

5/12/72

Dear Js,

Returned, tired and angry, from a very successful trip. Angry because the friend for whom, in essence, I did the work, did not meet me at the airport and my car was parked at his place to save parking charges. Killed time. Home to find dying brother-in-law just dear and Lil with freshly-sprained (but apparently very mild) ankle. And hours and hours of notes to type, at least 15 hours of interviews on tape. I'm less tired than I was, but I guess that is just because I am glad to be home. Backgrounded asst city editor Knoxville Journal (request editor, who has been friendly) until 1 a.m. and then up early for second interview James Ray at jail (first late yesterday). Gave said asst c.e. two good stories with which I can do nothing. And that is the seat of the federal court in which the habeas corpus on which I was working will be heard. Great stuff for it, esp. on Foreman.

This was a jailbird trip, after the TV show on which I got Frank so uptight he finally said he would say no more and took his lavalier mike off (he alone had one). I love to head-to-head with finks officially supplied, for they spill, and he sure did! A whole day at Leavenworth, including the guy with the interesting handwriting (from whom a possible story already phoned to CDN friend for initial checking pending transcription of tapes, the part I thought they'd like is how he was walked out of jail by the jailor. He gave me a map showing where he hid some of the pieces of hacksaw blades inside the jail! His case worker confirms his story that the federal charge against him is a bummer. His stuff on JER is dubious. At least that is my impression. However, on the more fascinating bit, John has a source he trusts who confirms. If it stacks, and only personal investigation for which I've neither time nor funds can determine, it will be one of the more farout bits yet. JER denies -being in Quincy, Ill. 1 1/2 months before assassination, when he was in LA, from the seemingly persuasive evidence.

John will be used, is being used, to establish a very bad principle of law not yet adjudicated. Can't go into all of it. Stoner was his lawyer, prepared no case, and John is salted away. The appeals-court decision, I'm told by the court-appointed lawyer, is one of the worst yet in every way, esp. on the rights of the accused and use of illegally-seized evidence. 50 page petition cert. now at U.S. Supreme Court, so there is little I can do for John (who has an amazing memory and some of the juiciest tales of Foreman, all quite independently confirmed by up to four people, all also taped).

Each time I lean on him I get a bit more from JER, but not on the crime, really. The one thing I've wanted most has weakened on. But I don't have it. He did deliver to me two of the more credible crooks who independently told me a fantastic story of the bugging of the Ray cell in Memphis, still used as a punishment cell. Those arrogant cops don't even hide it now! One con found one bug in toilet, another one behind it, and another saw one being service, attached to a TV camera. Lights, etc., still in use. How do we know it was bugging, not squealing? From the gent whose cellmate never left the cell and who was raked over because of what he'd said in a whisper. I'm getting the locations and names of 12 to corroborate, 11 beaten by n med cops and a jailer, including a named captain.

I'm older and tireder, which I mean to be more than more tired, but it sure feels great to be able to set out on each trip and come back with what I went for, in this case, again, with ever so much more than I'd hoped for. If only I were a young man of 50-55 again! This stuff ought be great in court, but I'm not doing the transcribing, nor is Lil. It is particularly reassuring because I interviewed each of the witnesses independently, used tapes continuously to show no editing, and they make clear I was not leading witnesses. If they are of the lower depths, I think they'll hold again the man who insisted to Jerry that he be called The Texas Tiger! (That's what they call me in Texas, especially in Houston)

Gotta knock this off and bed. I started to acknowledge your prescient May 7 and say I'll go over the enclosed goodies as I can. I'm also taking Frank apart, visualizing the possibility of a civil suit, which can be the open back door. That takes time. It is particularly fascinating because I can understand what he did not in uncritical but polished and smooth use of what he was fed. The on-the-spot frame was clumsy, but the rest seems more sophisticated, if I correctly understand what he did not. I did all the reading of it on this trip on planes.

I didn't realize I'd sent you Dick Whalen's story. I knew I'd sent what I didn't have

time to read. I've known him since 1966. He is a conservative Catholic, wrote The Founding Father, has the rep of being a good investigative reporter, and for some years prior to joining (and quitting) Nixon was with the Institute for Defense Studies in D.C. I think he is back there. You say what I'd expect him to believe. But it did take character to quit when quitting meant giving up a good job and a big rep. For your "We still feel his fundamental response to the offensive of the Liberation forces in Vietnam is still to come and could be catastrophic," a curt bow and a swirling cape! I've been out of touch except for the five minute (really 3) b'casts + heard while driving, which means I've been completely out of touch. I heard enough to remind you of my not-distant usage of Strangelovians. These men are not just evil; they are also insane.

Frank was the e. Mason was sick. Frank ducked confrontation in LA by showing up ahead of time and saying that was his only free time. I was then driving back from step-father's funeral, 5/3. But when I got to St. L 5/6, a dub awaited. Still a few decent reporters left.

Lippy says there was a long Sunday piece. She did not know I had written the above. In addition to what she feels in the ankle, ESP? In time, I'll send.

Nixon/assassinee: have you forgotten one was acquitted? There is nothing he won't copy and nothing he can copy well. But doubt potential assassin would go to Cuba. Unless nuts. (In the mail to be answered, note from reader whose neighbor confesses part in CIA 1960 plot vs. Castro.)

Hoover couldn't be autopsied because it would prove he and his doctor were liars, that he was not in good health, that he did have and knew he did have this condition.

