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Dear each of you,

One of the things that has bugged me for 2-3 days has been the inability to get time to respond to two separate and much-appreciated kindnesses. The very pleasing package and your mailings of the 15 and 16 that, oddly, had visible postmarks, came Tuesday or Wednesday and I haven't had time to make real response.

Tax season here is something like the other side of the moon used to be for you, and there have been a couple of other of what I've come to regard as intrusions that I could not ignore.

What Lil does well she does very well, and this covers a wide range. Like all of us, there are some things she neither enjoys nor wants to do. She has come to enjoy doing taxes for a number of good reasons, one of which is the response, something one would not expect, and another is just that she does it so very well. This has turned into a great liability. At 60 she is terribly overloaded by her successes for her employer and her personal popularity (which lead to another time-takers, but I hope a worthwhile one for us). Once she does people's returns, they don't want anyone else to do them. And, they keep sending friends and relatives. Yesterday, a guy who drives one of the mobile lounges at Dulles Airport was in and asked her if a specified number of so-and-sos had come because he had sent them. Friday night when I went to get her she was doing the return of one of the county commissioners, a professional politician whose folks I knew well when they farmed. (I used to beg most of the hams for the volunteer fire department's annual supper, Lil did the baking, the old mad did the best job in the countryside with his curing and aging, and when the old lady fell during a storm and broke a hip, I was the one in the ambulance crew who knew where they lived and who got soaked dashing from the ambulance to remove downed tree-limbs.) Thus far this season she has done, personally, at least 70% of the volume she did all last season, and last season she did half of the volume of the office she manages, management yielding her no special commission, although the owner of the franchise finally got the notion she is making him much money and added a magnificent 1% to the commission she earns. To give you an idea of what this means in work, she has at least one and often two daytime assistants and 2-3 nights and weekends, and yet she does half of it at offices work.

The office was forced to move to the rear of the shopping center, where there isn't nearly the traffic in people, where there are but delivery entrances and a parking lot. So, although she hasn't tumbled to it and I don't intend to tell her, I make it a point to get there before dark because during the day shift there are only women working there. Gives me reading time and she thinks it is for that and so I can run errands for her, of which there is only one, making her deposit when she finishes up. From the first week of January she has worked at home every night and weekends.

Dione has been only one of the unwelcome and unexpected intrusions. Another has been the at best stupidities of Stoner and Jerry Ray at the most inopportune moment. I've had to really sail into both, Stoner through Jerry. Finally, yesterday, the lawyers decided they also have to take steps, and Lesar and I discussed how they should do what. I'm glad he won't do anything without discussing it with me because Bud is a nut and is now so ego-ridden and sick with the unadmitted recognition of his own incompetence that his judgement is usually questionable. Only insanity is an alternative to the suspicion that Stoner has some kind of involvement in the thing job. While humanitarianism is one of the factors that impels me to take time with Dione, she has provided me with what could make one hell of a novel, were I a novelist, one that has a movie potential.

When I went for Lil Friday night she was doing the return of this county commissioner. His wife was with him. He asked me how things were and I said in some respects as bad as he, personally, had seen to it they would be. Well, that he didn't expect, and not before his wife. I was surprised at my pointed, spontaneous response. When he asked what the trouble was, I said the one he had first made and then ignored for two years. Required no further explanations. He said to call him first thing Monday morning. We both forgot it was a holiday, so when I picked up the mail on Tuesday, after delivering Lil, I went to his office and sat and read it until he was free. That is when I read Jim's valuable criticism of my hasty draft. They set a meeting for yesterday a.m. with the full commission.

A legitimate emergency came up, so I sat and waited for two hours, then met with them and the county attorney, and then they said they'd come out here again, the first time for a head-to-head. They did, and that killed just about the whole day. The road crews have done us much damage. Besides a great amount of wasted work and time, it has already cost me \$350.00 in cash to get the lane passable in bad weather. They have at last acknowledged liability. They will have to meet now to decide what they will do. The damage included blocking the flow of much water from the lane and breaking the dam that feeds the pond, with subsidiary damage to the lawn. I was about to file suit pro se and teach them some lessons when this happened, for \$350.00 is much to us now and if I don't let the road people know they can't toy with me, god knows what the future can hold!

