

CHAPTER 12

The Beginning of the Ending That Meant a New Beginning

Carl Bernstein was one of the pair of youthful *Washington Post* reporters who did most of the best of Watergate investigating and reporting. Later Bernstein wrote a book Loyalties about the abuse and suffering of his parents who had a difficult time after his father had become a "security" case. Bernstein interviewed Clark Clifford, then an eminent Washington lawyer who had been President Harry Truman's White House Counsel. With almost 40 years having elapsed, Clifford told Bernstein that Truman's "loyalty" program was not that at all. Truman was not really concerned about the loyalty of government employees.

What he was worried about was the political exploitation of the nonexistent "subversive" issue so inhumanely and effectively propagandized by the Democrats, Dies and McCarthy, and their numerous ilk in the Republican party.

By instituting his program Truman hoped to defuse the successful GOP assault on the Democrats as the alleged protectors of alleged subversives.

That may have been Truman's purpose but the way it worked was to ruin the lives of innumerable decent people who were not in any rational sense subversive and to deny the government and thus the people some of the best and best-informed public servants.

Castigation as a risk to the nation made obtaining employment difficult and sometimes impossible. Men, women and their children and others in their families suffered very much. Many outstanding people just would not apply for or accept government jobs. All this without accomplishing what Truman supposedly wanted to accomplish, according to Clifford.

Even in the minority of cases where these employees were "cleared" they had difficulty starting new

lives. Just imagine, Americans having their loyalty questioned for their supposed ideas, not for any subversive notion, merely because there were those, especially in the Congress, who saw political advantage in it, with absolute and total immunity, which the Congress enjoys in this Ameriform Hitlerism.

In the convoluted political situation they brought to pass those who abused and shamed every traditional and decent American belief became heroes for it. Dies and McCarthy did for quite some time. McCarran was honored, too. There is still an airport named for him- for what the Supreme Court later determined violated our Constitution and, for what for personal political gain he did, ruining the lives of so many innocents.

During the time our lawyers were fighting their good and successful fight to get our good names back, to the degree that can be done after such official denunciation, I made no effort to find another job, believing it would be futile. Then Bob Rogers took over the Washington "good music" station, then only the second in the country to program classical music. It was foundering and about to go under. In time he made a real success of it. As he was rebuilding it he turned to the news the station offered, read unchanged from the wire service ticker. What was aimed at the broadcast spectrum of listeners fell short of what served the better-educated, more sophisticated, culture-minded audience that preferred classical music. He asked me to become its news and special events editor.

WQQW, the call letters suggested by those of the country's first such station, WQXR, in New York, was then a daytimer. It was licensed to operate only during the daylight hours. I was at the station two hours before it went on the air to prepare the first newscast. I changed them hourly as the news developed.

I was surprised at what was not available to the nation's capitol listeners, including the media, the Congress and the vast number of government employees and those doing business with them, not ny any

means limited to lobbyists.

One example is that with all of Washington's many radio stations, not one presented the daily official program of the United Nations.

Of Washington's many radio stations, two then were all news in format. One of these was a CBS station, with CBS news for its listeners, too. When I wondered why the impartial news of the UN was not offered by any Washington station to its listeners, one reason could have been that the half-hour of that recorded UN news provided for no commercials during that half-hour. What also could not be avoided is that the UN's news was not aired in Washington because of a preference for reporting on the UN through our government's eyes and voice, not impartially. Most of the UN news that was reported was what our government preferred- was reported, as our government preferred that it be reported, with what it preferred not to have reported not being reported.

I encountered this media attitude later, when our President was assassinated. Then the media record left no doubt about it-all elements of the media reported only what the government wanted reported and nothing else at all. While my most intense experience with this, what amounts to media self-censorship, the making of the free media into an arm of government, was with book publishers, it was omnipresent in the media. The one significant exception was some of the media talk shows. They then were not as heavily loaded with right-wing views as was inevitable when the Republican administrations ended the "fairness doctrine" of the Federal Communications Commission and the Clinton administration announced it would not reinstate that requirement that more than a single view be aired. Most of these right-wing talk show hosts who do not find knowing what they talk about to be a necessity in what their air have the strange notion that it is only those of what they regard as the left who question the official mythology. That is not and never has been true. Those talk show hosts have their own agenda.

