

Dear Clay,

7/7/98

Your letter of the first, postmarked the first, came yesterday. I do not now have time for a full response but I do want to assure you that I do appreciate the kind things people say, whether or not I react detectably. I do not pretend that you may not be correct in saying that I have become comfortable with receiving criticism and have become less comfortable in receiving praise and because I am the one involved, may not perceive what there is for others to perceive. But perhaps I can explain how I see it another way.

There has been no legitimate criticism of my accuracy because I have been accurate with in all the work remarkably few errors and not of them major. Often some of these few errors come from official errors I did not have reason to believe were official errors. So, when there is such criticism, it means nothing and ordinarily I do not react to it.

There is legitimate criticism of some of the writing and I am quite aware of the legitimacy and of the causes, most causes anyway. It is inevitable given the conditions under which I write. But if I had not decided on this abnormal way of writing I'd have enormously less to show for it. Writing should be outlined but I did not take time to outline any of mine. I had a month in which to deliver the "Whitewash manuscript and I did that. Whitewash II was originally in response to a request of a French outfit for a series of articles. When they changed their minds I just called that a book. It was 28 days from the time I started Photo WW until I had the first hundred copies, with stitched bindings yet. Whitewash IV was delayed by what had to be done on the Ray case and then I believed should be rushed out, as it was. Etc. And all the time I was researching, doing more writing, fighting lawsuits with what included book-length and documented affidavits and most of that after the first thrombosis.

And packaging and mailing books. Which for a while I spent time promoting and I spent time in New Orleans working mostly on Oswald there.

All in all, circumstances not conducive to the best writing or a volume of it. But I have a considerable volume. Despite many problems. Beginning with the decision to replace the left femoral artery with ^{teflon} nylon. And that was followed by two limiting complications the second of which I was not expected to survive. Then the triple bypass of the heart in 1989 limited me more. So, I shifted to what you are familiar with, to make a record for history, and all else was sublimated to that. This alone assures legitimate criticism. It becomes inevitable.

To paraphrase Guevara, I believe it is the duty of the writer to write. I'm wandering but I'll tell you a story.

The second time I was hospitalized locally for congestive heart failure was

on a weekend, I think a Sunday. I awakened a little after midnight aware of the symptoms bit after I awakened Lil to help me pack, I came to realize that when I was erect I felt better. Then I thought that at the local hospital the only staff doctors are of the emergency room so there was no chance the specialists I'd require would be there or would be called for some time. So, I had one chapter to do or to finish for one of the manuscripts and I decided to see how I felt sitting and writing. I felt better, so I continued until I finished that chapter. It was then daylight or close to it and there was a better chance that the hospital would call ^{the} cardiologist of critical-care specialist do I drove there. With the chapter I'd written, a clipboard and paper for making notes in addition to the packed bag. And after I was admitted I did read and correct the that chapter, which I wrote with an attack of heart failure and read and corrected with it. They did not expect me to make it so ^{they} ~~she~~ ambulated me to Hopkins, which had me make it.

(The critical-care specialist says the work is my best medicine.)

I have forgotten which manuscript that is but the probability is that the last chapter of it could be much better than it is.

I'm trying to explain that I think it should be expected that a man will do what he is supposed to do. That when he does what he is supposed to do that in and of itself does not deserve special praise.

It is not that I do not appreciate the kind and fine things people say. The fact is that with the appearance of Case Open coinciding with my increased medical problems and accumulating years I started a separate file of some of them so that, with the great volume of the archive I leave, those who want can rapidly get an appraisal of reader reaction and comment. It will be easy, with that, for others to get a fair reflection of reaction to my work and my writing. There may be those who will want to know that at the outset of using the archive. With Case Open, in about three months there were about 500 letters. Most are filed by the first letter of the last name but a fat selection of them began this separate file. I've also told McNight about it so that when this is all at Hood and there is the question, what did people think, there can be an immediate answer without going through a simply enormous volume of letters. Last time we estimated we decided that we'd heard from about 20,000 strangers and that was years ago,

I go over the mail first, looking only for what I have reason to believe I should respond to. Until the heart failure I responded to all. Since then Lil does some. When I see an especially nice letter I show it to her. We both appreciate them.

It is not that I am uncomfortable with praise. I like it very much. But I

also believe that the praise is for what I am supposed to do.

I cherish the friends I have made, those you call my admirers. I am particularly happy when they visit now because I do not know how much longer that will be possible. Dennis, by the way, will be here 27th for several days and the Neich-^{er}ters for a couple of days about the 24th. A friend who is a cameraman for NBC-TV News is due this weekend but with his assignment Florida, that may be delayed.

If I am not demonstrative about it that does not mean that I do not appreciate it or am uncomfortable with it. But I also feel that when we do what we are supposed to do that in itself is no big deal. What we can do that we are supposed to do does vary with the individual.

I may not make a fuss over it but I do appreciate it and at this stage of my life it does mean more.

I have taken this time I hope to make it clear and I must get to other things. I'm flattered by what you have in mind for the collective and I also do appreciate that much. You may find some of the others too involved in their own things and having little time.

We have a medical appointment just before noon. Before then medicines to pick up, the delayed venous support hose for Lil to get, Gas for the car and a few other things and I have to delay leaving until 9:30 having promised CNN News last night that I would. They then did not know if they will have a camera crew. They want to interview me on the Zap film. They may just come up and be waiting for use after the visit to the doctor. Or they may not come. They are doing a piece on that film, which, enhanced, will soon go on sale.

It will be tight. I hope they can do it so that the release of the film can mean more to those who will see it on TV and will buy it to have and see at home. It can mean much if CNN goes for a legitimate story on what the film actually shows and what fits with it. I've laid a copy of the ms. Senator Russell assents for them to borrow because he refused to agree with what the Zap film shows is impossible, especially that single-bullet fiction that is not even a theory. I've asked Dick might to be available to retrieve the oral history Senator Cooper did that is in the basement and to share the attention if CNN agrees.

Excuse the rush, and many thanks,
If you said you might be coming, please let me know when so I can try to keep that time clear except for the medical appointments.

Harold