

**d'AUTREMONT - HELMS & ASSOCIATES**

CONSULTING MECHANICAL ENGINEERS

6311 N. FIGUEROA STREET LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA 90042

255-7121

16 Jan 67

Bernice and Jack McGee,  
4612 Merida,  
Fort Worth, Texas 76115.

Dear Bernice:

I again find myself looking forward, not only to receiving your letters, but in writing to you. In many ways you have become my confessor regarding my journalistic shortcomings as well as the hidden hand that motivates. Without your being particularly aware of it you have done an awful lot for me in many ways. In fact, I never intended to write the damn story in the first place. It was an accident. I began to write a story of a later period and was so naive that I believed I needed some sort of pre-introduction. This led me into "Rails North" which so absorbed my interest that I couldn't seem to let it go.

By now you may be (but I don't believe it) quite bored with the whole matter; still I must take the time to answer your remarks of 9 Dec 66 which were very enlightening.

1. The Poker Game: I see your point of 8 pages and will figure out how to simplify it - although not right away. This hurt a little as I love poker and enjoyed writing the story. Men (poker players) however, seem to like it but dyed-in-the-wool players are not numerous and your point is well taken.
2. Blue Cafe (and the paragraphs concerning boxing in schools): It may be that on international issues you are a "Dove" whereas I am obviously a "Hawk". If so, we need more doves - - as well as more hawks! What kind of nonsense is this I'm saying? Anyway, I had presumed it was necessary to toss in the Blue Cafe episode as an indirect method of developing the thoughts and personality of the two main characters. I concede that you are correct about the boxing-in-school and Infantry bit as it becomes obvious that the author has either an axe to grind or is attempting to directly influence the reader. In many cases it may violate their personal belief. I'll scratch this before publishing.
3. The Ball Game: The author's ego sticks out here like a sore thumb. Teenagers, however, seem to go for it. It also fits because not only did it happen this way but it affords the natural reaction after the courtroom anxiety. So here you lose.
4. The Hoop: I realize that the detailed description belongs in the story much earlier. The trouble is, the Boy had not evolved his thorough knowledge of the hoop until this period and was in the process of testing its advantages and variations. You will note that I have tried to keep pace with the Boy's mental growth in many ways. To describe it earlier would be to incorporate improvements he had not yet learned. I think now I'm just being stubborn. I'll check this out with the publisher.

I appreciated your comments on the likeable portions. As a result I have further re-edited most of the first book and provided a scattering of phrases along this line. You were the first to particularly comment on the Odie Beal portion, the buzzard, the man with the boils or to catch the remark about the Indians (remind me sometime to write about Indian matters.)

Amazing how long it has taken to gather helpful comments from people even when they are very interested. A week ago I sat for 2 hours with 2 male friends who took it apart with me. Their conclusions may be interesting to you:

1. The technique of seeing Jess thru the boxers eyes (Bucky) was approved. Use the same technique thru the eyes of the Grizzly. (This I have since done - and enjoyed.)
2. Develop the future plans of the Boy while riding home in the last chapter and more of his conclusions (since done).
3. Develop the Boys affair with the prostitute in Missoula regarding his reaction (since done - I believe tastefully).
4. Explain why he never carried a canteen (since done on page 38).
5. How do Hobos ride rods? (Since explained on page 140).
6. Why was the Ghost Town in such good condition? (Since explained on page 87A).
7. Develop more of Old Al's character and explain his impasse with Boy (don't know that I should).
8. Tag Jess earlier as being No. 1 Buddy (can do more here).
9. Why Boy felt so strongly about his film when crossing the desert? (Since explained).
10. Look at Boy thru Al's eyes somewhere (I'm afraid to.)
11. Why strikers assumed Boy was a scab when in San Francisco (I thought it was obvious.)
12. Lack of interest (by one man) in Boys thoughts on Trinity Peak. (I'm running scared on this comment. What do you think?)
13. Reference to Boy on first page of Introduction leaves the reader wondering who he is. It was also recommended that I delete the "Heavy stuff". (Don't know what to do.)

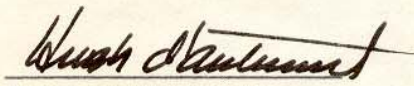
I should have dedicated this book to you. Please use the stamps enclosed to return the volumes. I'll refit them with the new pages and send them back to you - to keep, I hope, once and for all. I am sure that you will be far more pleased with it. I have improved most of the pages from 60 to 184.

Regarding Oklahoma Press, I requested them last week to return the manuscript for correction and advised that I intend to re-submit. Haven't submitted to any other University.

This re-write and assembly is tedious but I must do it before I get into the next story. You say you won't dig me on this point anymore but if you don't no one else will as you are my No. 1 confidant in that matter.

