

Dear George,

6/4/91

The suggestions for the summary I read you yesterday were no more than suggestions, rough, read and corrected in such haste I didn't catch all the typos. As you requested, I enclose it. Thinking further along the same lines I decided, thinking while walking this morning, that there are some suggestions you may in the future want to consider. I'll start a file of them for the future. I did make a rudimentary file yesterday of what was jumbled on my desk and in one file folder.

As I think I said, I'd gotten the impression when you asked me a few questions while working on the summary that perhaps you may have concentrated on specifics and may not have, as a result, given enough of an idea of the spirit, a feeling of what you'll be writing and how you'll do it. What I was trying to capture in what I wrote is what you do better than anyone I know, with a light touch (that I usually do not have an envy), making the ridiculous ridiculous and at the same time entertaining and amusing while still serious, factual writing. In this case writing I believe will be important, including for history and for scholars.

I hope your outline works. If it doesn't maybe some of this can be of some use.

I've had many experiences with book publishers and editors, with the former, with few exceptions, not good, with the latter, almost without exception, good to great. But the political problems - faced beginning in 1965 should not be problems today. The publishers then were cowards. Some actually confessed this to me in 1966 when they learned I'd published the first book myself. I have no reason not to believe that they remain greedy and crooked, among the reasons an agent is vital for the writer whose interest he looks out for with experiences writers do not have telling him how to do it. He can not only guide the writer, he shelters him from innumerable and time-consuming problems. A good agent more than earns his 10% cut and not infrequently his getting it means a greater return for the writer. If he is a good agent. If your friend is not able to act as an agent - hope he can suggest one or that you can get one who has done well for one of your colleagues.

Among the things writers are ill prepared to cope with is the contract itself. It means more than it spells out even if it is not one designed to screw the writer and most writers have no way of knowing this. Even the advance means much more than what the publisher gives the writer before publication. It represents what the publisher thinks of the book and its prospects and the amount and kind of effort he'll do to make a success of the book. I'm not trying to give you a short-course, for which in any event I do not know enough. I'm trying to indicate that I got a costly and painful education in the course of our getting screwed and gypped as you can't begin to imagine. As one example of this, I have copies of an edition of Whitewash by Zell that is not included in its accounting, I got nothing but the advance, they had at least four printings, the first contracted to

be for a quarter of a million and according to their own accounting they had 125,000 copies on hand when they made the second printing. Not only is this palpable false, even irrational - Whitewash was their only best-selling work of non-fiction for six months.

Returning to what I was trying to convey in the suggestions for the outline, I believe you never wrote a book. If this is true, then forget, except for structure and content, that you are writing a book. Be yourself and write as you have always written. Don't let the fact that it is a book intimidate you or persuade you that you should write ~~it~~ other than as you have always written. Polonius hit it right on the head and from editors to readers for publishers and ^{reviewers} ~~editors~~ they pick it right up and readers, at least, like it very much, as my mail reflects. It also eases the labor and makes for comfort and assurance in the writing. You'll feel more comfortable, more natural and it will be reflected in the manuscript. It may also help avoid an editor wanting to impose a different style on the writer. A good editor who is not at cross-purposes with the writer is a boon to the writer.

I've had two editors both of whom were excellent editors but one was, unknown to me, in terminal illness and lacked an understand of the subject-matter and never acquired it and the other never once told me where he was going or what he was trying to do.

The latter reminds me of an experience reflecting how absolutely incompetent some publishers can be and indicates another importance of an active, able agent.

When Percy Foreman was the most famous criminal lawyer in the country he quite literally fled WHAM-TV in New York. I mentioned this in telling you how ⁺ learned how costly an entirely bases ^{less} utterly spurious lawsuit can be. What I did not tell you is that while I was sitting in that office with the bottle of J & B they'd given me my publisher came in, just before the station confessed the truth. If ever there was a man-bite-dog story the cowardly flight of this most famous criminal lawyer from confrontation with a mere writer who had written so critically about him was one. When the publisher sat still, did not grab a phone, I asked him to. He refused. Why? He said that ~~was~~ was up to the station! Which, of course, wanted it less than almost anything else. That one thing could have made the book, didn't cost a cent, and I think was obvious. *The paper must know it. I couldn't because I had to do the show.*

He also didn't arrange a single promotion. The one thing he did do is pick up the small tab when I was awarded an honor for the book. He paid for the room, the coffee and the Danish. It sold fewer copies than any book I published myself, without a penny ever to spend on promotions.

