

UNAUTHORIZED!

by James Reston, Jr.

On the other end of the phone the edge in the high-pitched voice was sharp and unmistakable, carrying a hostility that surprised and shocked me. Why was it there? I had written the man what I thought to be a dignified, polite, even gracious letter, full of praise for my subject, sure that this person could lend vision and insight and much in the way of good positive stories about his friend. "Why should I talk to you?" Perry Bass of Fort Worth snarled at me. "I'm a friend of John Connally's!"

For nearly two years, variations of this attitude had plagued me, but never with this force, a virulence that verged on hatred in a man I had never met. I collected myself and delivered my standard response.

"It's precisely because you are Governor Connally's friend that I'm calling you, Mr. Bass," I said sweetly. "I hope to talk to as many friends of the Governor as I can"

"That's the way the cookie crumbles," he snapped, and hung up.

In other less electrically charged interchanges with Connally friends in the previous months, the conversations usually began more flatly, with a question I grew to despise. "Is this an authorized or an unauthorized biography?" they would ask. For that, too, I had a standard response. It was to laugh; it was a weary, ironic laugh of recognition. I had been commissioned to write a formal biography of Connally in October of 1986. In him, I felt, forty years of American political history could be told freshly. Through his relationships with three presidents--all such different yet vibrant relationships--events like the Dallas assassination, the Johnson resignation, the Nixon bunker, might be brought alive in arresting new ways.

I accepted the challenge cheerfully--for the story that was there, and only that--and I persuaded myself that beyond the obligatory presidential subjects there were few living political figures who were interesting and diverse enough to warrant the effort I proposed to undertake.

When the topic was agreed upon, the (then) publisher of Harper & Row and my editor, Edward Burlingame, wrote Connally a flattering letter, telling him of the project, hoping for cooperation with its author, but making sure not to suggest that the project was conditional or reliant upon his help. In the announcement in Publisher's Weekly, I was quoted as referring to Connally as an "Olympian figure." "By virtue of his eloquence and the sheer force of his personality, he dominated Texas and Washington for more than 20 years," I had written. "His life has drama of epic proportions." I meant those words. I was taking on the subject because it was a great story, and I was a storyteller. To me, Connally was a blank page. He had not been my idea--in fact, Harper & Row had originally asked me to write a biography of Jesse Helms, until we learned that a book on Helms was soon to come out. Connally had simply been Helms's substitute. I had been lucky. Connally, I came to believe, was a far grander subject for a big biography than the monochromatic Mr. Helms, and a lot more fun besides. Moreover, with his bankruptcy, Connally's life had Shakespearean proportions, and no one had ever accused Helms of that. I had no particular admiration, and certainly no animosity toward Connally at the outset. I would let him take shape in my mind gradually, as I talked to his friends and enemies alike. I wanted to be fair. I suppose all biographers say that at the beginning.

In an opinion I was later to change, I had the notion that his cooperation meant the difference between a decent biography and something better and more lasting than that. With his cooperation, I might get to the core of his

character, to the essence of his emotional make-up, and thus, to the essence of the great events in which he had been a major player. In my own letter to Connally on November 21, 1986, I put it this way: "The stories which interest me are those where the biographer and the subject have been able to forge a relationship . . . ," and then I made my first mistake. Reaching for a parallel he might relate to, I wrote a sentence which later made me blush. "One such relationship that comes to mind is that between Doris Kearns and Lyndon Johnson which resulted in a very good book which was widely noticed." How naive I was about the dark world of Lyndon Johnson then! A month later, as apparently the last person in the world, I finally heard the rumors about Lyndon Johnson's amorous passes at his comely biographer, as they were at work on an "intimate" biography. Embarrassed as I was, I hoped only that this gaffe would amuse Connally, for he was advertised to have a good sense of humor.

Connally did not respond either to my letter or to Ed Burlingame's. At the time, he was, of course, preoccupied with the collapse of his financial empire, and in the early months of 1987 he was working desperately to avoid the humiliation of bankruptcy. I tried to be sensitive. When one faces debts of \$63 million, books were probably not on his mind. I was sure that sooner or later he would come around.

Nevertheless, in early 1987, as I planned my first research trip to Texas, I decided to call him. I was quickly put through. When his familiar voice came on the line there were no preliminaries. "I have been getting these letters from you and from Harper & Row, and there's been no discussion of a financial relationship."