You were right in estimating a worthy successor would be found. Saw part of a press conference on TV tonight. Only the style will be different, his words. Remarkably, among the differences he said would account for this is that he is married, father and g'father.

I've been dipping a Scotch. Bottom glass, bottom letter (Percy Foreman drinks water-glasses of it down like water, with no chaser, no visible reaction, so in that dept he excels).

I'll be catching up gradually, probably sending a few copies of notes as I get to them. By the way, AP moved a story out of Birmingham in 1963, with a picture, showing King hanging in effigy before the local National States Rights Party Hq. I found the picture in the Post-Dispatch morgue. It was put on the wire with the caption referring this generally to the 1963 piece. If no trouble, I'd like. I met and was on the program with Stoner, not ruled out as involved. (Even the warden at Petros says he is "wors'n Hitler", having been handed an assortment of his campaign lit. about a month ago when that eminent barrister visited Jimmy.) In fact, I had lunch with him Sunday and he came to dinner as I was finishing. We were in the same hotel Kiss of death. And so sick. Only his laziness exceeds it. Twisted from birth, I'd imagine. Don't go to trouble of story. I have xerox of 1968 use, picture and caption. But that bag is still unpacked. I've emptied all but the files. I have the recorders ready if I need them. And that TC 40 was wonderful and completely trouble free. Used Sony 120 cassettes. Had to get in rush. \$3.45 each. Wow! The dozen 60s I'd ordered arrived after I left. They even included a wasteful carrying case. Wasteful of space, that is. I thought of you often, and with gratitude!

Best,

7 May 1972

Dear Harold:

Herewith a whole potful of stuff which has been accumulating ~~while~~ ^{while} your letters of April 15, 17 (?), 21 (2) and 24 came in. I mean those appear to be the dates of mailing. All, of course contain enclosures of differing dates.

Among the most interesting -- to us -- of the enclosed is Mary McGrory's story in the Washington Star dated May 4 concerning a book by Richard Whalen. He was a Nixon speechwriter four years ago and elucidates on Nixon's "secret plan" to end the war in Vietnam. It turns out that it was simply to pressure the Russians into getting the North Vietnamese to quit, and makes the significant statement that Nixon realized there was no way to win the war there with military force. In other words, he saved it up along with the China question to use in the 1972 campaign.

We shall be glad to have your tape of the Felix Greene interview whenever it arrives. No hurry. We've seen very brief references to it, but nothing adequate.

The photocopy of the handwritten letter you sent is certainly fascinating. By now, of course, anything we say about it is academic, but since you asked, our first impression is that it is not disguised handwriting or anything like that. ~~XXX~~ Its peculiarities are entirely too consistent. A handwriting expert probably could tell you a great deal about the writer. We have a couple of small books on the subject, and what they say that is applicable to this case is that the backhand means lefthandedness in an older person and rebellion in one younger. I'm lefthanded myself, and write with a forward slant only by standing on my head, sort of, and know many other lefthanders who do the same thing. The ones I know who stay with the natural backward slant usually are pretty queer ducks, not only rebellious but highly introverted and with a tendency to be secretive. Another point the books make which seems relevant is that the large, wide loops on letters above ~~the line~~ the line indicate great idealism. We of course read the letter looking for a possible trap, and feel that while on the whole it appears unlikely because of a rather convincing air of frankness, it can't be ruled out.

To get back to Nixon, we've come to the conclusion that one of the things Kissinger, if not Nixon, has had in mind, in the whole Vietnamization process, is not to Vietnamize the war, which they knew was impossible, but to Vietnamize the defeat and thus make it less unacceptable to the entire American public, including some of the hawks. It's clear ~~xx~~ that Kissinger is perfectly capable of this sort of indirection, but there's some question as to whether Nixon is capable of seeing it as an alternative. Not from principle, of course, but from his own naturally violent reactions. We still feel his fundamental response to the offensive of the Liberation forces in Vietnam is still to come and could be catastrophic. Certainly the Russians are no more likely to take him off the hook than were the Chinese, and for basically similar political reasons which most Americans appear incapable of visualizing.

From some of the clippings enclosed you will gather that Gerold Frank was in town and got a certain amount of exposure, but we don't know how much in TV or radio. We were all set to tape Eason the day Frank was supposed to be here, and it may be a hopeful sign that Eason didn't show on his program (radio) that day. His substitute said Eason had a sore throat. As far as we know, Frank didn't show either.

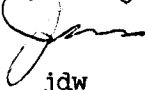
We hope you had a good and profitable trip, in terms of information and straightening out some of the tangles that were building up as you took off, if nothing else.

We're intrigued by ~~the~~^{one} of the two skyjackings that took place beginning May 5 -- specifically the one who wound up in Cuba allegedly claiming to be part of a group planning to assassinate Nixon. What could make a candidate more attractive than to have assassins laying for him?

And, as an enclosure indicates, we're impressed with the lack of time in which to autopsy poor Mr. Hoover, indeed with the lack of any need for an autopsy. In view of a) the certainty that he died of natural causes and b) the fact that they couldn't say what he did die of, one can only sympathize with public servants so pressed for time that they can't do their duty. We don't want to alarm you, but this does create a very nice slot for your friend Mr. Kleindienst in case the Senate should be rude enough to turn him down for AG. Of course there are many other equally worthy candidates for Mr. Hoover's job, we all know that, and are comforted accordingly, aren't we?

Only another week to go on this troglodyte shift. Perhaps we can be a bit more responsive when things get back to what we laughingly call normal.

Best,



jdw