If as I think book publishing is a new world for you I hope you have an agent who has enough hands to lead you with one, have another around you and still has hands for a shield and a buckler.

When we spoke yesterday about the stories you were going to send me I forgot to remind you of Ainsworth's. As of last night I'd heard nothing following Time's appearance. Reminds of a Garrison story that may amuse you ↔ Lay on!

Harold

HOOK: OLIVER STONE'S JFK ASSASSINATION MURDER GRAS

His face glowing with his sense of rare accomplishment and radiating ~~the strength or firmness~~ ^{of} his conviction the six-foot-six "Jolly Green Giant, towering about the five-foot blackboard on which he had ~~charter~~ ^{was} ~~is~~ ^{ing his} all-inclusive, coast-to-coast, ~~border-to-border~~ ^{cast} conspiracy behind the assassination of President John F. Kennedy to the audience he had convened in one of ~~the~~ ~~the~~ ~~dining~~ ~~rooms~~ ~~of~~ ~~the~~ ~~New~~ ~~Orleans~~ ~~athletic~~ ~~club~~ ~~he~~ ~~used~~ ~~as~~ ~~a~~ ~~second~~ ~~office~~, an audience consisting of two of his assistant district attorneys, a former special agent whose FBI specialty had been breaking-and-entering and robbing, a Philadelphia lawyer who had just finished expounding at some length how what the CIA was allegedly doing to the Giant was an exact parallel of the assassination of Leon Trotsky, and an aging former Senate investigator and ~~max~~ editor, and wartime intelligence analyst, ^{author} of six books on the JFK assassination whose ~~sex~~ ^{"Giant"} had just forced the very reluctant speaker to fire his favorite investigator.

Jim Garrison was holding court, unaware that three of the five in his audience made skeptical faces at each other when he turned from them to the blackboard as he added new cities indispensable ~~in~~ ^{to} his listing of the largest military suppliers behind the coup.

Jim Garrison, who had only ~~one~~ ^{gone} living conspirator he was about to take to trial, Clay Shaw, New Orleans businessman and sometime playwright, Lee Harvey Oswald and David W. Ferrie, his other conspirators being dead, his theories having been rejected by the jury despite most of its members believing there had been a conspiracy, wrote a ^{book of} self-justification attributing his monumental ^{of} fiasco to the alleged aborting of his "probe" by the CIA. He called it "On the Trail of the Assassin," the one trail he never followed.

Oliver Stone, oft-honored and twice-Oscared, with a reported 40 million dollars of Warner Brothers' money obtained with a script based on Garrison's book, precisely the description of it by Stone until author George Lardner's exposure of its departures from reality impelled him to protest that he was not neither basing the film on Garrison's book, thereafter making ~~caer~~ ^{care} in a number of public statements that he was doing exactly that, described his movie as recording the true history of that terrible crime.

Saying that his movie "does not purport to 'solve' this murder mystery" and almost simultaneously that it would tell the people "who did it, "how " it was done and

"why President Kennedy was killed," the version tailored to address ever-shifting public-relations needs, he found ~~the~~ Garrison's failed prosecution ^{of Shaw} not worthy of mention in his revisionist scripting of Garrison's revisionist book even though, as he acknowledged, most of the jurors believed there was a conspiracy ~~yet they acquitted Shaw.~~

This
The book, based on....

will show

attach Garrison's chart of the conspiracy, Scianbra's memo on the Boxley firing and the "eloche report and morgue book.

Garrison, who had planned to commemorate the fifth anniversary of the JFK assassination by charging Robert Perrin, a man who'd killed himself 15 months earlier and others who ^{also} had ~~no~~ no connection with the crime, could not fire himself for dreaming up his many theories the myths so he fired the man he personally had hired as an investigator for trying to prove ~~what~~ he knew Garrison wanted to prove.

To reinform Garrison's mythologies Stone contracted the rights to other books espousing conspiracy theories, particularly one that is an indiscriminate compendium of ~~many~~ all of them, each presented as reasonable and rational despite their radical disagreements.