

The Inman Diary

A PUBLIC AND PRIVATE CONFESSION

Edited by Daniel Aaron

VOLUME II

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THE INMAN DIARY

Illustrations

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Franklin Delano Roosevelt (Roosevelt the Rat) with Mayor James Michael Curley (right) and unidentified man, 1934. Courtesy of the Boston Public Library, Print Department

“Ready for Impeachment Proceedings — Daniel H. Coakley, member of the Governor’s Council, as he went before the state Senate today as defendant in the state’s first impeachment trial in 120 years.” *Boston Traveler*, August 5, 1941. Courtesy of the Boston Public Library, Print Department

Arthur at 44, in the summer of 1939

Arthur and Evelyn in the Baby Carriage, 1940

Arthur at 45

The diarist in the 1950s

Arthur’s Boston, c. 1963, on the eve of the great demolition and the erection of the Prudential Center. Courtesy of the Prudential Insurance Company and Fay Foto

“Never is the worry and dread of the Prudential Center and the proposed six-lane, toll-road expressway off my mind.” Courtesy of the Prudential Insurance Company and Fay Foto

“Lewdly, the high control crane, its heavy ball dependent, sways, comes purposefully, bangs into concrete reinforced by steel. Dust arises. Windows no one cared to save splintered.” Courtesy of the Prudential Insurance Company and Fay Foto

William F. Callahan at work, c. 1960. Courtesy of the Massachusetts Turnpike Authority

A page from the handwritten Diary, August 20, 1942

A page from the typed Diary, June 8, 1925

Evelyn and Lolo, 1953

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BOOK

IV

Arthur's Churning World: Domestic and Foreign

1937–1941

After an interval of relative tranquillity, Arthur experienced a sinking of morale that customarily accompanied the resurgence of old aches and pains. Falling stocks and money worries synchronized with collapsing ribs, depressed lungs, and stomach poisoning. He could not make money no matter how hard he tried, thanks largely, he believed, to the policies of "Roose the Rat" and his Irish and Jewish henchmen. True, the New Deal had met with some salutary checks, but the unctuous president was still playing his nefarious game.

Arthur was ready to give up. His father refused to die, and Arthur had not the "fortitude" to kill himself. "What a bruised, spineless, squirming semblance of a thing I am," he wrote. "I exist in mortal terror of the known and the unknown behind a masquerade of dissembled interest, laughter, conversation." And to make matters worse, the extension of the Boston subway and the tearing up of St. Botolph Street by the lazy "W.P.A.'ers" filled his waking hours with noise and dust. In his desperate search for diversion, he tinkered with the idea of collecting old light-opera scores. More than ever he depended upon his sadly depleted corps of readers, especially Roderic and "Old Cesspool" or "Old Outhouse" (his private names for the salacious Mrs. Cash), and upon the reassurances of steady Edna, helpful Ella, adoring Janice, and strong Dottie Bottomley.

With the shifting of the world spotlight from Europe to Asia, Arthur excitedly watched the progress of the Japanese armies. America, he predicted, would eventually have to fight that energetic and admirable people. An alliance between Japan and Germany ("clever Hitler" was establishing his hegemony over Central Europe) would soon "cause England and France to do some head-scratching."

Meanwhile at Garrison Hall, Arthur was having trouble maintaining "hegemony" over his domestic "troops." Evelyn, at least in her uncompliant moods, still mulishly balked at his orders. Billy refused to divulge his private history. Mrs. Banks, Naomi, and Roderic required tactful handling. Those of his employees who read or copied the Diary resented the slurring references to themselves instead of accepting these occasional thrusts as expressions of momentary pique.

After two years of silence, Patricia Caffree sent the Inmans an

enormous letter in which she spelled out her marital and extramarital adventures.

August 13 I might as well continue my diary. I like doing it, it passes the time, and what the hell. I'm going to write again. The urge to chronicle the fascinating panorama of today is stronger than my distaste for doing what may be a bungling job. I've had a rest — if existing through weeks of heat and humidity can be called a rest (anyway it has been a reprieve) — and now I'm raring to go.

Much of the credit — if there be credit in persuading a man to return to what may be a faulty job — lies with Naomi. She gave me a tongue-lashing for being a quitter. That made me think. She told me that I was doing something unique and unusual and would be a coward to give up just because I was discouraged at lack of approbation. Good Naomi — a person must love you a lot to call you down with all the vehemence at their command. And Evelyn, Mrs. Banks and Woodwork have chided me for my defection. So here I am back again, pushing the old pencil vehemently across the old paper and getting an occupational crick in my back.

