

1960 E. 72nd Place  
Chicago, Illinois 60649  
22 September 1966

Dear Dan,

You got the range. I'm working for the Sun-Times and will start a Ph.D. in English at the U of C in October. An ideal arrangement; for once, I'll be making some money for writing on a newspaper. The starting salary at the S-T (thanks to the American Newspaper Guild and the glories of organized labor) is about twice what I was getting at the News-Gazette. Chicago is a lovely university. I walk around the Gothic buildings and breathe. The English department, so far, seems friendly enough. I haven't met too many people in it. Glenn Kolb, the chairman, is in charge of Ph.D. hopefuls and was very pleasant the one time I've met him. Otherwise, all that will wait until October (which, lo, materializes in the east).

The Sun-Times will be fun, I believe. My first assignment was the Third International Congress on Human Genetics, which I was sent to "cover" after the science editor was dispatched to Florida for the Gemini flight. I knew, and know, nothing about genetics, of course, so I wandered around the sessions listening to bits of the dozen simultaneous papers being read, etc., and finally found a friendly haven in the press room with perhaps two dozen equally puzzled reporters from as far away as Los Angeles, Milwaukee, etc. I ~~finally~~ isolated the only paper of the session with general interest (retired U of C researcher announces Roman empire died of lead poisoning which killed off the aristocracy) and wrote it. Lo and beholden, they ran it on page three under a five-column headline, illustrated with a cartoon!!!! A spectacular start for a cub. Last Saturday I was at a staff party at the assistant city editor's apartment and the editor, Emmet Dedmon, was introduced to me. He immediately recognized my name: yes, yes, young man, etc, etc, I've seen your name in print, haven't I, etc, etc, I was talking about your story the other day, ~~mmh~~ etc (but lest I became dazzled by what I thought was his personal attention, he continued by explaining that my name came to his attention when the business agent of the Guild asked who the hell I was and how did I get a story in the paper without joining the union?) The city editor, who had hired me, explained I got the byline by "accident" (the assistant city editor didn't know I wasn't officially in the Union yet). So, singlehandedly, the power of my first reporting blast nearly leveled the great Field publishing empire. Unfortunately, it had nothing to do with the story.

I'll be working on Midwest, the S-T Sunday supplement, and spent yesterday in Evanston following Marshall McLuhan around for a profile they're doing. Marshall McLuhan is

an enigma. He is also probably nuts. I tried to read Understanding Media but absolutely had to give up. It is completely incomprehensible. ~~uh~~ In a press conference, he explained that he saves time in reading by skipping every other ~~page~~ page of all the non-fiction he reads. At last a dawning light revealed ~~conclusion~~ how he must also write his books.

I don't know if I would burn my auto in the ~~main~~ stadium if I were you. The playing field is already sprinkled with the ashes of Bob Zuppke, and they might run you in for desecration.

You told me in your letter that you met Wesker...but what happened then?

I'm sharing an ~~am~~ apartment here on the South ~~Sh~~ Shore with Howie Abrams, who just graduated from the UC law school and will be an assistant district attorney shortly. I met him at the National Student Congress in 1962. He's a great roommate in many respects, although nuts about bridge (he won the Chicago Contract Bridge Association championship and hasn't stopped ~~a~~ talking about it for days). Luckily, I ~~have~~ have resisted every effort to turn me into a bridge player. We have a full flat--living, dining, 2 bedrooms, kitchen, front and back porches, pantry, basement, etc, all furnished, for ~~m~~ just \$65 apiece, which is enough to make Champaign-Urbana dwellers weep with rage. (Who is the writer who always writes "frustrate rage"?) HMMMMMM

The number is 643-9857, and is listed under my name in information. Next time you're in the City please call. By the way, if you have the chance you really should come up and see the American Exhibition at the Art Institute, which is uncanny. It makes the Tate Gallery look like the Tate Gallery. Such objects d'art as the front half of a ~~am~~ sawed-off auto, with a dummy in the driver's seat, and a film of the road projected on the windshield. Also "The Beanery," a sculpture of an actual beanery which you walk inside. Machines to duplicate the smells of beans, beer and sweat. "The Egg," a ~~am~~ great vibrating steel band with a small wooden ball reverberating inside it much as an ~~embryo~~ embryo must on occasion. Etc. If you should come to Chicago anytime in the next millenium (while I get my Ph.D., that is) I'll show you Jimmy's (alias The Woodlawn Tap) in case you haven't been there before. Apparently it's the UC ~~am~~ watering spot. Chess games constantly in progress, and about five interconnected rooms of students, professors, etc. Almost like a London pub. And they have Guinness (possibly a mixed blessing).

There are give or six places in Hyde Park where one can buy the New Statesman, can you believe?

If the Wesker nephew Sean was dating was the son in the trilogy, may god have ~~mmm~~ mercy.

What else? I'm delighted by Hyde Park. The place has several ~~really good~~ really good used book stores (I picked up 8 back issues of Accent in one for 35¢ apiece), good newsstands, good restaurants, and Chicago's absolutely number one gang, the Mighty Blackstone Rangers, who shot an Eagle Scout through the head about ten blocks from here last week. He was in the neighborhood to attend a meeting of an integrated Scout Troop.

How are things in the English department? Kolb seemed to have heard many rumors of dissention, unhappiness, etc, about Illinois. My opinion of ~~Alte~~Abernd was that he will probably be an ~~efficient~~ efficient chairman, capable of smoothing over the unhappiness of the past year, but possibly not as open to new ideas as Dean would have been. I met Neil Kleinman over the spring and summer and found him a very refreshing, ~~an~~ inventive person. I hope his various schemes for a magazine, poetry broadsides, and so forth, work out.

What's your ~~status~~ current writing status? Has the novel been accepted? Anything else published?

Remember my story about the old man in Rome? It was going to go into the autumn issue of Oblique but they lost it. Probably just as well. I liked it in 1963 but now I hope I could do better. Although since I haven't written any fiction since South Africa I have little motive for thinking so.

With Vorster replacing Verwoerd, S.A. is out of the frying pan and onto the pyre.

Enough,

Roy.

P.S. My nonbook about 100 years of undergraduate life has been FINISHED (373 pages) at last, and Mark Van ~~an~~ Doren has agreed to write a page or two of introduction.