I cannot remember now if my shock at this beginning for our much fantasized "relationship" registered at that moment over the line to Houston,

but it was profound, and it would last for two years. There had been a terrible misunderstanding. In putting the project to Connally, perhaps we had been too grandiose, too overreaching in describing the book as a rare effort to place a major figure in his rightful point in history, but there would have been no doubt that a "formal" biography was intended. Yet, he seemed to have in mind something akin to the talk of Austin at the time, the Willie Nelson hagiography, where the subject and the fawning writer make out like bandits somewhere in the stratosphere of six figures on a quickly forgotten "marquee" book. I took his opener as a personal slight: so that was the kind of writer he thought I was! My appeals to his historical reputation had left him unmoved. To cooperate was to create an "authorized" biography, where the subject had control over the final project. In authorized biographies the subject profits, probably more than the writer. If Willie Nelson was not in his mind, Lee Iacocca surely was.

Apparently others were not as shocked by this story as I was. Indeed, when I told it in hushed tones I usually got a nod of recognition and a cynical smile. "John Connally is a bottom-line kind of guy," a friend of mine would say. When my agent, the worldly Timothy Seldes, got the word, he merely rocked back in his commodious chair and roared with laughter. The episode was a confirmation of what many already felt about Connally. His demand said much about him. On the phone, to Houston, I muttered something about how I would pass the Governor's request along to the publisher.

Connally's reaction was stupid, and the stupidity of it lay in its potential for influencing my early thinking. I was four months into my research, but several months away from beginning to write. My subject remained indistinct in my mind, still very much in the stage of "becoming." I was far away from addressing the subjects which touched on greed and personal

corruption, six months away from researching his bribery trial where the suspicion lingered that, despite acquittal, there was more to the story than the Connally jury understood, two full years away from dealing with his Grecian collapse, a collapse fueled by his desperate desire to be "Texas-rich" and occasioned by extraordinary lapses of judgment. The uncomfortable irony was that if, in fact, my publisher had been predisposed to make a "financial arrangement" with Connally, \$10,000--the amount he had been accused of taking from Jake Jacobsen in his milk trial--was about what he could expect from Harper & Row.

When I hung up the phone in February 1987, I knew I had to be careful. I was not ready to make judgments about my subject. I had to be certain that this phone call did not define for me too early, too patly, too clearly, and, most important, too negatively who John Connally was. Biography is a search for character, and I was guided by Virginia Woolf's counsel that the important facts in the art of biography are the "creative facts," those which reveal values and character. Had I not just encountered a creative fact in my own experience? I wondered. If a biographer's contacts with his subject are fleeting, is there not a danger that those brief encounters can take on an outsized and mistaken significance? Over the full course of writing "The Lone Star," I cannot count the times it was said to me, usually in the context of dismissing the possibility that Connally took money from Jacobsen, "Nobody ever accused John Connally of being stupid," and yet one's own experience is always defining, always compelling. I had to try to suspend judgment.

Ten days after our brief telephone encounter, I went to see Connally in Houston. In one of those sparkling office buildings off Westheimer Avenue in the brassy Oak Post area not far from the Galleria, I was ushered into a dun-colored office which was rather dreary and unadorned. It had the feel of a temporary place. For a man who had feasted with potentates and had been

himself a potentate, I expected the ambience of power, lingering grandly, affectionately, in memory.

Connally greeted me courteously enough. When I took my seat before his cluttered desk, he stretched back in his chair and put his feet on a side table, and began to talk. He was tanned, and his hair was very white and a bit too long, making him look older than I had anticipated, as if the trauma of his bankruptcy had aged him.

We were there to take the measure of one another, but that was the subtext. We had a lot to discuss. I launched into a discourse about the impossibility of a financial relationship. The work would be tainted and compromised and dismissed derisively by the critics. I had been commissioned for my independent judgment, and I had to insist upon that independence. I would not have accepted the commission had it been one of those "as told to" books. He listened attentively, peering at me through thick glasses sceptically. What I did not confess, although he probably knew it, was that I had been David Frost's Watergate adviser for the "Nixon Interviews" in 1977, the prime example, often invoked, of crass checkbook journalism. I could scarcely have a principle against subjects being paid to reminisce. But I remembered well from the Nixon interviews how we were always wondering with each minute of television whether we--and the audience--were getting our money's worth. Moreover, books and profit-making television are entirely different propositions. The thought of "getting your money's worth" is sure to sour any relationship between a legitimate biographer and his subject. Money poisons any possibility of elucidating reminiscence. It takes away the passion and the iridescence of a willing subject. It encourages insincerity, stonewalling, prevarication, simply to eat up the clock as if it were four corners of a basketball game and thereby to fulfill the letter rather than the intent of the

compact. Richard Nixon had attempted that very thing with David Frost in 1977.