Now you can go back to your research. Please let me help you here wherever possible. I wasn't a 'brain in school' but did learn a few things since.

Sincerely yours,

  
HUGH d'AUTREMONT

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CONSULTING MECHANICAL ENGINEERS

6311 N. FIGUEROA STREET LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA 90042

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13 Feb 67

Bernice & Jack McGee,  
4612 Merida,  
Fort Worth, Texas 76115.

Dear Bernice:

First, let me say that I had to laugh at your concern over Jack's appearance in the newspaper. He looks good to me either skinny or bloated! The kind of a guy a man (or woman) would want for a trail partner anytime! Your comment struck me as typically feminine.

Funny about coincidences...my great-grandmother was a Hannah McGee in southern Iowa. Her brother came to California during the Gold Rush. Recently, his descendant, a Col. McGee I knew in the Army Reserve approached me and told me all about the McGee tribe and enlightened me further on the family relationship in the early years as he knew of our family name. My youngest son has that Irish look even more than I. Anyway, you never know....your ol' man and I might be kissin' cousins!

Another thing that flabbergasted me! Seems like one way or another, all of my life, I seem to have an affinity for professional dancers and I can't dance worth a damn! I never know they are ex-dancers until I have been long acquainted. Example: I hold a large interest in the U. S. Marble Corp., main office in Phoenix. If you pass thru, please look up Elizabeth Schroeder who is some woman and managing the corporation! We are always on the verge of being broke but it is no reflection on her. Liz is an ex-dancer. For many years she performed a Cuban-Afro toe dance on a 6 foot drum! If you two ever get together you can spend hours cutting me down so size! I don't remember her professional name but she was highly talented, dedicated to her profession and quite famous. You two should get along great! I'll bet she can give you some first hand knowledge on the mining business that you could use in your writing. Her favorite term for me is "that damn Frenchman!" That's because I accuse her of reliving the time of Frederick the Great - she being a Heine and bred in Chicago at that!

As long as we are exchanging newspaper clippings, the one attached came quite timely. We live in a basketball crazy community (La Crescenta) which is a member of the toughest High School League in Southern California. Denny is only 17 years, 6'-4", but has been playing fine ball. Mary and I, with our oldest son, Bill, are naturally his best rooters.

Don't know whether I had mentioned it but Mary is Jess Baker's sister. Until Rails North was written, I hadn't seen Jess but about 4 times in 25 years, and then at a Baker family gathering. The story has brought us back together and Jess and wife were at Denny's last two ballgames.

I am sending the final story back to you by separate cover in a few days to keep with a note to you in the front. I received your books O.K.

I am very interested in "Iris and Angels" which you must send to me at the first opportunity. I gather this as something to do with Picket Post Mountain. I also gather that you have prepared a second story regarding the Jackson family massacre which sounds exciting. I am an Indian history bug and gloat over my library which is loaded with such data.

Incidentally, I sincerely appreciated your last letter which analyzed the comments to my story. It gave me confidence in my own decisions but you have a way of expressing your viewpoint which placed my own instincts in so many words.

I am returning the story to Oklahoma Press. A copy of my letter to them is attached. Thanks for allowing me to use your wonderful plug for the story.

Sincerely yours,

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HUGH d'AUTREMONI

Hd'A:oh  
Encls.

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14 Apr 67

Bernice & Jack McGee,  
4612 Merida,  
Fort Worth, Texas 76115.

Dear Bernice:

Wow! Have I been hustling lately! My business keeps me running between Reno, Las Vegas, San Diego and points in between. What it all amounts to is that as Consulting Mechanical Engineers we are involved in construction projects all over the Southwest. The business is primarily designing support facilities of a building such as air conditioning for the Wagon Wheel Hotel at Lake Tahoe. Also we have process piping for Military projects at various Air Force Bases, etc. Another example is the Central Heat Plant that we designed for the University of Nevada at Reno. And to think I once wanted to be a Civil Engineer so that I could travel! Usually I drive to Reno but I still must have 100,000 miles by Air Lines to my credit.

Some day soon I will start another narrative. Oklahoma Press bumped my story although they were quite complimentary as to the style. Who's interested in hobos? Gotta wait many years, seems like. Anyway, I requested their detailed reviewers comments for the sake of education and guidance on my next story. Their big concern is publishing costs for 400 pages.

Incidentally, just what is a rune-stone if other than inscriptions on a stone tablet? Would you describe the stuff you are looking at?

Just finished reading (again) "The Great River" which describes the first real survey of the Big Bend. You should take a couple of months and do it by boat. Take some Kickapoo Joy Juice along for snake bite.

Hope you send me copies of the material that you are writing rather than expect me to await publication. 'Taint fair to expect me to wait. Neither did I learn if your old man is a Kissin' cousin. Remember that my McGee ancestor came from within 100 miles of Hannibal, Missouri.

