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Martin to Jim and Family, 6 August 1962

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6 August 1962

Dear ole Jim and family;

On that DAY I was out in a little house about to commence sun-bathing when I heard the news over the car radio, my only means of communication. This was in Amagansett way out in Long Island. After indecisions as bad as those in flood times, I raced back to NY, a three hour drive, and caught a late plane for Memphis. I had borrowed money for the trip from a TV Film company which has an interest in my Oxford ventures. I reached Oxford early - on the day of the funeral and found that neither you people or Vickie were in town. Louise was terribly busy. I talked with brother John for a half hour, saw Leslie and Seay, sweltered in the heat and got an insite into what the two LIFE photogs were trying to do down there. They were being guided by Cofield and Meek and they had at least six reporters with them including Styron who wrote the main Life piece. I saw none of the family and didn't get anywhere near the house. A cop was guarding the entrance. It wasn't photographically important for me to be there but it was the only way for me to know what was going on. After the funeral, I passed out from the heat and lack of sleep. I now consider that what I have done and what I will do in October and November is more important for the world and myself, than ever.

I returned to NY the next day. The following week proved that what I had was valuable - I had a great deal of confidence - the very top people at Life including the publisher were in on it - and they bought my stuff for a large amount of money. There will be a major essay in Life on Faulkner country with a year. They bought first world publishing rights. None of the pix will appear elsewhere for at least another 15 months. I still retain book rights and TV rights. I do not wish the above facts to be known to other people than your selves - since there is a great deal of antipathy to Life in town. My return to Oxford will be as it has been - for a quality book. I feel now that I shall have a great deal of control over the future Life essay. Their intent is to caption pictures with quotes from his books and the people I talked to at Life seem to know very much about your part of the country and are most sympathetic to the work of Faulkner. Albert Erskine, WF'S editor at Random House, thinks that there's a good possibility of Random publishing me. However I continue to see other good quality publishers. I want to tell you more about the entire experience but I shall wait till I can get you on the phone.

I am anxious to hear of your status at the University now. Someone in Oxford said that you were not due to return till the 24th of Oxford August so when you get this could you drop me a line and let me know how to reach you - like what is best eve to catch you on phone.

I have had a pretty good month as far as work - a ten day vacation by the sea - a couple of lobsters and a deep tan.

regards

Martin