

12/15/73

Dear Phil,

Yes, I smoke too heavily. I used to enjoy a pipe more but they got to biting my mouth too much. I suppose if I could again find a Turkish water pipe I'd use it when reading. Use to relish the one I had as a young man. I also almost stopped a while back. In 8/67 I was down to a single cigarillo a day when we got chian-smoking company who plied me with cigarettes. When I awakened hours before anyone else, she had a pack on my desk. Before long I was hooked again. After we moved here I decided to cold turkey it and almost passed out. Then I asked a shrink. He told me that if I did I would also be impossible, too late to try. Don't know how good his advice was. In general I feel that with the load on tensions I carry any extra one will be a real burden.

You are right. I seem to be almost immune to depression. Perhaps this is irrational. My reactions is generally an extra shot of adrenalin and I fight back. However, my wife is not immune, and things can get pretty rough for her. All these years with me and what they have meant would have been too much for anyone else. Almost 40 years, and none easy. I wish I understood it better so I could be more helpful. Perhaps also less unhelpful. I am not at all sure that doing what I can to cushion is the right way. Or the minor little things, like serving the special tea she like inbed each morning. And at least two cups before she gets out, which I'm inclined to think is not good. bad time of the day to brood.

I don't mean to sound like an anti-woman's libber, but I really do think that the needs of the bodies and the minds do differ. On the other hand, I relished it when we got an Xmas card addressed to Mr. and Mrs. Jillian Weisberg. Exercise is good for the bodies of both. However, nature designed each for a different purpose. Each superior for some purposes. The minds, no; the bodies, yes. (Unless possibly there is an innate superiority to the feminine mind, which I'd be willing to concede without knowing or knowing how it could be measured. I'd also concede that society has made it impossible for women to make maximum uses of their minds. But I could theorize, that because of the difference in nature's design, it serves nature's ends for the woman's mind to be superior. Man? He was born for the club! The kind he swings, not joins. ~

As a matter of fact, I'd expected to be outside with the ax and the machete at this moment. With Lil to answer the phone and no real exercise for a week I want to. But I'm tired. Started a little after 5 a.m. If I perk up before the forecast snow I will.

There is a story to that handout, for which thanks. You are kind to the movie not because of its technical things but because of its (false) pretenses. The handout was written after the fact by one not connected with the book or the movie.

Don't waste time on Hunt's non-account of the Bay of Pigs. I got a set of the galleys. What I am looking forward to being able to read is Tad Szulc's ax job on Hunt. I suspect Szulc served more than the New York Times! It is an exceptionally complicated business. All spooks and spooking are. Beginning with personalities.

You both deserve the vacation. Hope you enjoy it. It will also give you some time for different creativity. (It comes in so many forms! I can't get to what I want most to do because I feel that if I do not do what I am doing it won't be done and it should be.)

Guess I'd better get outside. Have a good holiday and as good a year as the benefactions of our Glorious Leader permit.

Best,

P.S. The trunks, too heavy, lay where I was able to maneuver them, the neighbors not having come to help lay them on the broken dam. When there is another man here perhaps I'll be able to measure and cut and eliminate the extra weight. But using a fulcrum only would be a bit much for putting them where I need them!

10 December 73

Dear Archimedes,

Greatly enjoyed your tale of the tree. And I heartily second your remarks re: physical exercise. It is 1.7 miles from our house to the hospital, so that makes 3.4 miles nearly every day for me—plus a mile or so of jogging plus some general body exercises most every week day at the YMCA. Certain yoga postures are very useful, also. But one very, very nasty problem for me has been cigarette smoking. I quit altogether this last January—then started again last month while working days. I go back to nights tonight and have equipped myself with a couple of pipes...hoping to gradually quit again altogether. The pipe is infinitely better for you than cigarettes, but no tobacco is good for anyone. As I recall, you used to smoke heavily yourself. Perhaps you have stopped too?

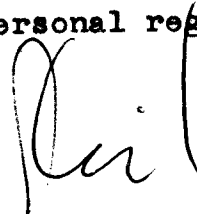
I don't know about your theory re: male, female & the vigorous physical life. Certainly women in America are discouraged from that sort of thing...but then the East German (for example) female athletes suggest other possibilities. But in any case I thoroughly agree that both body and mind are enhanced through vigorous, consistent exercise.

Corrected page proofs for Steppenwolf Five returned today to our printer in England. Glad to have that job nearly behind us. We are going to rest on our laurels for a few years before picking the work up again. Editing the magazine has fostered, among other things, a positive dread of correspondence and bookkeeping that now borders on the pathological. And I am grateful to you for keeping our exchange of letters going these past few years. Long periods have gone by, as you know, with little or no word from my end. Hopefully I can change that now. Letters are, after all, my one real defense against intellectual isolation. The climate here, both mental and physical, is harsh. Depression is apparently not a problem for you, and I'm very glad it isn't, but I am not so fortunate. It must be resisted.

I've not had the stamina to trudge through a second Hunt book, not even the so-called "true story" of the Cuban operation. Again, I can only wonder out loud how many of these looneys our government has on its payroll.

Finally, enclosed is the film company's hand-out for patrons of Executive Action—a technically well made but pointless movie. For your files, anyway.

Warmest personal regards,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Neil".