

2/11/71

Dear Jim,

A funny thing happened to me on the way to the court room next Tuesday. The U.S. Attorney phoned me and practically begged me to permit him to get me an extension of another 30 days! Yup. Even after I said I needed no time save that which he had cost me and nothing like 30 days, that my papers were drafted and all I required was enough time to get the retyping completed. He was to call me back on this and another matter and hasn't. The other matter was ~~ana~~ of cropping evidence. He has invented too many new dirty tricks and I've written too many letters about them, to him, cc to the judge's secretary. Anyway, with luck, I'll have them done on time because I found a girl who is doing some of the typing on an old long-carriage machine I'll has, with an identical type face. While I don't think it is a good idea to give courts retyped first drafts, this is ~~thaxax~~ a third as long as a small book, and I'm not going to be able to reorganize it. In fact, I had to handle the law and the evidence without the attachment to the papers to which I was responding, after certification of service to the Court and after I requested them. I think maybe the bum doesn't like looking like a bum.

Finished shortening the final section a few minutes ago and will edit it ~~ix~~ tomorrow. My chief concern is the elngth, not the fact or the law. I'm afraid the judge will be intimidated by the volume. Though he seems to be the Warren type, ~~+~~ have a notion ~~thax~~ if he reads these papers through I'm gonna win. We have both asked for summary judgement. Whatever happens, I have an appendix for the last part of Post Moretm that outs everything in an appropriate perspective.

Your long and enjoyable letter came yesterday morning, when I got back from the post office early, and the farther I got into it the more I became aware of the similarities in our thinking, seeing and understanding. And experiences. We've had similar ones socially, too.

I wont have time to respond to everything, for I should get to bed. I'll unwind a bit this way first.

On Hal: his conduct is very uncharacteristic. If I were to make to hasty guesses, they'd be Cheryl and Paul. This time of t e year he can get employment. He has a friend who has a tax business. Hal worked for him in 1968. If I send you anything further for him, please wait until you see him. I'd rather not mail to where he is because there is no doubt in my mind that there is at least a careful watch on it.

By the time you retire, perhaps you'll conceive of the kind of a book you could so, and I think should, giving all of this perspective rather than detail.

The clippings are fine. I, too, have gotten batches of bad paper. I need to replace the legal-size and suppose I've postponed it too long already.

Paul's new address is 1735 Highland Pl. #25, Berkeley, 94709. I don't know if he has a phone, an unlisted phone, or none. I suspect he'll have one.

My mysterious "friend": I could make a better case out for a more serious involvement in something more official. I don't, but such a case is not flimsy. If he has done one good thing I'm not aware of it. I know some of his credentials are false. He once undertook to edit a short release I'd been asked to make, without consulting me. No pro would ever have done what he did and I junked. He lived on air for too long and too well. But we waste time this way. ~~But if I do anything~~

Without any contact with Hal, I'll just send you what I think might interest or amuse you, when I have spare carbons, and send others directly to Paul.

That will depend on what promo there will be for FRAME-UP, in part. I'm tempted to file one I think can be simple and definitive, by my instinct is to get back to Post Mortem. I'll have another major chore when another office of the DJ gets off its hump, negotiating a settlement they've been stalling for a year and a half on my helicopter-damage suit. I had a phone call a month ago saying I'd hear int two weeks. I haven't. Basically, the main job is to make the record and then make it available. I think this calls for more writing than I've been doing. With luck, POST MORTEM can do something. I've got real stuff to add to the hot thing it already is.

Some of my digressions are not easy to abandon. They have a kind of relevance and serve immediately-useful socially worthwhile purposes. But I've already cuttailed them. Those I haven't abandoned.

Some years ago I also had Latin American interests. I have a fairly extensive file of clippings stacked up somewhere in the basement. I'll be glad for your friend to have them if she'd like the. Mostly from the Washington Post. I'd have to first find and then go over, for she might want some for TIGER TO RIDE.

The attitude of your German friend is more comprehensible than that of most others. I wonder, tho, if I feel, as you put it, that those who have quit or done worse have let me down. Maybe I do, but I don't really think that is it. Each one, however, makes others feel that this is a futility. Thus the few may become fewer. There are two recent additions to the small band, both young, both bright. And, when they are aware of the decay and crumbling of society and its trappings of which you speak, those tempted to quit or feeling it is a waste of time get no encouragement from it, not even the feeling that success would be good.

