

CBS special HW 8/28/75

Jim Lesar was quite disturbed yesterday when in effect Ernie Leiser of the CBS crew blackmailed him over an innocent and irrelevant mistake Jim had made in answer to a question he should not have answered. Leiser was going to use the error in the show is the way it came across unless he got a Ray interview.

There is a record of what I wrote Jim. I taped our conversation at his request.

Lesier phoned me after he spoke to Jim without so telling me. He wanted to come here today and I told him it would be inconvenient until after the 9th., when Howard returns.

I then asked Lesier while he was on the phone if until then there was any question of fact he wanted to check with me or anything about which he wanted me to think. He said not to both.

Esther Kartiganer phoned me late this a.m. to see if I knew where Jim was. I didn't. We got to talking when I told her where I hoped he was and it turned out that, as she put it, she and Leiser both had trouble sleeping over the accidental little mistake Leiser had made. (Jim, too, as it turned out.)

Because she wanted to be the one to tell Jim she did not tell me but what she later told him is that they are not going to use the footage. From Jim's account it seems pretty clear that she had really laid it on the line to Leiser and/or others.

I was polite but made it clear to her that there could be no accident in bracketing a treat to use an error with an interview with Ray.

From this I went on to comment that it is not right to cast lawyers on camera in rolls they do not serve. Jim is ~~his~~ defense counsel and not Perry Mason. He has to defend Ray, not solve the crime. I told her that it seemed to me there had to be something exceptional in an approach that does not begin with the basic fact of the case and that CBS had avoided this. That lawyers ought not be confronted with questions they should not be asked on camera because the situation is bad either way with the camera rolling and especially when CBS knows Jim is trying to be cooperative. When I told her that we were neither being paid and that I had supplied all the information possible the questions asked of Jim should have been asked of me. She said that everything I had told her had checked out 100%.

I did nothing except discuss this by phone with Jim. Jim stayed up to draft a letter to Rather he'll not now send. So, there has to have been something internal. It just isn't possible that a Lesier will try to pull something as raw as this and not know what he is doing. The deliberateness was obvious to Jim as it was to me when Jim told me about it. (Lesier interviewed Bud and said to Esther that it was a very pleasant interview. Bud told Jim Leiser is a prick.)

It hardly seems possible that anyone other than Esther could have forced this to an issue. If she was sleepless last night it wasn't because it had all worked out last night. If Lesier was sleepless last night it wasn't because on his own he was upset over being a scoundrel. My belief is that Esther heard or got wind of what Leiser had done and made an issue of it. He was worried for reasons other than she was. She may well have worried about her job, about what she might feel impelled to do, about this sign of what she is into. My hunch is that she phoned Jim as soon as she got it resolved. Jim had taken the baby for a regular check. He called me later after she got him in.