Glad to learn that you are part squaw. So is my partner who is from Norman, Oklahoma. Guess anybody from Indian Territory is in the same category. Mary has a grandmother who is part Yaqui or something like that. Maybe we should team up and sue Uncle Sam - might get a whole state back for ourselves or have the land re-evaluated.

Denny has offers from 5 colleges for basketball. (California, Occidental, Whitman, California Western & Pomona). He doesn't know where he will go but seems to favor a major in geology. That leaves the issue between the first two schools mentioned.

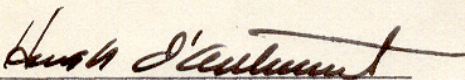
Met Barry Storm during Easter vacation. I took 30 Scouts out to Pinto Basin to explore some old mines and teach them a little about geology and desert fauna. Haven't been there for over 2 years but we were all disappointed to find that Barry had shaved! Fortunately he retained his total image thru his rustic clothes and his six-gun. Barry stated that he was impressed by your friend Marlowe's book and was of the opinion that his data was accurate.

Since starting this letter, I have spent 3 days in Central California as a guest of the Edison Co. to study their tremendous Hydro-Electric developments on the upper San Joaquin River. Had 2 feet of snow while there which curtailed some of the studies but lengthened the poker games.

Regarding the propaganda I sent to you, I'm just flexin' my writin' muscles. Got to stay active, ya know - - - they probably all need a re-write but I don't have time.

Let me hear about your next safari when you have the change.

Sincerely yours,

  
HUGH d'AUTREMONT

Hd'A:oh

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5 Dec 67

Bernice & Jack McGee  
4612 Merida  
Fort Worth, Texas 76115

Dear Bernice,

You are quite correct, I was digging you for the expected reaction regarding the "Brown Eyes", etc. in my hunting letters and was not disappointed.

Returned herewith is my manuscript with about 100 pages redone. Strange how a form of apathy sets in after a span of time and I found that I had lost interest in the yarn and it required all of my determination to get this last job done. I'm sure that I could do more but if I do it will merely be a matter of editing for a publisher.

The only points of interest for you might be as follows:

Chapter I - rewritten

91A, 91B & 91C - new material

146 to 157B - rewritten with new material

321 & 322 - new material (moved the back-pack description to Chapter II)

The balance of the corrected sheets are minor and can be located by the fresh appearance of the page.

Your recent letter made reference to the "Writers Guide". This is what I have been looking for! Please take a look at yours and give me an address to write to as I can't seem to locate one hereabouts. I hadn't thought about publishing the hunting stories but after receiving your opinion it should be worth a try.

You certainly have had a time with your family and we are very sympathetic---also with considerable understanding having been thru the same process myself. My father passed away in 1961 and my mother in 1964---no reason for it to have happened to either had they maintained normal health precautions. Trying to advise Old Al was like talking to a barn door.

A **Chukkar** is an imported bird from India and is about 3 times the size of a quail with similar reactions when flushed. They have adapted quite easily to the Western States and reproduce well---about 20 chicks to a hatch. They are brown-grey with a touch of red in the wing and neck.

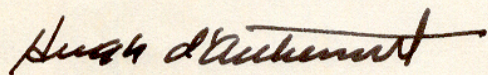
5 Dec 67

Bernice & Jack McGee

I don't believe Barry Storm is in the Superstitions---still in Pinto Basin---Just received a letter from him. He is quite busy again with articles and advises me to visit and bring my own jug. Wants me to use his agent for "Rails North"! Seems to think the story should be written in the 1st person and that it should sell on the teenage market with an appropriate title such as "A Young Man's Adventures in the West" which I think is corny although I can see it might attract attention on a store bookshelf.

We wish the best to both of you over the Holidays---along about New Year you might see me sitting in the Rose Bowl via TV clutching my ticket stub---anyway, I'll be there.

Sincerely yours,



HUGH d'AUTREMONT

Hd'A:kb



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12 Dec 67

Bernice & Jack McGee  
4612 Merida  
Fort Worth, Texas 76115

Dear Bernice,

Enclosed are a couple of stories for your interest or comment---The 7th of December helped incite me to write the first one as this is Pearl Harbor day and an important date in my lifetime.

I suppose I could write a dozen stories of wartime experiences along this line without ever touching mining or hunting ventures.

To be quite honest about it all, I would never have considered the possibility of writing articles until you excited me with your comment that my deer and moose hunting letters might be saleable. I now have in mind preparing several stories before making any attempt to unload them. Am curious as to your opinion regarding such an approach.

Your ol' pen pal,

*Hugh*  
Hugh

Hd'A:kb

Enclosures