case goes to trial, I think it is possible other things about Foreman might interest you.

Foreman is not always The Texas Tiger that he likes to be called in private. After publication of my book and after he had read it he flew to New York for some free publicity on a TV show. Only in the makeup room did he learn he was to confront me. He then fled, in such haste that the highlight listing of the confrontation in the New York Times could not be changed before publication. I do not suggest that he lacked confidence in his debating prowess. Rather do I believe he did not dare face the fact I had published about him, which is considerably less than I now have.

If you do not have the Florida court of appeals decision against him in the Singleton case, Lesar or I can provide a copy. It employs some rare language about Foreman and money and legal ethics.

Sincerely,

Harold Weisberg