

October 14,
1951

Dear Cap:-

For many weeks I have been trying to get a letter off to you, and now here is yours on my return from the Aspen Conference on Photography. First let me speak of this for it is most important. Do you know all about the Aspen Institute, conducted each summer at Aspen Colorado under the leadership and sponsored by Mr. Walter Peapke of Chicago? What he is doing is to bring to-gether leaders in their chosen fields of many important creative people. It began with Schweitzer and the Music-Goethe festival. It is broadening out into other fields. Getting these people to-gether in this small Colorado "ghost" town where the scenery is superb and where they have no place to get away, has created a wonderful interchange of ideas. It is all guided by an outline program, but all details are left completely free with the result that spontaneous sparks fly in all directions. For a place to live, Mr. Peapke has remodeled the old hotel and staffed it with expert experts (refugees probably) and then ofcourse in the winter there is the skiing which is said to be the best in the U.S. I could write on at length. Wonderful things are happening. The Conference on Photography was a great success due largely to this spontaneity. There were representatives of completely oposite schools of thought. I went as a listener chiefly, though I got popped in in a very minor capacity through default of scheduled speakers. So I was in on the discussion for next years plans. Mr. Peapke felt we should have some people from allied fields and then the names flew around. One was yours, and I do hope that it will work out for you to be there next year. Sept. 8-18.

Now about your letter. Yest, I knew about the McCombe book a year ago last July. I immediately went over to see Dr. Kluckhohn when I heard of it and put it squarely up to him, should I withdraw or continue? I gave him my outline and showed him all the work I then had. His answer was that there was practically no overlap. He also told me that the Harvard press would publish only if he did the text. He gave me the distinct feeling that had he known I was at work his inclinations would have been elsewhere. I feel sure that when the time comes he will write an introduction for my book if you think it a good thing to ask him. As to my progress, it is slow. Again I have been hit by the elements. If I thought the drought was bad in 1945, I missed my guess. No rain all summer and things are in a bad way. In three trips out this summer, not a cloud in the sky in a land where normally the skies are superb and on which I count much. Then too, I still labor under

financial handicap. But with the last rip I made in September I feel that have made good headway. However, I have come to the very definite decision that I cannot possibly have the book completed by next April first. I shall need another year, possibly less, but I do think that my kind of book is a definite Christmas book. I have been working very hard to get all the old material, and by old I mean the old way of life of the Navaho, before it is gone. Changes are coming frighteningly fast. I have gotten much. But it has taken time. But once I feel I have sufficient of this, the present transition material should come much more quickly. I have some of this of-course. I still need to get into two very out of way regions to finish off the old material. (What would the psychologists say to my continual reversal of letters?) It takes time to make friends. There are some regions where other photographers have spoiled it for me by paying very high model fees etc. Mine come through friendship and are much more genuine as the result.

Still one more problem added to my list is the fact that I have to move and set up a new dark room. I hope this will be the last one! But at last I have found a little place that exactly suits my needs and shortly I shall have the best work room I have ever had which should make for more efficient production. An old friend who is here with me and I move next week.

So all in all, please, Mr. Boss, may I have another year to finish this book? I have come home from Aspen after lengthy talks with Dorothea Lange and Ansel with many composite ideas gleaned from these two opposing approaches.

In reading over this outpouring, I see I failed to say that last year I wrote to Wally immediately on return from my interview with Dr. Kluckhohn. His answer was to proceed. Our correspondence should be on file, I presume.

It gives me some concern with my lengthy delay on the Rio Grande to ask for more time. But one can never count on all delaying factors. The Newhalls and Ansel Adams have seen some of my material and seemed to feel I was really coming along on it. It is all at loose ends now but I hope during the winter to pull it together. From now to Christmas is my best earning season, so shortly thereafter I can send you a portfolio of prints to see.

This brings my very best wishes to you and Charles and the hope that you will lenient with your now 40 year old photographer! This is the first milestone that has ever given me cause for thought!