I found this to be true of some reporting in those days along with a lack of enterprise reflected by the electronic and print press often being satisfied with what was delivered by the news agencies they used, usually using nothing else.

One morning I had written the early morning news for the opening broadcast then at seven. Just as I was leaving to hand it to the control board announcer so he could read and be familiar with it, the wire service teletype machine started clanging. Those bells represented something more important.

That time it was the alert not intended to be aired, that AP was checking on the rumor that India's revered man of peace, Mohandus Ghandi had been assassinated.

After scrawling a new lead, "There is an unconfirmed report that India's famed Ghandi has been assassinated. More to follow," I wondered briefly how I could get more than might be on the AP wire for the station's influential audience, including in responsible government roles, as well as for those who would without any special professional reason be interested in such news as fast as possible.

Remembering that on the top floor, in the engineer's office, there was an old short wave receiver, I phoned the Washington office of the British Broadcast Corporation and asked what short wave frequencies were then in use that could be received in Washington. On learning I tuned BBC in and ran a pair of wires from it downstairs to the control room. The announcer prepared to feed that into the transmitter. And lo! BBC did soon have eyewitness accounts and a reporter on the scene. While what we aired was not of preferred broadcast quality, we did air the first account of the Ghandi assassination in Washington. It was simultaneous with the BBC's airing.

This was not the only time our news agencies and reporters failed to provide the available news about a major international event in time of crisis. When rapid and accurate accounts are of great importance. Here is another illustration.

The American states were holding a conference in Bogota, Columbia. It was a major event. During it the popular Columbian political leader whose name was as I recall Elieacer Gaitan was assassinated. Riots ensued. Fidel Castro was the bete noir of the State Department as he was, of course, of the anti-Castro Cuban and of just about all the right-wing groups. The impossible fiction that Castro had had the popular Columbian leader to the left of center assassinated and was responsible for the ensuing and dangerous violence was the immediate official policy and propaganda. The violence was called the "Bogotaza." I knew about Gaitan from my days as a Latin Americanist. He was far and away the leader most popular among the Columbian masses, particularly the poor and the more liberal. He was in fact the political leader of those in that country who opposed reaction in it. He was the last Columbian anyone at all to the left wanted dead. He was assassinated by radical rightists, thus ending any political threat to them from any form of liberalism for years.

Remembering that at the Falls Church transmitter we had a young engineer named "Morty" who was also a radio amateur I asked him if he was getting any South American amateurs. He had in fact been listening to one on Bogota who was giving an eye witness account of the battles. We aired the news reported by those amateurs Morty was receiving. We also fed the information to the AP which distributed it to its clients. AP cited what I did with thanks and with praise on its wire as it did earlier with our Ghandi assassination coverage.

Any of the larger stations could have done a much better job with better "ham" equipment than Morty had but none did. Again the clear inference is that the free media abdicated to national policy and used no initiative to do its job, preferring to follow the official State Department line. In this they became part of a misleading political hate campaign and did not report the truth.

This also was the media record when JFK was assassinated.

The only complaints I remember about the news I aired was from Arabs who appeared to be attached to various embassies.

When the most powerful Arab armies attacked what had just become the State of Israel by United Nations resolution I filled in the gaps in the brief AP wire accounts for radio use and identified prominent persons in that war as they were not identified on the wire. In mention of the Trans-Jordanian army my accurate accounts included the fact that the army was British trained, financed and led, by General Sir John Glubb. After a few complaints about my accuracy and what I regarded as fairness- those Arab callers appear to have objected to reporting in Washington of their armies' failures and the stirring Israel defense of the road vital for Jerusalem's survival. I did once or twice needle them by referring to "General Sir John Glubb pasha."