I hope your SEAsia view is overly pessimistic. I have no illusions about the administration, national police, the military, whichever you want to designate, but I don't think they are insane enough to start WWII. I'm more concerned about their hoking something up about China, but the more time goes on the better the chances are that they will not. At some point they're going to recognize quicksand, and they today have major troop problems, I think much more serious than they've let on. There is too much hazard in the nukes and too little dependance on the troops. I'd estimate the chance of their concentration at home as at least as good. They just can't find a way they feel they can get out of SEAsia, those who want to, and I think there are more of those than we realize.

You are right about the attrition. But perhaps for me, personally, and what I can do, it will be a benefit for there will be fewer for me to feel I ought help, and that has taken too much of my time in the past. As you realize I've done almost no p.r. and I plan none unless it is in connection with the new book. I think that the things of which you speak correctly make it is a time for other concentration, and it must, for me, be production.

The kids are a great hope, but they've become dispirited and too many feel they are powerless. They've been given no meaningful option, only violence. This can lead some to the religious trip.

We hold similar views on ours and the European political structures. The big campaign against that here has always been a meaninglessness, that we have "satbility" they do not have, as though in and of itself that is anything good.

I thought the letter-scale cute, had never seen one like it, appreciated it, but have accepted your suggestion and sent it to one of the young ones whose often guess wrong and delays his mailings. I have a Pelouze. Sometimes I forget to use it, though. Thanks for the warmth. Best to you both,

Nothing urgent here -- just wordiness.

5 February 1971

Dear Harold:

Under separate cover we're sending you photocopies of our files from the S-I from the time you ceased getting it, through Jan. 30. As long as we continue to get this miserable rag (God, what a depressing newspaper) we'll continue to protect you, although if postal rates are doubled as threatened we may have to give it up. I apologize for the quality of these copies, due apparently to a bad batch of paper. Some are barely readable. If any are especially important and you need better copies, just let us know the dates and we can have copies made down in the village.

This is in reply to yours of Jan. 23 and 25, with the various enclosures. Those for Hal have been sent along to him. By the way, if you wish anything sent to Paul Hoch, please provide the address for him you've been using. He used to be in the telephone book, but I would like to be reasonably certain that anything we might send to him will reach him.

We have heard nothing further from Hal, and assume this means there's no change in his status since last report. We are becoming just as puzzled as you over his emerging attitude, or lack of one. On the basis of what we know, which is little enough, we can ascribe it only to his extended joblessness and to the state of his affair with Cheryl, which remains a mystery to us. For the past two days we have tried to call him, but either no one answers the phone at all or he's not in.

The exchange of correspondence you sent regarding the gentleman in Los Angeles is interesting in that it strengthens the opinion we formed of him two years ago on the one occasion we actually met him. Before that, from talking to Hal, we always had assumed first that he probably was working for someone. Once we met him, however, this gave way to a feeling that it was more probable that he was a freelancer trying to pick up bits and pieces of information which he could peddle to someone. This was not based on any feeling of sympathy or admiration for him. Quite the contrary. We disliked him on sight, which is rare for both of us. The real basis of our judgment was experience with a number of people very much like him in the past -- in Peking, Shanghai, Tokyo, Washington. They all share common traits with him, from the basic quality of the grotesque, through the quick and cunning intelligence, the unfailing histrionic flair, the grandiose talk, the unerring nose for centers of power and wealth, the opportunistic tropism, and finally the tendency to bully, threaten and intimidate which always emerges. In other words, these people all would have been court jesters in another age, trading court gossip for small favors, playing on fears and suspicions, useful and at times used, but in the end never fully trusted by anyone. They never quite make it, but they dance and caper and make noises on the sidelines, sometimes amusing, sometimes on terror bent, while never being fully accepted into the mainstream of what goes on.

It seems to me that his central message is still what it was two years ago: you are all outnumbered and outgunned; why go on? On the occasion we saw him he even broke out an Instamatic camera and went about taking pictures without permission of all the more than a dozen people at the meeting -- to which he had invited us.

So I doubt that he has the permanent backing of any organization. He may sell a tidbit here and there, but who would trust him on a permanent basis? Did you ever hear of a court jester being promoted?