In any event, these are the kinds of things that have wasted a considerable amount of time for me. And they annoy.

Yesterday I got three more letters from Dione. I haven't sent you copies, although you might find some of them entertaining, because it would just be burdensome for you. I did want your collective judgement, as best you could make it about a stranger and from two letters, because it is possible there is some truth in her inferences and statements. I've indicated the basis for truth in the past. This doesn't mean that her knowledge is first-hand, but that doesn't make much difference to me. I made a short response and wrote the sheriff to ask him to let her have a ball-point pen and larger envelopes so what she sends will be more legible, and to ask permission for her to write some biographical sketches for me for my writing, which means more than two pages at one time. Until I hear from her lawyer, to whom I've written, I'll not take much more time. Two of the eight letters she had written me by the 19th have not yet come!

In her phrase, last night Lil just zonked out. So, not to disturb her by going to bed later, I retired with her. After six hours I was up and wide awake, so I got out of bed, fearing wakeful restlessness would awaken her. It had been my intention to go over the draft with your letter before writing, but looking at the stack of things to do, I'm delaying that until I catch up and can do it with more freedom, for this is the kind of thing I need much. I know without rereading that you have to be right, and as I appreciate your taking the time, so also do I appreciate your candor. I have had a general awareness of it since the summer of 1968, when I articulated some of it in a discussion with Matt Herron. There are many causes, as I see them. But I guess the dominating one is the compulsion to do too much. Except for parts of OSWALD IN NEW ORLEANS and all of FRAME-UP, everything I've published is a rough draft. I do them or have done them with as much speed as possible. To meet the contract, I had 28 days to write WHITEWASH, and I took 30, sending it off in takes and not even being able to write the chapters in order. WW II began as a series of articles for a French agent. PHOTOGRAPHIC WHITEWASH was 28 days from the time I started the foreword until the night I got the first 100 bound copies for press use. This, of course, is much too fast. There were reasons in each case that at the time were compelling. With PW, remember Lane's incredible irresponsibility beginning when he first met Garrison? I was, among other things, fighting for our credibility.

With the passing of time, perhaps without basis, more than this credibility began to worry me. Garrison was clearly an incompetent and a hazard. And except for Hock and later Howard, nobody was doing any real work. The others were just dilettantes and dangers. Thus the compulsion to get everything down on paper, at least, and the foolish hope that in some way means of publishing in whatever form would somehow be possible. The Ned disaster ended any hope, but not the feeling of obligation to make the record.

Matt had a solution that in failing taught me much about the rest of the critical community. Before going to N.O., he had been close to Salandria in Philadelphia. Matt recognized the value of the work I was doing and assumed Vince's sincerity and selflessness. He told me that Vince had inherited much money, didn't have to work, and didn't really practise law, handling just a few cases to keep himself busy with some kind of minor legal job in labor-relations law with the Phila. school board. Must be pretty busy right now! The idea was for Vince to provide a small salary for some bright kid fresh from college who would be my editor-in-residence. I would provide the room and board. Vince would have nothing to do with it. I have learned that rich stay rich by acting as the rich traditionally do, not spending. Spending and principle are in hard conflict all the time with them. My first experience with this among the critics was with Maggie. Joe ~~Kirk~~

Field was a full partner in Hutton & Co. Another was Sylvia Meagher who, when I first met her, made it clear that she had an income greatly in excess of any need, tax exempt as a UN employee. But she never even repaid the cost of Archives xeroxes for her.

