

August 15, 1988

Mr. Ronald P. Sokol  
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Dear Ron:

I greatly appreciated your letter of last winter. I do not know where the time has gone, as I have long intended to write again. In the meantime, we have finished up another academic year, and a new class of judges has been launched this summer in our Program. Now we are poised to commence a new academic year next week. This beginning in August has never set well with me or many other faculty members. We have the impression that we are beginning school in the middle of the summer. Last week I returned from Toronto from the annual meeting of the American Bar Association. Tomorrow I am leaving for Idaho for the Judicial Conference of the Ninth Circuit. That will be my last gasp for a few days away from the law school before we are down to serious business again.

In addition to the usual law school duties, I have two major external projects these days. One is chairing the ABA Standing Committee on Federal Judicial Improvements. We are engaged in the frustrating task of attempting to enlist the support of the ABA in behalf of much needed statutory changes in federal judicial structure. Inasmuch as we are getting nowhere with the ABA House of Delegates in endorsing our proposals, I have now launched the committee into preparing a report which will be issued to the entire country (without the necessity of anyone's approval) setting out the ideas, hoping that this will have some long-run educational benefit. My other project is membership on the Board of Directors of the State Justice Institute. This entity was created by Congress nearly two years ago as a conduit for federal money to improve the state court systems. Our major functions are making decisions on applications for grants from the state courts and from research entities involved in research on state court problems. Both of these activities take considerably more time than I had reckoned, but they are interesting, and I will stay with them at least for a while.



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You may recall that several years ago I mentioned to you the possibility that I might embark on some fiction writing where one is not tightly tied to footnotes or facts out there in the world but can invent his own facts. I finally did commence the writing of a novel and last winter, after two years of pecking away on my talking computer at random times on nights and weekends, I finished a manuscript of a novel. In response to a "query letter" seven publishers have agreed to look at the manuscript. Incidentally, the drafting of a query letter is itself a high art form, and I had some expert advice in its construction. A copy is attached. The theory of a query letter is that if it is responded to affirmatively it gets the author out of the "slush pile" of unsolicited manuscripts that receive precious little attention from the editors. If an editor responds affirmatively to the query letter, it means that the manuscript will at least get read by someone. Of the seven to whom I have sent the manuscript after hearing from them affirmatively, two have now responded negatively. Five are still looking at the manuscript. I am told that I should not be discouraged if all reject it. There is plenty of testimony that novel writers sometimes receive fifteen or twenty rejections before they hit pay dirt. I am not sure that I am game to stay with it that long, but I will at least explore a few more possibilities before giving up. I have in mind another novel but I am not inclined to begin it until I see how this one flies. If there are no takers for my present manuscript, I may give up the whole idea of novel writing as being something that is not my cup of tea. Incidentally, the next novel I have in mind is set in Korea during the Korean War.

I keep thinking that you will get back to Charlottesville for a Sokol colloquium. You should certainly plan to do so next time around. Each year this event seems to be a considerable success, and I think you would enjoy being here to witness one.

One of my daughters--my oldest child--was married here in May. My son is getting married here in October, so 1988 is proving to be a year filled with matrimonial events. I have one more child, and I hope that she says nothing about the subject until at least 1989. I hope that all goes well with you and your family. Jan and I still hope that in the not-too-distant future we will be able to get to France and to pay you a visit. Doing so is high on our list of things we would like to do. I look forward to hearing from you when you can find the time.

Sincerely,

Daniel J. Meador