

Thad Drehr
615 S. Ott
Columbia, SC 29205

10/27/94

Dear Thad,

When I could no longer not recognize that my time was limited, although, happily, less limited than I'd feared, I decided to spend what time I do have trying to perfect the record for history to the degree possible for me. I've been productive. I've completed, except for conclusions and unless I think of something else, a rather long book ms and I'm adding to a shorter one I'd thought I'd finished. I have no agent and my recent experience, which take me back to where I started in this sick field, with a published persuade me not to try to get them published. Perhaps later they will be. But my point is that I do have less time remaining than before and I deny myself the enjoyment that can come from interesting correspondence. As on the truly great Tom Paine.

Two weeks ago a very bright boy in high school near Baltimore was here. He'd never heard of Tom Paine. I've understood for years that most places exclude him from our history as it is taught. And from what I remember, he should be credited with more than 50% of the Declaration. That he is a stranger to our young means we are in the times that try mens souls, decent, caring men.

Last time I was fishing in the Bay was before WW II, about 1939. I no longer remember the species in it, if those then still are, but there are blues and my what eels. I has a chalk line over the side with some meat for a crab and ~~some~~ an eel took it and burned the hell out of the hand around which the line was wrapped.

We do not have any souther/marauders in it ~~but~~ believe it or not recently there was a manatee. It was a major operation saving it in a tributary but they did and then flew it south.

If I could type as well as you I'd be overjoyed.

The books were typed first on an old Royal long-carriage I got at a low cost and when it wore out a new one. I had legal-size sheets ruled in blue to give my wife the margins that the offset camera would reduce to a 6x9 page. And that is how we did it. After the first, nylon ribbons were available and they give a sharper imprint. But the first was with carbon ribbons.

Reading: if you've not read David Wise's 1973 The Politics of Lying, worth the time. I'm most of the way through it.

Your comments on Paine are appropriate to the stamp you used, Ben Franklin. It was Ben who talked Paine into coming here from England. Where as some kind of customs agent he got in trouble writing that they should be better paid.

Best,

Herold

sadday 21 october

HAROLD WEISBERG
Frederick Md

Dear sir:

thomas paine....THOMAS PAINE ??...i haven't read Tom Paine since my undergraduate days, about a hunderd years ago.

still, we sucked in Tom Paine with our mother's milk. more exactly, with our undergraduate beer ? he, with a handful of others, created the very air we breathe, is it not so ? we still talk about inalienable rights, and the age of reason, and government by consent, and the pursuit of happiness - all those good things which we take for granted, which once shocked the Establishment right out of their underwear.

one of the really remarkable things in our history; here's this guy who was the very spirit & soul of the Revolution, he thought it up and sold it to other men, he is at least 50% responsible for our most precious document, the Declaration; he talked it into being, and wrote about it for those he couldn't reach first hand; he put his neck on the block as much as any other, Marse Tom & Big George and Benny F. and Sam Adams;

and yet...you can scour the land for a monument to Tom Paine, any kind of monument, even a street named for him. *How about a stamp? You ever see T.P. on a stamp? But look at this envelope...*
you wanta explain that to me ?
yes, he was a difficult fellow. he was querulous, quarrelsome, cranky, impossible to like.

so what ? he got it done, he carved the block, we all enjoy the fruits of his labours ?

he wasn't respectable, you know ? He knew that western civilization, like all civilizations everywhere, rests squarely on a set of lies, agreed upon. once you see this clearly, and know it, you are forever doomed to be an outsider, there is nothing you can do to be accepted into the company of respectables, like Jefferson and Washington. no monuments for tom paine.

there comes to mind another outstanding and creative personality who came to the same end; read the article on Swedenborg in 11th Britannica, and you will find that this very dubious character conceived and wrote about the condensation of the family of planets out of a cloud of gaseous debris, long before anybody else came up with such a nutty and impossible concept. Read any history of science, any respectable history, and they will solemnly swear that the nebular hypothesis was conceived by that barren old professor Immanuel Kant, and made mathematically presentable by Laplace; and nowhere will they even mention Emanuel Swedenborg. not respectable, you know; good christ, this old fool talked with angels every day !!!