August 14 Ella at present is engaged in making me some pajamas. She has searched the downtown stores by the hour to find the kind of cloth I want. There seems to be no trouble she will not take to please me. She tells me all her troubles, asks my advice, takes it. At present her husband, Robert, is embarked on a venture of selling Joe Louis favors to the colored population of New York, Brooklyn and Boston. "He's going to put in a hundred and fifty dollars," explains Ella. "Even if he loses every cent of it, I consider that the experience he will have with the business will well be worth the loss. He tends to live a restricted existence. It will be good for him to come in contact with people and to spread himself out. And the chances are at least even that he'll make a success of the scheme. If he does, think of the self-confidence it will give him."

If I didn't get female affection and education when I was a boy, well you can't say I'm not having it now. And do I like it! In a measure it compensates for the years when girls passed me by and when I was so wary of them that I crossed the street when I saw them coming. If they spoil me now, I'm not the one to complain. Not I.

August 15 Very low in my mind. When you get down to bed-rock, I don't like expressing myself artistically. Fundamentally, I possess as much disdain for any art other than utilitarian art as does my Father. I write because I must do something, not because I admire the art of writing. I am Anglo-Saxon. What I really want is to do something useful, self-evident, of unquestionable merit. I would rather forge a sword or collect maple syrup or build a staunch boat or plow a straight furrow than compose the finest verses or predicate the

deepest philosophy or write the most stirring novel. I disdain art for art's sake and the artists whose milieu is art; hence, basically, I disdain myself, for if I am not an artist, at least I am striving to be one.

August 19 East wind. Cooler. Enjoyed morning. Billy and I went to Bernard's Elm. Sat on ramp. Wind in leaves overhead. Jays calling to each other. Chipping sparrows. Showed Billy how vines grew clockwise, what sort of roots various trees have, the burrs on the chestnut tree, the seed-berries on the ivy, the feather of a bird and how it is constructed for lightness and wind resistance. New knowledge for him. He was interested. He is at last really commencing to like me ever since I told him how to manage Sadie when they experienced their first misunderstanding. Billy ate an apple and I ate a can of deviled ham and some crackers. The lawn is brown from lack of rain. The Place is weed-grown and needs grooming. Enjoyed every minute of my stay.

And now I am sitting in my room with the wind blowing on my back and no one about. Evelyn went with Billy in the Pierce to Brookline to buy whitefish for my lunch at the Jewish fish store. I like being alone. I can read the paper headlines about the war in China and the Rat's last sneering attack on the wealthy.

August 22 Roosevelt so frightened the Supreme Court Justices that not a decision of major importance went against the Administration and one Justice resigned. In the place of this Justice, Roosevelt has appointed and the Senate, after some acrimonious debate, has approved Senator [Hugo L.] Black of Alabama, a radical New Dealer, a former Ku Klux Klan man, a sneerer without brains or judicial experience, a pure and simple yes man. The Governor of the State of Alabama appointed to the Senate in his stead a woman, his own wife forsooth.

August 23 I asked Woodwork if, should anything ever happen to Evelyn, she would marry me. She replied that I couldn't mean that. I said that I did, for despite how angry she made me at times, she and her mind pleased me as no one else's did. Moreover, I was by now resigned to the conviction that I loved her in spite of myself. She thanked me for the compliment. "Nothing's going to happen to Evelyn," she said. "I hope not," I said, "but you never can tell. It may be God's next move. Who knows?" "Anyway," she pursued her reasoning, "I love Allan. When I love my man, I love him all over." "That's all right by me," I said. "You've plenty of strength and emotion for two men. Allan could take care of you sexually, and that would relieve me. I wouldn't be jealous. I could give you a name and freedom from office work, and no one ever said that life with me was dull or dragged." I believe that she was touched, at least temporarily. I have a theory that much of Woodwork's hardness would vanish were she to have a fixed position in society, a name, a husband, a home. I

believe, too, that she would make a fine wife.

September 2 A new depression is brewing, of that we can be sure. Perhaps next year. Perhaps not for three years yet. When it hits, however, it should outdo the last. The country, chiefly due to New Deal meddling, is not as fit to meet it and cope with it as in 1929. We are as a patient who has been administered so many medicines that when another attack comes medicines will not do for us what they did.