To each complainant I offered equal time on the air. Not one accepted.

There could have been legitimate complaint about that "pasha" crack but there was not a single one. I did not use it until those complaints were daily and the offers of "fairness doctrine" time were not accepted. And it was a fact that American taxpayers were entitled to know that while their money was being given as aid to Great Britain, Britain was lavishing millions on the Trans-Jordan army which it also trained and led. (After Hussein became king he shortened the name to "Jordan.")

Those Arab complaints were about accuracy, not about inaccuracy.

Then one day Rogers told me that an investigator from the House UnAmerican committee was coming to see him. The intent to blackjack the station into either firing me or being mercilessly red-baited into bankruptcy- advertisers would suffer from any association from it- was undeterred by the judicial determinations that I was guiltless and that committee's agent was a felon, made no difference at all. Once that poison was started truth was not any meaningful antidote for it. Allegations made by those in the

Congress who were immune were widely accepted as fact when they were not. Even those advertisers who detested such UnAmericanism caved in and canceled their advertising knowing if they did not their business would suffer if not be ruined.

So, I left my last reporting job to pursue the dream of many World War II soldiers, to be free and independent, or at least so we thought, by becoming farmers.

As a farmer I dared raise red chickens!

I bought what had been a cornfield the last time that tract at the base of a tall hill only along the highway north and west from Washington was farmed- in 1898. It was on the western edge of the village of Hyattstown, at the upper end of Montgomery County. My wife was raised in that village. Her relatives were an appreciable percentage of its just under 100 population, including infants.

On the tax books that tract was identified as "Ward's Struggle."

By hand I cleared the land for our home, the chicken buildings and for chickens to run and live naturally without any mechanical equipment. Until I began building I did not have even a carpenter's electrical hand saw. It could not be used for clearing land. Besides, I had no need of electricity until I began construction. Until then, even the well I had had dug needed only the old fashioned hand pump.

It was the hardest physical work and I exulted in it.

That strenuous activity was one of the factors in my later survival of post-surgical crises the surgeons did not expect me to survive.

In time I became a woodsman, a carpenter, a plumber, a mason, and an electrician. All the while I also became a poultry husbandman.

My wife worked in Washington, spending three hours daily on the bus to it. While I was among other things learning how to raise chickens.

My biggest advantage in that, as I later came to realize, is that I did not have the accumulated ignorance of the ages, passed from father to son, to unlearn. Raising chickens was not like raising dairy or meat cattle.

Mostly farmers did not raise chickens. Chickens were a modest source of income for the farm women, who paid scant attention to it, having no time and only small flocks that almost always ran loose. Commercially, chickens require refinement. That increases enormously the probability of illnesses and changes radically their food requirements. It was no longer enough for the farm housewife to scatter grains of whole corn on the ground twice a day for chickens who spent their days scrounging for food around the farm grounds.

As I built the buildings to house them I learned from observation, trial and error and the literature available from the Agriculture Department. Before long I built a regular clientele in Washington to whom I delivered my own poultry that I dressed and prepared for them and my own eggs, brown in a white egg market.

It was a bit out of the ordinary, a city man, a writer, becoming a poultry farmer. When University of Maryland agricultural scientists specializing in the various aspects of poultry raising and marketing were in the area they would stop off.

Their initial interest was in my unusual marketing, then it was in the quality of what I delivered. They were surprised that men and women in important positions, along with their receptionists and secretaries, would carry chickens and eggs home from their offices when they lived where I could not deliver to the home, and would pay more for it because of the superior quality of what they went to that much trouble to enjoy.

In time both the State university and the Agriculture department's famed Beltsville agricultural station

consulted me when asked about better quality and specialized marketing.

Among the university's agricultural experts my wife's fame as a cook enticed their visits when they were anywhere near us.

