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Great Stories Often Untold



NEW YORK — If Chiang Kai-shek dictates that publishers on Taiwan will not be permitted to steal William Manchester's uncut Kennedy book, there are going to be a lot of outraged literary pirates over there. Chiang will blow the pirate vote in the next election.

A number of nations which adhere scrupulously to pacts and conventions of all kinds assume the most cavalier attitude toward copyrighted literary material.

These nations are not necessarily our enemies, though the Soviet Union and Communist China rank high among copyright scofflaws.

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IN 1945 the Number One book on China's best seller list was "Within Four Seas, All Are Neighbors," by Wendell Willkie. It did very well in this country, too, under its original title, "One World."

Number Two on the list was "I Bombed and Destroyed by Fire the Great Eastern Capital," by Capt. Ted Lawson, one of the heroes of the Doolittle raid. In this country it was called "Thirty Seconds Over Tokyo."

I had had something to do with preparing Ted's book for him, so it was interesting to meet the people who stole it. Ran into them at a party in Chungking and found both of them quite charming. Two publishers had pirated Ted's book and both reported that their competitive editions were selling very well.

"My book is doing better than his," the Chinese lady publisher told me, nodding at her rival. "He was stupid

enough to wait until he could get hold of the Random House hardcover edition. I stole my text as it appeared from week to week in *Colliers*." She seemed chagrined that I didn't congratulate her very warmly.

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THE RELATIONS between a writer and the source of his material can be hazardous. My guess is that Manchester failed to clear his original manuscript with Mrs. Kennedy and Senator Kennedy because he suspected they'd want to kill or water down the passages which made the story a million-dollar property.

Bill Slocum and I once wrote a fine book for Jack Dempsey. Jack pulled out all the stops in telling us the story of his life, and, believe me, no man ever had one that paralleled it. *Look* magazine (naturally) bought it for a most respectable sum, only to be told later by Jack's attorneys that great blocks of eye-opening material would have to be pruned.

By the time the book appeared the immortal Manassa Mauler was revealed as a cross between Little Lord Fauntleroy and a Salvation Army trombonist.

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I HAD a somewhat similar experience with the book I spooked for Babe Ruth, another volcanic man.

By the time Babe and his friends finished their surgery, the boisterous bambino had become a kind of monk. As for the movie script, Babe was transformed all the way into William Bendix.

Gen. Wainwright had some second thoughts about what he had told me concerning his relations with General MacArthur, when it came time for our last look at the manuscript. And out the window flew several priceless footnotes to history.

Matter of fact, the only literary giant I ever ghosted for who didn't want to change a word of the script as written was Specs O'Keefe, the Brink's robber. I've always been grateful for his confidence. *Look* magazine offered to buy Specs' story but couldn't get together with Random House on a joint publication date. The deal fell through. It would have been an historic "first" for *Look*: Being able to print exactly what it bought.

Pity.

Hear Bob Considine on KGO Radio (810) Monday through Sunday at 5:50 p.m.