yeah, i remember those old Underwoods, all right...there must have been millions of them in offices all over the place. four-square, rectangular, heavy, heavy metal....delicate ladies had to get a man to do it, when they wanted to move the thing to another desk.

after its working life was over, you could tie a line to it, and use it for a small-boat anchor.

if i could find one of those in working order i would certainly bring it home with me. but now i have to make do with this old Smith-Corona that i gave twenty dollars for down at GoodWill, twenty years ago; that works out to about a dollar a year, to automate my correspondence.

my idiot brother keeps telling me i got to get one of these word-processor things, so i can type in BODONI BOLD or FUTURA LIGHT, as the spirit moves me.

i laugh at him and tell him that if i had two grand to piss away, i would import a keg or two of finest Irish dew, JOHN JAMIESONS or JOHN POWERS GOLD LABEL, enough to ease my passage through this vale of tears.

i tell him that nothing any good has ever been written on a word processor, and probly never will be;

that everything i know of that is worth reading, like the PHAIDO and the DECLARATION, was written with a goose-quill pen dipped in ink made from lamp-black mixed withbear's oil, by the light of a candle lit by a slave of some contrasting color;

that when you start worrying on technique, that is the sure sign you dont really have anything much to say....

see ? i can be as ornery as tom paine ever thought about being, and for the same reasons. they'll never raise any monuments to me, either: one thing your fellow apes will never forgive you for, is to go around pointing out the perfectly obvious.

come to think of it, if i had a whole keg of John Powers, i could tell all the doctors to go piss up a rope.

you want an aphorism for the computer age ? i made this one after one of those IBM ads telling us that if you didn't have one of their number-crunching infernal machines, you didn't know what reality is:

MORE IS BETTER,
FASTER IS BETTER,
MORE, FASTER, IS Paradise.

Kurt Vonnegut, our Principal Madman, made this one to go along with that one about virtue and its rewards; in violent contrast to the Socratic injunction KNOW THYSELF, we post-freudians have come to another conclusion:

SELF-KNOWLEDGE IS PRETTY GENERALLY BAD NEWS

two or three wars ago i did some hard time up there in your neck of the woods. boot camp at bainbridge, in january.

the japanese never laid a glove on me, but those g.d. navy doctors did everything in their power to do me in, and came so close i flinch every time i think about it.

(there's a dove sitting on the oil drum right outside my window, trying to look in here and see what i'm doing. he wants to know if theres gonna be any more crumbled biscuits this afternoon....)

later

putting my theory about technique vs. content into proper mathematical form: let t =technique, c =content, then

$tc=k$, where k is an arbitrary constant.

putting this to the reality test, i would have said, before i ever saw or read any evidence, that

- a) Harold Weisberg can't type a damn bit better than i can; and
- b) his books will look like they were published by the local YMCA, on a mimeograph machine run by volunteer teen-agers.

both ~~observations~~ fully borne out by later events.
predictions

now what i want to know is, if you take a bucket of live shrimp, three or four old herrings, a sack of Mirro-lures and a sack of yellow lead-head jigs down to the Bay, what could you expect to bring home for dinner ?

there must certainly be flounder, ~~go~~ some kind of bottom-fish ? how about croaker, spot-tails, whiting, blue runner ? sea-trout, weakfish ?

do any of the deep-sea marauders find their way into the Bay, like bluefish, jacks, ladyfish, bonito, little macs, big macs ?

no tarpon that far north, i expect. no kingfish chasing the squid. ~~ix~~ how about snapper, any kind of mutton snappers, mangrove snappers ?

far cut bait,
of course

i got to quit this, makes me feel like this ole rockin chair has got me, and that aint good---

Thad

oh yeah, my favorite source of aphorisms is John Heywood, who lives in this old mud-colored Bartlett i got for 50¢, also at my favorite GoodWill. what he says is funny; the way he says it is hilarious:

ALL IS FYSSHE THAT COMETH TO NETTE.

and a companion-piece about fysshe:

THE CATTE WOULD EATE FYSSHE, BUT WOULD NOT GET HIR FEETE WETTE.