Connally spoke of a longstanding dream to write his own book--and to profit from it. If he was going to do that, why should he give away all his best stories to me--for free? I had anticipated this argument. I knew that in 1975, after his bribery acquittal in the milk scandal, he had tried to market an autobiography proposal around New York, but no New York publisher of note was interested--or not to the tune that would have encouraged Connally's literary agony. I responded now what I considered a formal biography and an autobiography to be two separate forms, to which readers look for different things, and that his book and mine were not necessarily in competition. Yet, in nearly the next breath after he had embraced literary aspirations, he confessed to a contempt for politicians who held high office and squirreled away documents and "memoranda for the file" against the day when they could write books about their Washington adventures. He made the reference to Nixon overt. Of Nixon's authorship, he spoke with evident contempt. He painted a picture of Nixon sitting by a fireplace in retirement, alternately saving and burning documents.

"Frankly, it disgusted me," he said.

No more complimentary to his friend Lyndon Johnson, he spoke of watching LBJ become "obsessed with rewriting history" at the end of his life, and he found that spectacle merely sad. The idea of writing a real book was daunting to him, and he said openly, "Maybe I'll never write it." This was my bet, for I knew already that he was famous for his short attention span. His was not a reflective mind which gained pleasure from long hours of solitary labor. He was an activist, and rarely do activists write good books. Moreover, he said wistfully, "Sometimes I wonder who would really care."

That was sensitive ground, but it was an idea I wanted to register firmly in his mind. Dallas and the governorship and the Nixon Cabinet and his court trials and presidential disaster notwithstanding, he was a figure of the past--"yesterday's yawn," a Hollywood type once labeled him to me. He was of secondary rather than primary rank. The world was scarcely crying out either for a biography or an autobiography of him. Yes, I replied carefully, I knew what he meant, and I had thought about that. (I did not say that I had begun a number of my early interviews with the question "Why should this book be written at all?") I had concluded, I told him, that for my biography to be a success it would have to be well done. "The subject alone," I said bravely but softly, "will not compel the interest."

We parted cordially, and he held out the possibility of cooperation toward the end of my process. I could wait. His cooperation, or at least an absence of hostility, was too clearly in his own personal interest to continue this resistance forever. It had been a civil interchange. So far as I was aware, I had given him no reason to be hostile, no reason to believe I was out to gut him. I had, however, given him no hope that he could control me. Nor, in turn, had he given me any reason to dislike him or to question the worthiness of my project. If for no other than cynical reasons, I wanted to like him, for I was sure of one thing: no one would want to read a purely negative book about a secondary figure of the past. Neither a "trashing" nor a "definitive" biography was called for. The literary possibilities lay elsewhere. Moreover, on my mind were recent celebrity biographies about Picasso and Elvis, where the biographers had come to hold their subjects in contempt. At all costs, I wanted to avoid that, for at the very least I was devoting several years of my life to this book, and I did not want to be in such close proximity with someone for whom I had neither affection nor respect.

In the months ahead, as Connally went formally bankrupt that summer, I was surprised to feel the growing hostility of his friends. "The word is out among the Connally people," Robert Strauss told me in his Dupont Circle office, "that you are writing a very tough book." How would they know that?, I wondered. To be independent was suddenly to be tough. The conversation in March of 1987 had had one major consequence: I concluded that I could wait forever for him to have the wit to see his own interest. So I began to write, and to ^{write is} judge. At the outset of the biography, Connally's opportunity was to influence the direction of the book, in effect, by captivating me. Every biographer is open to being captivated in the beginning. From that one extended conversation, I had no doubt about the force of his personality. He was impressive and I was impressionable. I would have had difficulty in resisting his power and his dominance had he thrown his arms open to me. But his indifference to his historical reputation disappointed me and made me suspicious. He was acting like one who had something to hide, and that encouraged my investigative instincts. The documents in the LBJ and Nixon libraries and in the National Archives inoculated me against the dizzying prospect of sitting uncritically at his feet. With each successive day of writing, his opportunities to influence me passed away. A character was beginning to form in my mind. I was becoming as close as I wanted to be.