September 3 Evelyn home. The dog she ordered from Alabama came. The first thing it did was to let go on Billy's floor. Billy looks tired. The heat is terrific. Evelyn has washed the dog, which is no more bloodhound than I am, albeit a nice creature, albeit with a menagerie of fleas. Evelyn takes the dog to Angel Memorial Hospital to have it de-fleaded and wormed. She intends to housebreak it. I am jealous but am saying nothing. Funny, to be jealous of a dog. She treats it as though she owns it. She takes off all her clothes when she washes it. The mind of the male is a queer mess where women are concerned.

September 6 Confused. Mrs. Cash told me of motion pictures of Shanghai at the Paramount Theatre on downtown Washington Street. I decided to go. I went. I have just returned, my eyes seeing double and my stomach sick and myself bewildered. Pictures nothing wonderful, not far advanced beyond the newsreels in 1916. They run them too fast, never give you more than a moment's glimpse at any one view from any one angle. The light and the sudden movements which my eyes wouldn't follow confused me. I was glad to leave. If I hadn't enough girls when I was young, if I wasn't permitted to do things other boys of my age were, at least I saw enough movies to last me the remainder of my life and to leave no regrets that I can't watch them now. I don't think I miss much anyway, from what I hear. As with the radio, the newspapers and the pulps, the movies studiously take into account the inability of the American mind to concentrate beyond a certain limited time on anything. I think that the publishers and the producers are as much wrong as right, but perhaps they know best. They have to make money.

September 15 I have given up working. Evelyn reads to me every afternoon. We are now reading a fine biography, 'Ships and Women.' When I don't work, I can become more lost in what others have to say. We are also reading a tiny book called 'Mr. Bulkeley and the Pirates.'¹ It is a gentle and whimsical book, all about Mr. B. and the

¹ *Ships and Women* (1937), by Bertram M. Adams (Bill Adams, pseudonym), is not a biography but an account of the author's seafaring adventures before a severe illness forced him ashore to become a writer of sea stories. B. Dew Roberts's *Mr. Bulkeley and the Pirates* (1936) relates the life and times of an eighteenth-century Welsh squire and contains extensive extracts from his diary. The "pirate" of the title was Bulkeley's scapegrace son-in-law turned privateer, Captain Fortunatus Wright.

life he led as a squire on the Island of Anglesey off the Welsh coast in the 18th century. The author writes as though, when thoughts came to him, he gave up his pruning of roses for a small hour or so, stepped inside his French windows and put down a bit more toward his antiquarian book. So these volumes give me pleasure.

Sometimes, too, there are other happenings which distract me a while from the melancholy that is now so steadily with me. Janice last evening, for instance. No one else makes so much of me, seems so genuinely to enjoy touching me. She kisses me. She runs her hands over my body. She sings snatches of tunes in her husky singing voice. She ruffles my hair. She tweaks my nose. In a word, she makes herself master of my body to such a degree that I am solaced and persuaded to forget myself awhile. "I wonder," said she, "just how much of this you would stand if I were with you constantly?" Not much, probably, but as an interlude her apparent devotion is a healing unguent to my tired spirit.

September 18 Billy left this morning for his five-day vacation. He went in his car; Sadie and Sadie's mother ("Ma") were with him. He appears to like Ma about as well as Sadie. Mrs. Banks asserted that his penchant for older women is a sign of his undeveloped mind. Billy has common sense, tact and a pleasant nature, but there's no denying the limitations of his mentality. Imagine an ordinary male, not six months married, taking mother-in-law on a trip with himself and his wife and footing the bill to boot. "Billy," I said, "I'll bet there's not one man in a hundred would do it." "I bet you," he answered, "that there ain't one in a thousand." They have no idea whether they are bound. "We just go where our inclinations lead us."

October 6 Night before last the first work on the subway in this near vicinity began, digging up St. Botolph Street for a two-block, U-shaped deflection of the city water main from Huntington Avenue. No sleep all night. Pneumatic machines tearing up the pavement. Boards being thrown about or driven in the ground with huge mallets, men shouting, whistling, trucks coming and going. All in yesterday. The day spent finding out whether or not a curb could be put on the night activities of the workmen.

