

d'AUTREMONT - HELMS & ASSOCIATES

CONSULTING MECHANICAL ENGINEERS

6311 N. FIGUEROA STREET LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA 90042

255-7121

6 Jun 66

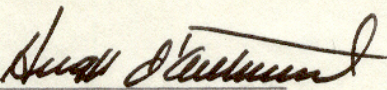
Mrs. Bernice McGee,
4612 Merida,
Fort Worth, Texas 76115.

Dear Mrs. McGee:

I am at a loss to know whether you received my letter 24 Mar 66 in which I believe I answered most of your questions. Your letter stated that you planned to be away soon on an expedition which may be the problem.

Your letter also encouraged me to write. I have done so since but not on the Superstitions. In fact, I have a true story of about 200 pages. You and Storm are the only professional authors I know of and, since I don't quite trust him, a little guidance from you as to what to do with it would be appreciated. I am so ignorant of my next step, or what to expect, you would be amazed.

Sincerely yours,


HUGH d'AUTREMONT

Hd'A:oh

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24 June 66

Mrs. Bernice McGee,
4612 Merida,
Fort Worth, Texas 76115.

Dear Mrs. McGee:

I had it in my mind to try to establish that the Peraltas had a very limited expedition. I have lost the original copy which was meant for you so have made a thermo-pax of my file copy which is enclosed.

Your letter of 7 June 66 mentions that you have heard that Storm "had" to leave Arizona. I had the same feeling when we put him to work at our mill site several years ago. My hunch is that he was in debt. Also attached are some notes on his present predicament.

The sloth skeleton I found was complete. It had skin and organs remaining, all thoroughly dried out in the moistureless dust which (being in a cave) had known no humidity for thousands of years. The museum was particularly interested in the contents of its paunch as it gave them a clue to the vegetation that prevailed in this era. The food was broad-leafed plants and grass which dated the skeleton about 10,000 years ago during the last of the recent ice age when the Superstitions probably had many pine trees, particularly on the slopes of Weaver's Needle. The climate was much more humid.

We enjoyed your story about the mountain lion. I would hate to own one as they eat about 5 pounds of horsemeat per day.

I had a chance to visit the Superstitions last year. I was absolutely amazed at the housing construction near Apache Junction and on the west side of Superstition Mountain. I had not been there since 1939 when it was all wilderness between Phoenix and the mountains, except for Mesa.

By separate cover I am sending you a copy of my story "Rails North". I do this for your candid criticism. I am too busy in my engineering practice associating with Architects and Engineers, it seems, to have any opportunity to meet people in your profession. I am sure the story needs more polish and re-write but, as it falls somewhat in your field, you might be able to give me some pointers as to what to do with it or where to send it. Since it is a true story, I can't change the facts but I could improve the story, I suppose, but should have guidance on my weak points.

Just don't make a big deal out of it and throw it away if you don't like it.

Sincerely yours,


HUGH d'AUTREMONT

Hd'A:oh
Encls.

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11 Jul 66

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

Dear Bernice:

Never have I appreciated a letter as I did yours of the 30th. I have read it half a dozen times. You certainly have a way of motivating people. Your comments indicate such deep understanding of my problem in writing "Rails North" that I was amazed. Two friends (without writing experience) returned copies with the comment "Very Interesting", nothing more.

I must agree that you are correct in that the story should be further extended. I will add about 80 pages of some strange and unusual experiences of the following winter and summer when Jesse and "The Boy" traveled together - - all in the same writing style and without repetition. The 204 pages required 280 hours. I don't know if this is good or bad.

The problem occurs when the "Boy" became a man. This may require a different writing technique but I could in 400 pages sum up the following experiences plus some side lights:

1. Honduras Expedition (planning and failure).
2. Pinto Basin (Gold discovery).
3. Superstition Mountains.
4. Mexican Prospecting (4 months horseback).
5. Pinto Basin (Gold milling).

This would carry me to World War II about which I have only given vague thought as I wonder whether I could be adequate.

In any case, the story as a Boy and then as a man could be considered as separate covers although it may not be wise. If "Rails North", including the 80 page supplement, proves a dud I would hate to write further. It will be along time before I could get around to it anyway.

One point that disturbs me is that I have never really accomplished anything of importance. It was all search and try. My adventures in doing so is about all that I have of any interest. From the people that I meet and see, these normal experiences (to me) all seem too fantastic to them to be other than my imagination. This disturbs me somewhat but I guess others have had the same problem.

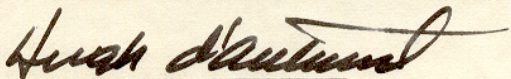
Now to find the time to write 80 pages. Under the stimuli of your letter, I finally located Jesse Baker with whom I had lunch Sunday for the purpose of memory-jogging. We sure had one helluva time in those years and it was fun reviewing the format.

I am not even sure as to what you mean by a soft cover. A "Bantam Book?" Don't they publish with a hard cover first? I don't read novels (my shelves are full of history books) but looked at the display in the drug store Saturday. Several run 200 pages or less.

One friend said that "Rails North" should have ended with "Desert" ordeal as this was the true climax. I doubt if you agree with this. My trouble is, I never seem to have a true climax but I could make one out of the following summer as it was the end of my hoboing.