In the summer of 1987 he formally declared bankruptcy, and a month later, as I was researching one day at the Nixon project in the bottomlands of Alexandria, I heard whisperings of great events in Austin. Several weeks before his declaration of bankruptcy he had secretly donated all his papers to the LBJ Library. In doing so, he was attempting to place a five-year restriction on scholarly access to the materials. So much for his contempt for the scholarly process. "You can not write your biography without my papers," he had told me

in March as a kind of mild threat. Perhaps, I had replied noncommittally, for I knew that, unlike Lyndon Johnson, he was not much of a letter-writer, and his close associate, George Christian, had already told me that his papers were 98 percent junk. At the end of his Texas governorship, they had simply thrown them all in boxes and carted them away. Still, his "gift" was a sneaky and a hostile act. He meant to convey the air of generosity to history, at the same time as he was overtly frustrating the one work of history that was under way about him. I began to call the five-year bar to access as the "Reston restriction."

Moreover, to me, the "gift" was clearly illegal. It was a fraud on his creditors. His papers were sure to be filled with correspondence from presidents and kings, and at the time a letter from a president with an original signature on it, much less a handwritten note, was worth about \$1,000, regardless of whether or not it said anything interesting or historically useful. As an appraiser of historical materials would later write in a court affidavit, his papers were probably worth roughly \$3 million. Under bankruptcy law, he was required to declare everything of value that he owned, required to have it appraised and sold to pay back his creditors. That is what he was eventually to do with his china and his parade saddles. So, too, he was required to do that with his personal papers. But first he had tried to hide them on his initial bankruptcy filing, and then he was trying to park and sequester them at the LBJ Library, beyond the reach of his creditors and me. I was furious, but as a client and user of the LBJ Library, I was sure that the Library would not lend itself to this self-evident fraud. Wrong. The LBJ Library, as it turned out, was only too willing to let itself be used as a kind of Alamo. I began to understand Santa Ana better. I was laboring under the misperception that a presidential library was supposed to belong to the historians rather

than the politicians. I was also learning how powerless the historian is when it comes to a dispute with a well-known political figure.

In November of 1987 the Houston Post broke the story of Connally's dubious gift on its front page, reporting that the move had occasioned a sharp controversy among scholars and archivists, and that a donation of papers in connection with a bankruptcy raised novel legal questions. Connally was furious and called a press conference to denounce the story. He was fortunate to have one inaccuracy in the Post story to latch onto. The paper had reported that a 1962 letter to Connally as Secretary of the Navy from Lee Harvey Oswald was in the Connally papers, and it alone might bring \$50,000 at a Sotheby's auction. That was false, but in saying it was false, Connally went overboard. He didn't know anything about such a letter, he exclaimed. As it turned out, the letter in question was lodged appropriately and safely in the Warren Commission files at the National Archives. Connally not only knew about it, but in the 1960s he had made several vigorous attempts to recover it for his own estate. Clearly, he had been fascinated with the letter, for it bespoke a possible animosity toward Connally by Oswald, and, therefore, a possible motive for the Dallas assassination, not with Kennedy but with Connally as the real target. On one occasion in 1967, he had involved George Christian, LBJ's press secretary, in his attempt to recover the original. But the National Archives had turned him down, fearing that if Connally got his letter back, Marina Oswald would start to ask for the return of her correspondence as well.

In Houston, at his highly publicized auction in January of 1988--the bankruptcy that was a world-class social event--I saw Connally again, at the back of the auction hall. This time, he turned on me angrily, charging that I had been responsible for leaking the Houston Post story in November.

"A lot of people knew about that, Governor, and a lot of people were upset by it," I replied obliquely. It was true, however: I had leaked it, but what of it? His ploy was illegal and deserved to be exposed. Only if others were affronted did I have a chance at getting into his papers, and if it came to a choice between having access to his papers or having access to him, I had long since concluded that I would rather have the papers. I was to learn another lesson there: the public does not easily identify with the passions of archivists

In our brief, tense colloquy at the back of the auction hall, not far from the panoramic painting of Texas history from the Conquistadores to Sam Houston, I was able to diffuse his anger over the newspaper story. When he was calmer, I raised again the question of limited cooperation. To my astonishment, he raised again the subject of money! He was not one to give up easily, and I duly registered a mental note in deference to Virginia Woolf. Could it be, I wondered, that he was deliberately trying to alienate me now, to drive me completely into a negative frame of mind and thus to produce a book that he could dismiss with the contempt of a Bobby Knight and no one would want to read? I could find no other reason for his denseness.