From what you say, it does appear that you are going to have to make a choice in terms of priorities and do what you can about the things that seem most important to you. We feel sure you want to keep your options open, of course, but after studying your letter we we can see nothing else to be done if you are to avoid dispersing your energies (including your emotional energies) at the expense of what you really need to do. If other things must be neglected, that is unquestionably unfortunate, but only relatively so in terms of alternatives.

We made a comparable choice -- on a minute scale, of course -- a couple of years ago. In the first place, we never had contemplated seriously doing anything concrete with what we began collecting. Our central motive was to avoid being brainwashed, and was based on my entire experience, which is that if you watch closely enough you can keep reasonable track of what goes on and discern much more of its real direction than if you don't watch closely.

At the end of the first Shaw trial we decided to restrict ourselves almost entirely to organizing the material we had, as best we could, and working up a passable index to it, and this we have done -- at least it's passable for our purposes. Whether we ever will do anything with it is still entirely open. Certainly nothing can be done until after I retire a little less than two years from now. Even so, we have to resist the constant temptation to expand the area we're trying to keep track of, and it takes all our spare time and then some. You will understand, if anyone does, the friends we have lost during the past seven-plus years, simply because for their own amour propre they could not admit that anyone should be keeping track, since they themselves were not.

Aside from Hal, we have only one real friend who understands, or who even is interested in understanding, what we are trying to do and why. Even he now is basically discouraged and inactive. There is one other person, a Mill Valley woman, who sends us a few clippings now and then (we clip 10 times as much for her in her special interest area -- Latin America) but she doesn't consider our area one where she could function effectively, even though she is fully exercised about it.

These are the exceptions among the friends we had in 1963. The rest refuse fundamentally to look at it, and in effect deny our right to look at it. The reason, of course, is the subconscious feeling of guilt: that if they admitted there were anything to justify our interest, they too would be obligated as citizens to share and pursue it. Of course we have never implied they should, but the feeling of guilt apparently remains.

This appears most clearly perhaps in a European friend -- he's Jewish, who was an assistant prosecutor in Germany but escaped in the mid-thirties to a Scandinavian country and then came here in 1938 or so. He's teaching college German now and doing very well after a long and very hard pull. A man of his experience and background cannot refuse to discuss the assassination, and at times he even volunteers questions and indicates he realizes very well

the general drift of what has been happening here. But at first he refused to entertain the idea of a plot, and only gradually came to admit that something of the kind must have gone on. He handles the whole thing like a hot potato, and we finally have decided that his reluctance is rooted in his subconscious refusal to face the repetition here of what he saw happen in Germany. In other words, he simply cannot bear to think of going through that whole ghastly business again, and to us this is a considerably more valid excuse than any advanced by the various native-born Americans who should know better than to stick their heads in the sand. To us they have no real excuse for not facing facts, at least to some extent. What really irritates us about these Americans is the patronizing attitude they assume to protect their own egos.

There remains the problem you discuss: of those who have faced the facts, gone to work on them, done good work in many cases, and now appear to be subsiding or dropping out. The fact that some of them have let you down seems to us to be somewhat incidental: you are directly in the path of any such tendency. Buffdom being what it is, you naturally would be the first to feel the effects of any diminution of interest by others. This is so, not only because of your enormous activity, but because so many have depended upon you, consciously or otherwise, for leadership. It is you, in most cases, who have spotted areas for investigation. It is you, more than anyone, who has been ahead of the pack. If there is anything personal in this tendency of people ^{not} to live up to the promises they have made to you, we suspect that in most cases it is due simply to a feeling that they cannot measure up to what you have a right to expect.

In the meantime there are all the distractions that militate against a continued high level of activity on the part of most people, who are, after all, only part-time workers. Look back to 1963. How much does life now resemble life then? Even if you had kept on doing only what you were doing prior to Nov. 22, and had taken on nothing else since then? Life is simply harder for everyone, in a way that perhaps only those who have lived in overpopulated countries can readily recognize. Our ways are losing their effectiveness, if the system isn't actually breaking down. Nothing much works unless one personally pursues it and makes it work, or pays exorbitantly if someone else can be persuaded to do it.

