



The Proud Highway: Saga of a Desperate Southern Gentleman, 1955-1967 (The Fear and Loathing Letters, Vol. 1)

By Hunter S. Thompson

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Here, for the first time, is the private and most intimate correspondence of one of America's most influential and incisive journalists--Hunter S. Thompson. In letters to a Who's Who of luminaries from Norman Mailer to Charles Kuralt, Tom Wolfe to Lyndon Johnson, William Styron to Joan Baez--not to mention his mother, the NRA, and a chain of newspaper editors--Thompson vividly catches the tenor of the times in 1960s America and channels it all through his own razor-sharp perspective. Passionate in their admiration, merciless in their scorn, and never anything less than fascinating, the dispatches of The Proud Highway offer an unprecedented and penetrating gaze into the evolution of the most outrageous raconteur/provocateur ever to assault a typewriter.

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

This first volume of the correspondence of Hunter S. Thompson begins with a high school essay and runs up through the publication of Thompson's breakout book, *Hell's Angels*. Thompson apparently never threw a letter away, so the reader has the treat of experiencing the full evolution of his pyrotechnic writing style, rant by rant. The letters--to girlfriends, to bill collectors, to placers of "Help Wanted" ads, to editors and publishers--are usually spiced with political commentary. The style and the political animus always seem to drive each other. For instance, an 11/22/63 letter to novelist and friend William J. Kennedy about the day's cataclysm is apparently the birthplace of the signal phrase "fear and loathing." (Thompson summed up the Kennedy assassination thus: "The savage nuts have shattered the great myth of American decency.") And the willingness to write strangers is stunning: this collection includes Thompson's letter to LBJ seeking appointment to the governorship of American Samoa. You might have thought Garry Trudeau was exaggerating in his *Doonesbury* characterization of the Thompson-based character Duke. He was not.

From Library Journal

"I'm already the new Fitzgerald," Thompson declares gamely at age 19, in 1957, as his cracking lifelong correspondence gets under way. "I just haven't been recognized yet." The original gonzo journalist, who struck the big time with his book on the Hell's Angels ten years later (when this first volume of correspondence terminates), amply displays his talent for bragging?and barking?in these self-consciously irreverent, wordy, and often tender letters he was fond of banging out impulsively to friends like William J. Kennedy (*Ironweed*); magazine editors from whom he hoped to scare up work; youths who asked for career advice; Lyndon Johnson, when asking for the job of governor of American Samoa; and writers whose work he read with violent pleasure or loathing (Norman Mailer, William Styron, Nelson Algren). Thompson enjoyed messing up wherever he could but he never lost a grip on his desire to become a damn good writer. This is a shot in the liver for struggling writers and a searing testimony to an important moment in American journalism. Highly recommended.

-?Amy Boaz, "Library Journal"

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From Booklist

William Kennedy (*Ironweed*) writes an evocative foreword to this collection of letters that lays out Thompson's early struggle to become a writer, and, in the process, Kennedy defines "gonzo journalism" as it relates to HST's brand of fiction. Of course, it is easy to write so evocatively when one's subject is an arrogant but talented writer. And no one will ever doubt the arrogance of HST after reading this book: he corresponded wildly and, according to the editor of the collection, always made carbon copies, "hoping they would be published . . . as a testament to his life and times." And directly from HST: "These were the pre-Xerox days, and I was anal retentive in my desire to save everything." The earliest letters in his 20,000-letter collection are dated 1947 (HST at 10 years old). The 200 letters of this published collection will include those written from 1955 to 1967. But self-assurance does not make a book, and this is quite a book. In these times of e-mail, letters like Hunter's are a reminder of what a letter can be--our own personal literature that is, indeed, a testament to our life and times. And the insights into U.S. cultural and political history offered in his letters are deliciously voyeuristic--his responses to being "stomped" by the Hell's Angels just prior to publication of his book about them; the crazy scenes of people invading Big Sur, seeking orgies with Henry Miller; the little pas de deux between HST and Philip Graham and between . . . This collection rivals any Thompson biography. *Bonnie Smothers*

Users Review

From reader reviews:

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Do you have favorite book? If you have, what is your favorite's book? Guide is very important thing for us to know everything in the world. Each publication has different aim or goal; it means that reserve has different type. Some people sense enjoy to spend their a chance to read a book. They can be reading whatever they acquire because their hobby is actually reading a book. Consider the person who don't like examining a book? Sometime, man or woman feel need book if they found difficult problem or even exercise. Well, probably you'll have this The Proud Highway: Saga of a Desperate Southern Gentleman, 1955-1967 (The Fear and Loathing Letters, Vol. 1).

Margherita Pettit:

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