A year of writing still stretched before me after Connally's bankruptcy auction, but as of January 1988 I lost interest in his cooperation. I began to appreciate why a biographer like Stephen Ambrose would have no interest, as a matter of principle, in interviewing his subject, Richard Nixon. Cooperation had begun to have many more downsides than advantages. In my interviews I was beginning to find that I knew more about Connally now than even his closest intimates knew or could tell me. My character was developing sharp dimensions. The only substance that he might be able to add was the emotional force behind the events I was describing, but for him to give me

such a thing--say, it was really like for so proud a man to collapse so quickly, so humiliatingly, so needlessly, at the end of his career--would require, at the very least, a bond of mutual respect. He had chosen this adversarial stance. My problem was to guard against it. A feeling of such hostility and distrust had crept between us that now I would have to spend a great deal of time in simply dispelling his ill will, and wouldn't I, in the end, be giving away far more than I would get? Wouldn't I be duty-bound to let Connally challenge every potentially damaging or unflattering thing in the entire manuscript? What about the dalliance I had discovered with a Texas coed or my growing sense that he might after all have taken that \$10,000 in the milk scandal? Wouldn't I have to give him the chance to explain or to comment?

With his friends, I began to invoke one of Connally's patented lines from his days in the Nixon Administration. It was a line which underscored his abilities as a pure practitioner of power politics. "I can play it round or I can play it flat. Just tell me how to play it." And so it was with the practitioner of the writing craft. I was simply trying to write the best book I could under the circumstances as they were given to me. Most of his inner circle--the former White House press secretary, George Christian, and an Austin public relations man named Julian Read in particular--perceived that Connally was not acting in his own interest. From the beginning--so they told me--they had been trying to cajole Connally out of his stubbornness. But they were caught in the middle. They saw, if Connally did not, the danger of the subject setting out to alienate his biographer. Naturally, they wanted the book to be favorable, but since they could not demand or compel a favorable treatment, at least they wanted the book to be fair and accurate. To these close Connally associates, it was clear that if Connally's friends did not talk to me, his enemies were only too willing to do so. I had started as an

empty vessel and I, like any writer, was intent to fill the book with the best stories I could find, regardless of which "side" I got them from. Kitty Kelly's book on Frank Sinatra was on everyone's mind. I persisted in saying to Connally's friends that I did not want to write a Kelly-type book, but they should face it: Kelly had recently been honored by the American Association of Biographers and Journalists for her Sinatra book. I would not be displeased to produce a book that might be similarly honored.

During the post-auction period, I learned that Connally had taken yet another step against me. He had written a letter to a score of his closest associates, probably including Perry Bass of Fort Worth, asking them not to see me if I called. This put his friends in an impossible and embarrassing dilemma. It was frankly demeaning for, say, Congressman Jake Pickle of Austin, a public official, to refuse to see a legitimate author. The most persistent refusenik was the former Johnson aide and Connally friend, Horace Busby. His excuses to avoid me reached the level of high comedy, for he never wanted to be on record as having said a definite No. For two reasons, I persisted over a period of eight months in needling Busby with requests for an interview. I knew my persistence would get back to Connally--for Connally had to know that I would be doggedly determined. And I wanted to test the story I had heard about Busby: that he was a leading voice with the inner circle of former Johnson aides to refuse interviews to all scholars about the former President.

This spirited debate within the Johnson crowd over whether to cooperate with the Johnson scholars had its roots in the work of Robert Caro. The Johnson intimates seemed to be divided evenly between those who felt that Caro was a skillful biographer and those who felt he was a snake and a betrayer. A mythology about Caro's book had grown up in Texas, not unlike the mythology

about Salmon Rushdie's novel. Among the most stalwart of Johnson loyalists, Caro's treatment of "the Boss" was akin to Rushdie's mockery of Allah. When you asked a Johnson loyalist what specifically in the Caro book he objected to, you could never get a satisfactory answer, certainly never get chapter and verse. Like Rushdie's novel, it became clear to me that many had not read Caro's book.