I fear I must admit defeat insofar as stopping the building of the subway is concerned. One or two courageous men willing to fight for the beliefs they expressed and with sufficient daring to buck the politicians, and one lawyer with ingenuity, and we could have halted this particular politicians' dream in its tracks. I am sure of it. But where in America are courageous businessmen, men not so afraid of losing what they have left that they stand inept and cringing on the possessions left them by the Jews and the Irish and the women and the educational funds and foundations? And where is a lawyer with real ingenuity and perseverance? I am disgusted with the American

male. He is a gutless, timid, cautious shadow of what he was forty years ago, a straddler with one eye on the hold he still has on his possessions and the other on the politicians, his acknowledged lords and masters. He is a de-spurred baron who has climbed to his last fortress while the mercenaries of greed and avarice swarm the broad domains that once were his, unchallenged and unmolested. He does not intend to die fighting but to hold on to what he has left by caution, bribery, acquiescence, subterfuge and the camouflage of remaining unnoticed.

Yesterday the Rat cut loose in a speech at Chicago and renounced the American policy of isolation, calling for a "quarantine" for aggressor nations. Is it the first step toward a war with Japan? Roosevelt has been on a Western tour. Has he seen his power slipping and resorted to the subterfuge of those who will retain power at any price, war and the talk of war? Or is he being used as a cat's paw by the British, even as Woodrow Wilson was? It is a momentous right-about-face if he means it. The League of Nations, China and probably the English are jubilant.

October 13 Evelyn left this morning for Portland to see Father. She dreads the job. "Nobody else will talk to him. Somebody has to. It seems to be up to me. He depresses me beyond words." She plans to ask him for money and, if the outlook is propitious, to bring up the subject of the will again. Coca-Cola has dropped some but not at all when compared with other stocks, so that he should still be financially cheerful. What the outcome of the interview will be it is impossible to guess. I only hope that the sledding goes not too hard for Evelyn and that she makes a couple of good runs on the sandy soil that is my parent. I told her to let him know that I was better than a week ago and would love to see him if he wished to stop by Boston. I pray that he stays away. Poor Evelyn, it is a dog's job, thankless, that she is undertaking.

October 14 The door opens and Evelyn comes in. She throws a check for \$250 on my writing board. "I'm sorry," she says, "but it was the best I could do. I had a hard time getting that. Your father left Portland this morning to take the Mohawk Trail. He was overjoyed not to have to see you." He told Evelyn that I was ruining him, etc. As a matter of fact, the dividends he gets from Coca-Cola alone, and that after paying income taxes, would support me. Evelyn thought it expedient not to push him to get more money nor to raise the question of the will.

October 27 On Sunday and Monday I inserted an ad in the 'Herald' for someone to read and sing to an author. Mrs. Banks has been telling me for a long time that, did I acknowledge I was a writer, I would obtain a better class of people. It seems as though she were right. Four excellent possibilities thus far—an old bird of

energy and vehemence who can both play and read, an art student who cannot earn a living painting so is going to be a nursemaid, a girl, twenty-four, divorced from her husband, and someone else. We have had at least two hundred answers, seventy or more Irish and, consequently, for the wastebasket. Have interviewed people until dream about them nights. More of them today.

October 29 What pleases my Father is an admixture of flattery, apology, sentimentality, self-deprecation, blunt forthrightness and sinuous evasion. I didn't want Aunt Louise to blackball me when Father reached Atlanta, so I resolved to send him the sort of missive he would wish to receive. The following is what I composed, but for heaven's sake don't believe most of it—as though, assuming that you have read much that has come before in this record of mine, you would.

October 25, 1937

Dear Father: —

I was very sorry indeed that I felt so badly and you felt so badly that we didn't see each other. But probably I couldn't have been lively, and seeing me would only have worried you. I hope to be stronger in the spring so that you can have a nice visit. I assure you I don't like being down in health the way I have been for two years now.

It is nice that Evelyn had a good visit with you in Portland. She is a grand wife, and I appreciate her daily.