In about 1965 an agricultural economist, Perry Twining, urged her to enter the National Chicken Cooking Contest. She was a failure the first year. The next year she won and became for that year the "Queen," the National Chicken Cooking Champion.

That was a challenge to me! So, in 1969 I competed and became the National Barbecue "King" or that year's Champion. (My secret was to use a marinade as a barbecue sauce. It was basically one used by South American men in their whole-small animal barbecue known as "asados." My winning recipe was "Chicken Asados.")

As our reputation for quality grew satisfied customers recommended us to others and our business grew. On the one hand young women new to Washington and not uncommonly strangers to cooking were out customers. (I passed cooking tips on to them and provided those who could not cook with an Agriculture Department "Aunt Sammie's Cookbook." When asked I even suggested which of our recipes their boyfriends were more likely to prefer.) On the other extreme we served some of the world's most famous of the day, especially among diplomats, including our own. When Mrs. John Foster Dulles saw me making a delivery to her hairdresser and liked the appearance of what she saw, the Dulses became our customers. Each Tuesday I was phoned the order to be delivered the next day, fresh. When the Dulses were not home their butler showed me the house and gave me a shot of the Secretary of State's favorite whiskey, Old Overholt.

Dulles suffered the gout. Our poultry was one food he both relished and gave him no troubles. Dulles liked our birds so much that when he planned a one-on-one conference, just the two men, he would

use them to help create the atmosphere he wanted.

The Dominican dictator Trujillo relished our birds and in anticipation of his coming his military attache, Colonel Fernando, known as Nando Castillo, laid in a supply. When Winston Churchill visited Washington, Michel, the embassy chef, who fed the family our poultry and eggs and bought on the commercial market for other embassy needs, decided on our individual serving birds for Winnie.

By chance, just as I was making my weekly delivery, the wife of the New Zealand ambassador, Lady Knox-Monroe, had just learned of an abrupt and unexpected change in the social arrangements for the organizational meeting of the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization. She had not known in advance that she would be serving supper that night. She was wringing her hands in distress with her cook, an Austrian refugee named Rosie, gave me a quizzical, questioning look. I nodded my head affirmatively, so Rosie suggested that I be asked if I could supply what they might like. I had the roasters and the next week I was told that some of the ambassadorial guests and their wives had gone down to the kitchen to learn what the wonderful fowl were.

Mamie Eisenhower did that also when she was First Lady, as the Dulleses cook Bertha told me the next week.

I could go on and on like this. We had a cabinet and former cabinet member customers, lobbyists who also had me ship our birds for their Christmas presents, military and other attaches, a few spooks, and some of the best restaurants and clubs as regular and part-time customers.

We even won first and third prizes at the first national dressed-poultry competition. I've forgotten the year but I do remember that it was the year before the USSR sent its first sputnik into space.

Even seemingly more incredible, when the Charles Pfizer drug manufacturing company, one of several for which I did experimental work, decided to present a Science-Comes-to-the-Farm Exposition

for the nation's food editors to educate them on the importance of correct medication for healthier livestock, although Pfizer then had the world's largest and most extensive nongovernment experimental farm, they asked me to provide a display of our poultry. For their exposition they used a Waldorf-Astoria ballroom, for rather unusual displays. Like a steer with a screw-in closure of the opening into his rumen for the removal of samples for testing. But the time the food editors spent at our display slowed each tour down to where I was asked to see if I could hurry them up a bit.

We were becoming quite successful and famous, our fame extending abroad. When the top British poultry expert came for a month of inspection of the largest commercial poultry operations his first step was at the smallest, our place. His later report that, incredibly, was actually classified "secret," twice stated that the best poultry breast he saw anywhere in this country was on our birds. I was not given a copy but I was shown it by the attache who brought him up.

When we were troubled by a severe behavioral problem my experimental work in coping with it was cited by National Institute of Health scientists at an international scientific conference in Australia.