If there is a reason why these loyalists should be upset, it is Caro's treatment of Lyndon Johnson's affair in the 1940s with Alice Glass, for they imagined, I suppose, that Caro's portrayal of Johnson's infidelity was profoundly embarrassing to Lady Bird. What was Caro to do? Delete the Alice Glass story altogether? As it was, Caro did delete (or did not know about) much seedier dalliances of Johnson's at a favorite place of ill-repute for politicians, called "The Hopkins Institute," at 2701 Connecticut Avenue, which was raided by the police in the early 1940s when Johnson was in residence and he--and the late Senator from Washington, Warren Magnuson, had to leap from the back balcony on the second floor and flee into Rock Creek Park--Magnuson in his undershorts.

The Caro debate around the font of the LBJ Library had poisoned the well for me. It had become the Reston debate among the Connally crowd. Connally's letter to his intimates notwithstanding, more of Connally's friends were willing to talk to me than not, largely because they wanted the positive stories about Connally told, because they perceived that I was not the ogre Connally was trying to make me out to be, and because they saw that Connally was being self-destructive.

Toward the end of the process, I made one last overture. By October of 1988 I had written 700 pages, but I still had three "Texas-based" chapters to do: his governorship, his years in the 1950s with the oilman Sid Richardson

(whose nephew was Perry Bass), and his bankruptcy. The ship was getting ready to pull out of the harbor. On October 1 I wrote him for the last time:

I remain uncomfortable and disappointed about our distance. In the end, I do not feel that stance, if it holds, will be in your interest, for it would necessarily prejudice the reader against the subject, especially if it is packaged in that routine way as "the book JC tried to stop" or "would have nothing to do with, . . ." etc. As I've said to you directly on several occasions, the "unauthorized" or "adversarial" book was never the type of book I set out to write or wanted to write.

I repeated my proposal for limited cooperation, ten hours or so of interviews, so at least the edge would be taken off the relationship. I felt that I had, again, to try to get him to discard his fixation with money.

A financial relationship remains impossible for all the reasons I expressed to you both in your office and at the auction. I continue to feel that this insistence of yours has been a mistake, and I hope you will not continue to let cooperation turn on that point. This is a serious and dignified book. It will be taken seriously. It will also have a great deal to do with the way in which you are remembered. You should have a say in it.

Connally did not reply to that letter. With more relief than disappointment, I plunged forward to finish. Had he suddenly invited me to Picoso Ranch for extended warm conversations, I am not sure that I would have gone. I would have had to go back into the book and rip it apart, as if I were remodeling a solid, old-fashioned ^{comfortable} mansion. By this point, however, though I might have expected a courteous reply, I had little expectation that he would respond warmly. In fact, on the day I wrote him that last letter, he was appearing at a seminar on Texas politics at Rice University in Houston, and from the audience the Texas writer Lawrence Wright rose and asked him why he was not cooperating with this "major biography" that was being written about him. Connally drew a laugh when he replied, "Because I don't get nuthin' out of it but trouble."

Several ironies remained for the end stage. When, last November, Time

Magazine ran an excerpt of my Dallas chapters on the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Kennedy assassination, the ABC show "Nightline" asked both Connally and me to appear, and Connally readily agreed. He would talk to me on national television, even if there was a distance of ~~two~~^{two} thousand miles between the studios in Washington and Houston. There, on a split screen, in the brief and unsatisfying and overheated medium of television, the biographer and the subject had their first and only exchange on the substance of the life. Several weeks later, I spent a few hours in Washington with Julian Read, a man as close and unfailingly loyal to Connally as anyone. Read was clearly torn, and with the book nearing completion, he worried that there would be an overreliance upon the stories of Connally's enemies. Three months after that, in March 1989, when I was four days away from delivering the 900-page manuscript to my publisher, I got a breathless call from Read. He had finally had a conversation about all this with Connally, he said, and then, with an unmistakable pride in his voice, he announced that he had gotten Connally to agree to see me! The discussions had to be limited to "the facts," he cautioned. "This is not an overture," Julian said. "I don't want you to get the wrong idea."

I could only mumble something about it being awfully late for this, but I thanked him, sincerely. I was, however, sure of my facts. A few days later I sent off the manuscript and went to Italy for a much-needed vacation.