Evelyn tells me that you told her that "certain persons in Atlanta" had suggested to you that all I cared about you was for as much money as I could get out of you. While I suppose it must seem that way to "certain people in Atlanta," I want to assure you that it is not so. While I do worry about what sort of plans you have made about your money should anything happen to you, I do that because of my physical helplessness and not because I wish to value your money more than your devotion. If sometimes I have been unwise in my expenditures in the past, I have learned from my mistakes to be more careful and to put a high value upon your unusual wisdom as an investor. I can promise you, for instance, that my Stock Market days are over and behind. As you once told me, "It is too easy to be taken for a ride." I try harder every year to make my expenses come within the income you send me. If I weren't sick so much I could easily do so. I shall not cease to try. I seem, I am sorry to say, to run about two thousand dollars behind each year now, but I give you my word it is not because I want to. I appreciate your generosity with me too much to want to impose on it, and I want to say in plain words that I don't enjoy asking anyone, not even you, for money.

So will you please tell those "people in Atlanta" that they don't

know what they're talking about. I have always been honest with you and will always be so, as I value honesty myself and know that you do. I shall probably have to continue to ask you for extra money as long as this present sick spell continues, but it isn't because I am trying to milk you. I ask only because I have been so ill and the doctors cost so much. It makes me annoyed to have people suggest things to you when they aren't so. I do the best I can. You'd think, I know, that with all the money you give Evelyn and me, we'd have a lot to spend on ourselves for clothes and trips and luxuries. But it is not so. Doctors and rent and people to care for me eat up the cash, as Evelyn has explained to you. And yet I honestly try to live not more expensively than will prevent me from suffering. Some of the burden of caring for me has to be taken off Evelyn's shoulders by other people, as she isn't as strong as she looks. She should be away from me some, as no one ought to be made to stay with me the year around; it is too confining.

But I think that undoubtedly you personally understand that I am doing the best I can and in no wise or any way wish to take advantage of your generosity, so I'll stop before you begin to fear that I want something or have some worry to burden you with.

I hope that you will be even more sure of how I feel now, for I have written my heart in this letter. While you and I don't always agree on small points, that in no wise stops me from loving you and admiring you and feeling the respect and devotion a son feels for his father.

Devotedly,
Arthur

That is what I wrote, had censored by Evelyn and Edna, sent by air mail to Charlotte. I always like to write Father at Charlotte, for Mr. Johnson, the man with whom he chums there, is a good influence on him. He answered air mail. His letter, as Evelyn puts it, is all I could wish for and should make me feel sheepish. Perhaps it does, a bit. If Father were as human as some of his letters, or at least if he acted as human as they sound, he and I would get along with less friction. He certainly can write a heartrending epistle.

Oct. 27, 1937.

My Dear Arthur:

Thank you very much for your nice letter, and am very glad you wrote it as it gives me a chance to get you straight on several things which I feel that you have been needlessly worrying over.

The first is that my advice to you is, so long as you feel that you are doing right not to worry too much about what other people

think as it is as far as I can see a personal matter entirely between you and me and it is not the business of anyone else.

The second is that while I have always said that you were most secretive and that it seems almost impossible ever to get the whole or to the bottom of anything with you, and have often thought of you that at times you showed very poor judgement in getting the full value for your money and in some of the things that you put your money into, never for a moment have I doubted your absolute honesty and sincerity nor have I ever thought that you were willingly trying to hold me up for more money than you thought you actually needed.

It is with a heart full of gratitude and relief to my peace of mind to hear you say that your stock market days are over and behind. Some lessons are hard to learn, as I have found to my sorrow in my own case, but once learned they seem worth the experience as I feel certain that I would have nothing today if the stock market had gone my way when I was younger.

I also appreciate very much your efforts to try to live within your income and I think I understand and realize just what you are up against when you have your long sick spells and have always tried to impress on you that I did not want you to ever suffer for anything that would add in a reasonable way to your health, happiness, or comfort.

Remember my dear son that you are all I have and my whole effort in life is to try and see that you are taken care of both while I am alive and after I am gone, and for this reason I have had to play as nearly safe as my human judgement would allow me.

I hope and trust that this letter will relieve your mind, stop any worries that you may have had about my ever having doubted you, and give you in a measure some of the happiness and relief that your letter has given me, and with dearest love to both you and Evelyn, I am devotedly your father,

H. A. Inman

P.S. Your expressions of love for and trust in me go a long ways towards helping me struggle on.

You are too much like your old Dad to ever be dishonest about anything.

A couple of days ago margin requirements were lowered from 55% to 40%, and a margin requirement on short sales of 50% was instituted. The Market is answering favorably. Paid Dr. Pike another \$500 last week, leaving a debt of \$1,500. This morning I am sending a check for \$500 to N.P. Putt & Company to be used on a