

12/20/93

Dear Elizabeth,

Last week Lil and I found time to go to a local store that has a large stock of secondhand books. Each of us selected book/we'd read and forgot we'd read. I'm sending you with this the one Lil forgot we read. I'm rereading the other one. If in the little time I presume you have for reading you've not read John G. Grisham and would like to, let me know and I'll send you A Time to Kill when I've finished with it. Grisham is a southern lawyer who writes about law cases and crimes. This novel has also to do with Mississippi crackers and racism and racist crimes. *His are best sellers.*

While I do not regard The Pledge as one of Howard Fast's best novels, I am high on him and it is faithful to the great personal and national tragedies of the era of which he writes. It is also in a sense autobiographical. Those best known victims of the early period of what grew into the cold war are The Hollywood Ten. (I had some contact with them when one of them came to me for help before they appeared before the UnAmerican Committee. I also had my own experiences with them if that interests you.) Writers were also among its victims. Fast is one of those. He served some time for his beliefs.

While for the past three decades I have not been widely read at all, I believe that no American writer has been as prolific ^{or faithful} in writing about this country and its supposed beliefs as Fast. His historical novels are, I think, excellent and in keeping with the beliefs of those known as The Founding Fathers. His writing begins before the country was established and in more recent years, his series that began with The Immigrants, deal very well with our society as it grew and changed. The first immigrants of whom he writes was an Italian who helped build the railroad to what became California, settled there and raise a family ~~there~~ there, with a son the central figure as I now recall in three novels, extending into and past World War II.

Through coincidence we knew Fast's sister Rena. She married a tailor, Julius Fine, and they moved from New York to Frederick when they were young. Just Julius was for years the only tailor in Frederick, and they prospered. It also happens that he had a brother who is a writer. I'm not familiar with his work but he is the one who first wrote about "body language." I understand the phrase is his.

All, like me, first-generation Americans.

I believe that Fast did write about his experiences with the UnAmericans but I've not seen and read it. That was when I was too busy on other things. I have written little about my experiences with them, only in reminiscences to your father and a few other friends. They framed me and I beat them. I got their agent convicted of two felonies.

In 1940. Thanks to the invaluable assistance of my own Mati Hari, Lil.

Hope you do have a few occasional minutes for reading and that you enjoy the book.
Have a good holiday season! Our best wishes,

Harold