However, from the first I have always sought editing and at least suggestions. Sylvia alone made a few with WW, which she read in the xerox edition. I got Maggie, Bill O'Connell and a friend then a Baltimore Sun reporter to read WWII, with almost no suggestions. Based on this, I didn't take the time with PW, because the time yielded nothing. Since then, I got some of the younger one to read everything else, including what I've not completed. Also Bernabei, the classicist in Canada. Hoch, Schoener, Bernabei, Howard, Mary, Hal, Bud and others have all had drafts of COUP and POST MORTEM to read. Hoch made a few factual comments, often hairsplitting but sometimes valuable, Bernabei ditto, and except for Howard, who was by far the best of all, from the rest nothing. Bud didn't even take time to read, Mary just gushed. As I recall, Hal never said anything.

The professional editing was disastrous. With O in NO some of the best stuff was taken out entirely. For example, almost all on the Cuban training camps. And even the typos Lil caught in going over the galleys weren't picked up. Which reminds me: with his characteristic dishonesty, Garrison has apparently supplied everyone with my interviews with Ricardo Davis. You may remember, one of the camps was his. (I found a total of four, Davis' former girl friend, the storekeeper who supplied him, etc., all unknown to Garrison and his investigators and investigator-lawyers. Dione claims to have been to one at 17 and gave me a very precise and quite accurate description.) Lesar just found a copy in Bud's files, read it, and reminds me of what I'd forgotten, the appearance of a Romero in what Davis told me. Interesting coincidence. With F-U, there was less cutting than there should have been and the interjection of endless Prussian redundancies. It doesn't make me feel any better to find such things even more annoying in Kirkwood, where he had much editing and other help from Simon & Schuster.

Probably this history and the certainty of unpublishability and the feeling of the need for speed in everything that undoubtedly increases with increasing weariness and the accumulation of years dominates and discourages. There is, I suppose from childhood - I started going to the library when I was 8 and my mom worried about me walking that far through a big city - I've had an affection for the writing that was characterized by long sentences. So, as I rush to get everything said in as much detail as possible, that is how it happens. I also have a verbal style, writing as I speak. The newspaper and magazine work are so far in the past that disciplining is for all practical purposes lost. Generally, when I go over things before Lil retypes them I cut the sentences, taking much more time for reading than for writing. You presumed correctly that with that sample for Harbord I just rushed, and Lil didn't catch it. She also had her own pressures.

In a sense, I guess it is something like overcoming the liability of a leg that broke and healed crooked. I guess also that it is easier with the physical. I hurt my back in 1939 and it has yet to keep me from doing anything I really wanted to, even when crippled by it and in pain. But I'll have to do something about it.

Another thing I learned that probably works against my doing anything I learned with WW. The publisher had an unadvertised advance sale of 25,000 copies, described it as a gold-plated best-seller, and just didn't do it. Didn't even return the ms. I recognized this was probably a political decision, but to satisfy myself got a professional editor to read the reconstituted ms. I didn't even have carbons of some chapters! She refused to do any editing, saying that no two publishers would agree, that what she might do with one in mind would not suit another. She also told me that in six months I'd be a rich and famous man, that the book clubs would be fighting for it, etc. She was an editor, not a politician. She was right: it became a best-seller. But I got cheated out of most of that. Remembering what she'd said, during all the long time I persevered in attempting to get commercial publication, I planed another book, Dick Daring in the Hell-box, or How I Got Rich in Six Months. The files I accumulated on that, a book I'll never write, are quite a commentary of publishing and publishability. What is on the covers is but a tiny fraction. From Banta, and Pocket Books down everyone among the editors said best-seller. It is only a coincidence that kept Pocket from doing it. They really raved, with approval all the way up to Shimkin, the majority owner. The executive editor, who stayed up all night when he was sick to read it at one shot said they'd make it the best-selling book of 1965.

All Shinkin could think about was Calories Don't Count, a clearly fraudulent book with which he was already in trouble with Justice. Ultimately, six others went to jail on that and he didn't want to be -and wasn't - one. They were so impressed that in my presence they tried to get Doubleday to do it. They even insisted that Eisenhower's and Nixon's editor, whose name I remember as Sam Vaughn, read it. It happened, too. Doubleday had a big meeting on it and was as honest with me as Pocket had been, telling me their decision was not editorial and not easy to arrive at. And more than that was educational at the time and a kind of curse since.

