

9.9.56

Dear Dorothy and Seniel:

The next voice you hear is that of one you thought no doubt had died or fled the country. He has done neither, but has merely kept himself at home over a steaming typewriter, trying in the only way he knew to dig out of some rather formidable difficulties.

I dropped you a note when I arrived from Mexico shortly over two years ago. I pulled into town with a wife, three children, a dog, a cat, one mortgaged Jeep, and \$400. in my pocket. I had no assets except that cursed trust deed, which then and for two years thereafter was in litigation with the Department of the Interior, since we had, during our occupancy, inadvertantly built on ground we thought was ours but which was in actuality, part of a national forest. Thereafter the problem was to exchange land that was legitimately ours and contiguous to the national forest for the land of theirs which we had appropriated. It was finally squared off about six weeks ago.

There were other problems. I had lost all of my life insurance during that disastrous Mexican holiday. I lived on borrowed money for the last nine months of the visit. I couldn't even get my furniture out of storage because of a \$1200 storage bill I couldn't pay. I sat down in a motel in Pasadena with the dog, cat and one child, while Cleo and the two girls moved in with my sister. I had kept my electric typewriter, and by the second day of residence, I was operating it as fast as the Lord gave me the strength to do.

Most of my black market connections had dissolved during my absence, and it was like trying to find work at midnight in a thick fog among strangers. Also, with no credits for the past ten years, it was wondered whether I still had whatever touch they had thought me to have in the past. Hence I started at the bottom, like any newcomer, for as little as \$1,000 a script. In the first 18 months I wrote 12 scripts---which normally would take between 4 and 6 years to do. The necessity of keeping the money grinding in made it impossible for me to take as much as a month off and gamble on an original which might sell for ~~sufficiently~~ enough to give me gambling room.

Six months later I bought a house for \$200 down and \$200 a month---the same sum I was paying to rent one. It was an expensive house build in a lower middle class area, and Lional Sternberger, a restaurateur, the owner, was eager

in that particular year to take a capital loss on it. He took the government-disputed trust deed as security, and we had shelter, which now has mounted into a certain kind of security. Unluckily, the house had a swimming pool, and the problem of owing everybody on earth and yet possessing (or seeming to) such an extravagant luxury made me somewhat timid. Also, I am probably timid and evasive when I owe money and can't see just how I'm going to pay it back.

Anyhow, I ducked practically everybody and began my long stint of hitting the typewriter. I first accumulated again sufficient insurance to give my family some kind of protection in the event of my death. Then I started in on the list of creditors. I was owed some \$26,000 in personal loans, but all who had borrowed from me had themselves been ruined in the political earthquake which had smashed me along with them, and there was nothing to be had there. I started monthly payments to creditors, taking as first those who were themselves in trouble and needed the money as badly as I. I have, by now, paid off some \$6,000 of these, as I termed them, desperation-creditors; and now am turning to three other accounts which I felt were better equipped to withstand delay. Among them, thank God, is yours. I enclose a check for \$50, which I shall now be able to repeat every month until the money you so very graciously lent me is paid off in full.

This letter, then, is an apology which I hope you will be generous enough to accept. I have been rude and discourteous to almost everybody, because I was seized with a kind of desperation, and knew the only solution lay in privacy and very long and arduous spells of uninterrupted work. I never went anywhere, except to some political function when it appeared necessary or desirable for me to show up. Aside from that, I've been a monk---a surly and ungrateful one, perhaps, on the surface, but not really so at all.

I am enclosing under separate cover a copy of a recent pamphlet I did on the California Fourteen; and also a first edition of "Johnny" which I ran across by luck. The first edition is rather scarce, and I thought you might like to have it. It is the copy used in the Norwegian translation.

With all good wishes to you,

Most sincerely,