Right now I feel like having your letter framed and mounted on the wall. I am very grateful for your encouragement which, frankly, I needed.

Sincerely yours,



HUGH d'AUTREMONT

Hd'A:oh

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

July 15, 1966

Good Morning !

Am how is the "Boy" and his family this beautiful Friday morning?? It is 7:30 A.M. here, and I imagine the d' Autement's are still pounding the pillow out in California. (5:30) Get up, you lazy prunepickers! Ha. Having had a good breakfast, got Jackson off to work, and have a pot of coffee nearby, so am ready for the start of a brand new day!

"Rails North" took a holiday trip over the fourth of July...! It went as far North as Mexico, Missouri! I read aloud part of the way up, till darkness set in, and upon our return trip, I read thru Missouri, Oklahoma and Texas. Shortest trip we ever made! Ha. Talk about getting hoarse!! Jack was as taken with the story as I had been. In reading it the second time, I found I enjoyed it even more. Great story and excellent writing! Jack agreed with me that it should not stop at this point!

After reading the five proposed chapters listed in your letter of the 11th, we know for sure the "Man" had equally as much to tell. It is possible the writing technique may have to change gradually as the boy grows older. As we see it, the story in "Rails North" was told with the innocence of a young boy, and this was what makes it so good. A person reading it can almost hear the voice of a half-grown kid; wise in so many ways, but the description of the fuzzy-checked boy keeps him in character at all time's. You have never allowed the readers mind to forget that he is a boy! Other than the time involved in writing more of your life story, you should have no trouble in finding the words! You have a natural flair for writing, and I think you must enjoy it, so other than the time involved....what have you got to lose? Jack and I both felt cheated when we read the last page.....we wanted more! This is a good sign, Hugh!

If you do not want to continue the story, and your letter sounds like you are walking a tightrope of uncertainty, then why not submit it as is, and get a publishers reaction? I would include a letter much like the one you sent us including future chapters....but go into a little more detail! "Rails North" will give them an idea of your writing ability, and should they be content with the 204 pages....fine and dandy! I doubt this very much, but go ahead and try. I repeat....it would be wasting the second half of your life. To have the first part published, then try to go back and write a separate account of your later life, would do an injustice to the "Boy" as well as the unborn manuscript of the "Man." You would have to do some repeating of your first story in order to bring the reader up-to-date with the man's background....so you have split the book and the readers. Am I making myself clear?? I don't think so!! Ha.

I would like for Joe Small to read your manuscript! He is the publisher of Western Publications. Pat Wagner does most of the reading of manuscripts, but would like Joe to read this personally! I am afraid though that his judgement would be based on an article (naturally), and perhaps he would not encourage the continuation. As a publisher of short stories, this would be his natural tendency, and I'm sure he would like to have this one! Ha. Have you submitted your manuscript to anyone yet? It would seem the University of Oklahoma Press, New Mexico, Arizona, Texas or University of California Press's would be the most interested in publishing a true historical account of life in the 30's. The State's in which the story took place should be most interested!

Sure hope you continue the story, but know exactly what we are asking! My God!! 400 pages (as you stated) is a lot of work.

But remember this hugh, you have spent your life living it....why not devote a little more time to recording it? It is your life, your story, and only you can do it justice. I think God has been very good to you in many ways..... after reading your story, we have wondered just how you lived to be a man! Ha. You must have a special place in His heart, and whether you realized it or not you wrote of nature as a boy who had a close kinship with God. I defy anyone who has spent a great deal of time studying nature to say he doesn't feel the presence of God in the wilderness. I sound like a religious "nut"with the writing of that paragraph! Ha. To the contrary.....we do good to get to church once every six years! I think you will know what I am trying to say though!

I have been up to my ears in the Federal Census of Arizona & New Mexico Territories, 1860-1864, and 1870. Tho the title may sound boring, it will fool you! Is good reading, and the names I have come across have made all the eye-strain worthwhile! The book was sent us by the Gila County historian, Mrs. Clara T. Woody. Don't know how we would get along without this wonderful woman. She has coached, encouraged, and helped us every step of the way in doing research on early Arizona. She has opened doors to study we didn't know existed! Under her able tutelage, I hope to one day be as precise and as good in historical research as she has been! I adore her for the time and patience she has shown to two "squirts"who want to follow in her footsteps! Although 80 years of age, she is finishing up on a book that will be an absolute contradiction to the Pleasant Valley War story "Arizona's Dark and Bloody Ground". It seems this book was written on the basis of the Graham's side of the feud. She has done years of research on the true story of the Tewksbery-Graham feud, and will shake out a few family skeleton's. Ha! Were I to list her qualifications and accomplishments over the years, it would fill several pages. She is to the field of Historical research and writing....as the Cadillac is to the automotive industry!

I have been doing research in readiness for four proposed stories to begin in late Summer or early Fall. I have taken a two month rest from any writing, and will not do any till later in the Summer. Perhaps we shall begin together?? Ha. I can just picture Old Bernie, and Old Hugh, pounding the typewriter till the wee hours. Plug in the coffeepot!

Let us know how you get along with the story should you decide to continue. Will send your manuscript back pretty soon. Is this your only copy? If you need it back immediately, just say so! Will mail it past haste! Would like to go thru it once again if you are supplied with other copies! Please let us know.

Sincerely,

Bernie and Jack McSee