Add to that the increased difficulty of feeling right about anything. The war. Inflation. We all know it is only a matter of times, as things go, until the Americans will resort to tactical nuclear weapons in Indochina. The only alternative to that is to get out, and this is not in prospect. China will feel forced to enter the war in one way or another. Russia will be forced to live up to the mutual defense treaty, and we shall have had it. And we all know that as ~~things~~ ^{things} are going now it is only a matter of time until American currency is devalued and inflation becomes far worse than it already is. Such considerations, whether consciously realized or not, cannot help but take their toll, and they take it in the area of research on the assassinations quite as much as in any other area. Perhaps that area should be the first to be abandoned under the values most people follow. You and we feel differently, but for most people we suspect it's just easier to watch one more commercial television fantasy, and even for the dedicated and truly interested it's easier to put off doing what should be done until one feels a bit better and more capable of coping with it.

In general, we suspect that the broad strategy of the obfuscators is paying off again. They were set back by your books, and other books, and by the Shaw trial, but they counted upon time and weariness and the steady growth of alienation and the increasing burden of living to dull the interest and determination of those who would not accept the official fairy story. They know it can be done. Lots of people know that several people were tried and hanged for conspiracy to assassinate Lincoln, yet John Wilkes Booth remains the popular lone and unaided villain.

And values change, and they change particularly among the wonderful young people who are our only hope. Two or three years ago Hal had no trouble organizing a class to work on the problem. Today, I doubt if he could find even two or three to enter such a class, assuming he himself had the inclination, time and resources to conduct one.

So we would agree with you: try to decide what should be most effective and concentrate on that. We don't know what it is, but if anyone does, you should. One suggestion could lie with youth, which will make up the majority of voters in a few years. Already the kids know the official story is garbage, simply because it's the official story. The problem is to make them realize that this particular bit of garbage is the worst pollutant of all, so rotten that decent government and life in this country has become impossible until it is recognized and exorcized, and that none of the other garbage will yield until this fundamental and most-easily-exposed bit is dealt with head-on.

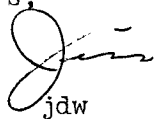
One of our problems is our anachronistic electoral process with its corollary two-party system, which prevents our administrations from being as responsive to popular pressure as European governments. If we had had a responsible system of government, we could have rid ourselves of LBJ long before we did because of the credibility gap over the war. I have said from the beginning, and I still believe, that any party or presidential candidate that came out openly for solving the assassinations and cleansing the national soul, and showed it meant business, could win in a walk. This is not at all in prospect with the present system, and not even likely if there are more than two parties, but the coming majority of youth could provide an opportunity for something of this nature to take place.

It is not going to happen if youth goes on a big religious trip, as it shows some very depressing signs of doing. Nor is it going to happen if psychedelic dreams become much more popular. Hard drugs are not yet the mass escapist device that commercial television has been for the elders, but there is that tendency among youth. There is also a counter tendency, and one of the most encouraging things we have encountered recently was Eldridge Cleaver's denunciation, and total rejection, of Tim Leary and "the whole silly psychedelic cult." The revolution, he said, needs clear heads "because we're up against murderous, fascist pigs." Good young people -- and the vast majority are the best I have ever seen or heard about -- do not need to be revolutionaries to understand this message.

We don't pretend, in trying to answer your fine letter, that we can offer you any worthwhile advice, or that we can discern any clear answers. We can offer only what you seemed to invite, the considered reaction to your thoughts by a couple of people who have changed neither their minds nor their values. As I said, what we have been trying to do becomes more and more difficult. It never was easy, partly because we were poorly prepared, but there has been such a speedup in my office in the past three years that I have much less energy than before, and this is not just because I am older. We're both in good health. It's just that nothing much really works any more if you depend on other people, and one winds up doing virtually everything one's self. We've also had a lot of illness at my office recently, and increasingly I am having to give up half my weekends to overtime work, as everyone else is, of course.

But thus far we have managed to keep our modest operation down to proportions that can be dealt with, even if we do fall behind. And we have no intention of stopping, however futile what we do may appear to others. We refuse to be brainwashed, period. To be truthful, the lady with whom I have the honor to be associated would never permit it.

As always,



jdw

Message from On High: The letter scale really works, and was intended for a midnight letter-writer who might thereby be saved a trip to the Post Office, assuming his mailman will pick up mail from thebbx. If you already have a letter scale, pass it on to some theoretically deserving soul.