If all of these things and more contribute to the problem you set forth lucidly enough, they do not tell me how I'm going to bell that particular cat. When I sit down to do that, there is first confabulation and then the intense desire to forget about what I've already out on paper and get to what isn't put together, often in my mind alone. It is not a boast but a confession to tell you that I've never taken the time to outline any of the books. I made a few notes on a single sheet of paper for WW and as I'd write, would record a few other things I didn't want to forget. (I still forgot much). One of the worst examples is POST MORTEM, which I began in early 1967, completed the first part toward the end of summer, then wrote another part when I got the panel report, etc. This unpublishability situation is not easy to cope with, and books are not newspapers. But confabulation in itself is a difficult one. There is so much in my head too often I can't separate that from what I've put on paper. This must be a common problem, but I guess it is worse for me because of my character and because of the amount of material I try to encompass.

Soon I'll be ~~awakening~~ ^{waking} Lil. I recall your question about Hunt/Barker. I began with analysis, satisfying myself that just about nothing else was possible. Soon I got, quite by accident, a story from Miami in which there was specific identification by a Bay of Pigs vet, I think unnamed. The Miami reporting, which could have been good, wasn't. I think this is the same story that noted the Who's Who bio and was content to report that the New York phone company had no listing for the Littauer & Wilkinson company. This was very early, before Bernstein joined Woodward. If I didn't send you a copy, it was before I knew you were keeping a WG file, that early. I could probably retrieve it in about 15 minutes if you want it. It is in the thickest of the files, before I started breaking them down more. (Doesn't this tell you something about what I've called the Post's machismo on this story? I told Woodward immediately, he found my analysis credible, yet he never consulted with Haynes Johnson, who sits close enough so Bob could get his attention without shouting. And Johnson has been silent.)

Perhaps, with this understanding of some of the factors that in my not dispassionate or detached view cause the evil you put so well - and, thank you, forcefully - you may be able to think of some things I might be able to do to improve it. I'm sure that if I really thought there was a chance, I'd be less distracted when I read, but that would be a minor benefit.

I'm sure this is just as bad as you say and because it is so horrible an example, I am awaiting the time I can give it the attention to deserves, for that should do me some good. I don't now recall if any of the defects can in part be attributed to the concept that this would be an opening chapter, to be expanded upon later. Of course, this would not be relevant to sentence structure and obscurity. You are right about the jamming in of ideas.

Well, I see we had a film of snow during the night. I'll probably be too tired later in the day to chop down more trees, so if the mail isn't heavy today, I think there were some questions in another letter and I'll get to that. I have several letters about POST MORTEM I have to answer. If the Ned thing had come to anything, the book probably would have at least paid the printing costs by now. There is regular request for it, from individuals, bookstores and wholesalers. The word has gotten around. If there were not this great envy in the critical community, we could have accomplished much more and all of my work could have been available, without any great cost to anyone. It takes much time just to explain why I can't fill the orders.

Je, Lil was much taken by the very attractive nun's sculpture. Nothing that even if she didn't find it so pleasing to the eye she'd have like it very much simply because you thought of it. I also find it beautiful (I'd not recognize it from the description pine-cones scales!). We see a soaring grace in it. The inside wall of the living room is largely shelves and mirror, and there she has placed it, where we'll see it in just looking up when we are sitting and eachtime we walk past. We enjoy the imaginativeness of it, too. How in the world can they find enough pieces of driftwood for their sculptures?

You make the best package in boxdom! Even the new and improved post office couldn't dent it!

The simplicity of the anti-walker stuns. I haven't taken time to mount, but will today. I'd never seen that gadget.

If the stamps are always welcome, again the timing was perfect. I had just used my last and that delays laying out another \$8.00, always a major expense now.

So, for all, and for just thinking, our thanks and appreciation.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to be 'JL', located in the lower right quadrant of the page.