There are those like Mark Lane, the first of the successful exploiters and commercializers of the JFK assassination, who delighted in wiseguy and sneering references to me as "that goose farmer," but he never did anything as well- or as honestly.

Geese were, in fact, a sideline we enjoyed. Some of the best Washington hotels and restaurants depended on them for their holiday menus.

Our double-yolked goose eggs, which weighed about three-quarters of a pound, would not hatch. My wife hardboiled them and I took them to the children's hospital in Washington and sent them to Baltimore's to the Easter delight of the sick kids and as promotions for the needs of those hospitals.

When there was more than these hospitals needed I gave the extras to others. Of those I

remember some who rolled those very large eggs on the White House lawn Eastertime. One was the little boy of Eddy Rossi, then the butcher at the Madrillon, a famous and an excellent Washington restaurant, Giancese Maggia, whose chef was one of those who visited us regularly.

I could go on and on about what one can do and learn in an utterly foreign and strange field with thought, effort, initiative, imagination and a little daring.

For fun and for the entertainment of others I had wild Canada geese, honkers, I got them so tame they ate from my mouth without biting me. They even brought their young to me to feed.

What J. Edgar Hoover, he of sainted memory, liked best of all is what he reported to the White House in November, 1966 about us: that we "annually celebrated the Russian revolution with a gathering for about 35 strangers at our home."

That, as Hoover knew, and intended, aborted any White House interest.

It was also a lie.

We hatched our own eggs from our own breeding flocks. When I learned by accident how attractive the town and neighborhood children found watching the eggs hatch and just touching the fluffy, just-hatched chicks, goslings and ducklings (yes, we also had a special duck and Dwight Eisenhower got some to raise on his Gettysburg farm)). I arranged the hatching for weekends to accommodate the children and their parents.

We turned the farming clock back to what it had been before the mechanization that made more intensive farming first possible and then necessary for the survival of most. With the poultry what we did was so attractive to children that even members of the diplomatic corps brought their children up to enjoy it and on occasion, when some of their countrymen visited with children, they brought those children up for what was to them both, children and adults, a rare treat. The parents enjoyed the joy of their children.

Once when our friend George Quigley, of the poultry faculty of the University of Maryland School of Agriculture, was visiting and saw what a delight our having what was later referred to as a "touching" farm was for both parents and children, he exclaimed, "We've gotta steal that from you!" With a laughing gesture, as though I were handing him a piece of paper, I replied, "You don't have to steal it, George. Here is my patent."

And that is how more than three decades ago the children in the Washington area got what the University called "Old McDonald's farm," after the popular tune.

They could hardly have called it McWeisberg's anyway.

When last I heard (from a mother who had been taken there as a child) it was still being operated in Wheaton, just over the Maryland line from Washington. With many varieties of animals the children could touch and play with, the whole McWeisberg deal.

Animals tame with trust. Earn their trust and they trust you. The honkers who ate from the mouth, not mine alone, but those of visitors and their children, had learned to trust. But they could inflict painful injuries and bruises with their strong serrated mandibles and their powerful wings, their means of self- and family defense.

Even in the countryside children then never saw chicks hatch or got into hen houses and with the other changes in farming, never got near live animals, leave alone touch them and if daring enough, ride them. Agriculture had changed, as had farmers and their needs.

Farming had had to change, as had farmers. With modern mechanization farming operations became more extensive and intensive. The farmers themselves touched their cattle less with the advent of more mechanical milking systems. If farmers had to milk cows by hand, the cows kicked and resisted. When I had a heifer to milk, I'd call her, she would come, and where we met I'd squat down, she'd stand

still, and I'd milk her into a bucket. That could not be done with a cow or a heifer used to being milked mechanically, as commercially virtually all then were. (Before a cow had two calves she was known as a heifer.)

