

5/23/76

Dear Jack,

Now I'm sorry I didn't take Steve Jaffe's addresses when you offered them.

And now I'd like you to be in touch with him, as I'll explain. But first some other explanations, so you'll know.

During the Ray evidentiary hearing I met a Playboy writer, Jim McKinley. He made a favorable impression on me. His assignment also appealed to me as worthwhile and honest. I agreed to be helpful to him subject to what is normal among journalists, confidentiality. The two major areas are my relationship with Ray and my own work, which I told him I was not about to give away. He agreed and I tried, without success, to help him.

Later he came here with an editor of Playboy, to see if Playboy could get interested in the ancillary rights to Post Mortem. This was before I printed it. He later told me that the editor and everyone else, including the bureaucracy of the Bunny Clubs, had approved the project - all the way up to Hefner, who nixed it. He also told me that as a result of much thought after the alleged (I didn't know, of course) Hefner rejection, Playboy had decided to do a series of violence in America. While I'd have liked to have sold the prepublication rights to Post Mortem I was pleased with their copout, a field in which, going back to the 1950s, I've had much experience. He then told me that they had agreed to hire me as a consultant. I accepted. However, when they first called on me, this was transferred into what they call Playboy's (my emphasis) History of Assassination. Although there is a great difference, I had given my word and I tried to keep it.

They began with their sending a woman researcher here. As best I recall her name it is Ann Gurlein. I spent some time letting her copy clippings and things like that on my machine. (yes, afterward I required a service call.) I loaned her books that can't be replaced and I do not have them back. I have asked Playboy for these several times and still do not have them.

To jump ahead, on the JFK stuff they stole, literally, from me. Extensively, too. By the time I learned it they claimed they were about to go to press and no changes could be made. I agreed to make no claim, file no claim, in return for a nominal settlement and simultaneously told them not to steal any more, that I didn't want money in return for stealing, I didn't want my work used that way. They wrote me that they found my requests quite reasonable.

The next thing I got in xeroxes of the manuscript was their King stuff. I was shocked. My published and unpublished stuff was again ~~stolen~~ stolen, extensively, with the cheapest high-school journalism attempts at masking this. I notified them immediately. Then I got a lawyer's letter from their house counsel assuring me that this had been eliminated. My request for proofs prior to publication so we could both be protected was rejected. When I wrote and said I'd seek and injunction in federal court * I did tell them I had a book researched and partly written - they assured me that what I objected to had been eliminated. Through their house counsel, whose name I remember as Leonard Rubin. He also phoned me. He always claimed that my letters had been delayed. This left me in the position, as I wrote him, of not having a basis to go to court to prevent damage to me because he had given me these assurances. And although I had planned to go to federal court in Baltimore and had spoken to lawyers, I could not.

I don't drive much since the phlebitis. Last weekend we had a family function in Philadelphia. My wife, looking for something to read, got a Playboy in the Baltimore station. She read some of it on the train. But she knew nothing about my arrangements with Playboys's writer so she could not alert me to what I have found.

This is a pleasant Sunday. So, with much outside work to do - we have more than five acres - and needing the exercise, which is especially indicated for the post-phlebitis condition, after the dew was dry I worked outside, for about an hour at a time. On the hour of rest between these bursts I read the current Playboy piece. On the second break I read what is stolen, with amateurish attempts to hide it, from work that is uniquely mine. I do mean uniquely, too.

Plagiarism is the most common characteristic of this entire series claimed by Playboy to be its own. With me it is also theft or in ordinary lingo, larceny after trust. I warned them about this repeatedly, not just with me, because it is all ripped off and presented as Playboy's own work. Believe me, their consultant is quite prepared to prove this in several ways. First, I have the originals, before type was set, and then, so everyone could be protected, I suggested to them that it be taped. So I also have some tapes. Not all because I did not anticipate this and probably reused some cassettes. However, I am sure that I have more than enough tapes. Never dreaming their writer, who I liked, was a crook, one of my purposes was to satisfy him.

Without a word-by-word comparison I can't be 100% sure. For all practical purposes, despite the assurances of their house counsel, in letters and by phone-taped -nothing of any consequence was changed or eliminated. There may have been some changes to make further false pretense. But what is my own work, precisely that to which I objected and was assured had been eliminated, is all in the published piece.

Aside from the book I have two-thirds written, a friend has been representing me in Hollywood. He was here not long ago. Just this week he approached a production company there. Not only did Playboy, by its thievery, take the edge off of it, which is hurtful enough - but why should anyone now buy the rights to my work from me? No matter how much the work is mine and mine alone.

Back to Jaffe. I'm told he is close to Hefner.

I don't know what I can do. I am without means. But I do know what I am willing to try to do to protect myself and my rights. Hefner and Playboy have stolen my work. I told them not to because I was then working on this book and have spent an enormous amount of time and for me money on a suit relevant to it. It has cleaned me so thoroughly just earlier today I wrote a friend asking him to try to help with it and this, too, Playboy stole, some of this suit of which I had, as their consultant, to tell their writer -not for use but for his approach. To protect Playboy against developments with the lag they have between editing and appearance.

First of all, I think the absent in Hollywood Hefner should know what his people have been doing. Next I think he should know what the potential for him and his property is if I have to protect myself. There is more but he should know that I have most of the tapes of my consultation. These include repeated and specific warning about theft, not only from me in the JFK material but in the entire field, including King. He and they are foolish if they kid themselves on this. Theft is the predominating characteristic, aside perhaps, from sycophancy.

When I can I'll be writing Playboy's lawyer and writer. But if Jaffe is Hefner's friend, as I've been told, I think Hefner should know. And I'd like to know what Hefner thinks about this situation.

Sincerely,