A friend who once saw this childish delight asked if he could bring his charges up for them to enjoy it. Jack Frankel was the Jewish Welfare Board representative whose Washington duties extended to caring for the needs of that area's Jewish military personnel. After the Jewish High holidays, which are earlier than and do not coincide with the anniversary of the Russian revolution, he did bring those who wanted to come and their children up. These kids gathered eggs, watched them hatch and played with the just-hatched young, the less timorous of them rode on our tame heifers. This is what Hoover converted into what he wanted it to be rather than what it was. I was to learn how adept he and those under him were with such conversions into mendacity.

Hoover even gave that defamatory invention to the Senate Intelligence Committee. When he was its chairman Barry Goldwater posted a correction with it.

Just as we were beginning to be able to increase our capacity what meant the end of that soldier's dream of freedom and independence began. Before it was over our farming was ruined and ended, I was forced by the Army's refusal to adhere to an amicable settlement to establish a new principle of law, of the property owner's property rights intruding into the air to the extent necessary for him to enjoy his constitutional right to own and enjoy property. The settlement of the second lawsuit that the government finally did agree to several years later is what paid off the mortgage on our present acreage and home.

Our farming was ruined by low-flying military helicopters the army itself was not able to control. Typical of Mark Lane's undeviating devotion to the strictest accuracy, he, not that it was relevant to anything other than what he thought was a putdown, said that sonic booms from those helicopters did the

damage- and to our geese.

Sonic booms are caused by anything going faster than the speed of sound. Some military airplanes can go that fast, not all by any means. Helicopters are the slowest of aviation. They cannot fly that fast.

I also learned that if you know one Mark Lane you know them all, many as they are.

Among the helicopters that caused us damage were those, had I been so disposed, could have caused serious official embarrassment. Some carried our presidents and their staff and parties, others had the head of foreign states, of whom I remember the British Prime Minister, Macmillan.

This terror by chopper, which is what it amounted to, lasted seven painful and costly years. Each overflight caused some damage in tearing and deaths as the frightened chickens panicked and trampled each other. Egg production also fell. Some laying hens were frightened into molts. The pullets that were to become egg layers were also killed in the panics. Some became nervous wrecks and were not productive.

I could not sell the torn fowl and I had to feed those no longer laying eggs or get rid of them at a great loss. Meanwhile, efforts to enable the fowl to adjust and medication were among the other ultimately prohibitive costs.

Of all the many learning experiences later useful in dealing with the government perhaps the most shocking was the complete inability of the Secretary of Defense to have even the slightest influence on his low-level pilots, low level in both senses, personally and in their officially prohibited low level of flight of those helicopters.

He tried, and these prohibited over flights, too, the Secretary of Defense did. Whether or not he was far-sighted enough to anticipate the real and costly problems in the wake of my precedent-establishing lawsuit those uncontrolled pilots made inevitable, the secretary and those under him he directed to give us relief really did try.

Learning that the man at the top in government may not be able to control- even influence- those under him, was not of direct value in my later work on the assassination and in the FOIA lawsuits. But what I learned that those under him were capable of was of use, and it was educational. Including that they could be self-starters and even vicious, and that they cared naught for law or regulation. What I did not learn well enough is that when agreements are made that does not mean they will be kept.

The supposedly disciplined military was so anarchical that a retired colonel on the nearby military post who still insisted on being called and calling himself "colonel," even threatened my wife when she phoned Fort Detrick to report an overflight as under the secretary's direction we were told to do.

That authoritarian actually said he would have her arrested as a nuisance!

For doing what under his regulations she was supposed to do!

Does this and so much like it not suggest that in government almost anybody can do whatever he damned pleases?

And that there are some situations that nobody can control?

But among all the innumerable liars, sadists and those who were going to teach those damned hicks better than to complain were some very decent people, too.

Some were cloaked with authority. But it meant nothing at all.

Impossible as it may seem, the Secretary of Defense could not control those who piloted his choppers. And the general counsel of the Defense Department could not get the Army to comply with an agreement he had negotiated and to which the Army agreed!

That anarchical situation may have been as much of a learning experience for those high government officials as it was for me!