

6 June 1976

Dear Harold:

Naturally I'm delighted that you found the review of Post Mortem as satisfactory as you said you did in your letter to Don Stanley and again in your June 1 letter to us. Just as naturally, I was not that happy with it, but do realize that the main purpose of a review is to convey a true summary of some kind in order to get readers interested. Personally, I'd like to have been a bit more specific, such as going into detail on Arlen Specter for one example, but stayed away from it for reasons having to do with the odd history of this review.

It actually was ready for the prior issue of the quarterly, in March. However, that issue also was running the long review I did on the four books on China, and at the time they didn't want to use two reviews by the same person. So yours was held over, which disappointed me but as it turned out probably was better in the end because there now is more interest in Post Mortem's area because of the Schweiker-Hart and Church committee reports.

Anyway, by the time this last issue of the quarterly was about to come out, I had submitted the review of The China Hands, and again, Linda Ferguson indicated she'd have to make a choice between that and the one on Post Mortem. And in the meantime there has been some sort of reshuffling at the Sun which I'm not at all clear about, but apparently due to a drop in ad revenues they are concentrating on nothing but Marin County news except, of course, for the literary quarterly. And Don Stanley apparently has taken a more modest position, with McNamara, the publisher, taking over some of the chores Stanley had been doing. Anyway, I was quite surprised to find -- and very pleased -- that they used both reviews in this last issue and better still put yours in the prominent position it deserved.

A week or so ago I sent you a couple of copies third class along with some clippings, but apparently Stanley's shipment reached you first. Just as well. I have more copies if you need them.

As you suggest, I'll send a copy each to Schweiker and Hart. Good idea. It may not be right away, but I'll do it.

The reason I can't promise to do it promptly is that I've had little time to take care of details like that, what with fighting insurance companies on Jenifer's bill and trying to figure out a way to replace our carport on the steep hillside and still not violate county building code rules.

The health insurance mess is especially bad because the AP, through which our coverage is arranged, has a weird combination of Blue Cross of NY for hospitalization and used Prudential for major medical and surgical coverage which normally would be covered by Blue Shield. A ponderous arrangement at best, but not helped by the fact that I've not yet been able to convince AP that Jenifer is not yet old enough to be covered by Medicare and that therefore there is no sense in submitting her bills there first, which they are convinced they require ~~xxx~~.

I won't bore you further with details about either this health insurance ~~snafu~~ snafu or the carport problem but should mention that both take incredible amounts of time and attention. I will say Blue Cross paid the hospital bill in full with no fuss; it's only getting AP to relay to Prudential the claims for the surgeon, assistant surgeon, anesthetist and so on that we're running into trouble.

Meanwhile, Jenifer is doing fine, and continues to astonish her surgeon friend, Dr. Klein, with her rapid recovery and generally good performance. When she first came back from the hospital she had been on a liquid diet for some three weeks, and naturally had to take some time out for rest for the first few days. But from the first she was up and doing her regular routine about the house and at her desk. When I could persuade her to take a rest, she'd lie down for perhaps an hour, then got up when she felt like it.

To give you an idea of how well she's doing, the daily irrigation chore, as you no doubt know, is a physical and also a psychological problem for most colostomates. She's never had any trouble with it from the first day except for rare occasions when an upset of some kind throws the peristaltic muscles into a tizzy and nothing goes right and time is consumed waiting for the events of the day to take place, so to speak. All the literature says to allow an hour for irrigation. She's never taken anything like that long -- a little more than half an hour being her longest experience -- and is now down to between 10 and 15 minutes each day, with an overall average of something over 20 minutes -- and that's coming down, of course.

~~That~~ last time she went back to see Dr. Klein she asked him how long she was supposed to take to heal the perineal wound. He mumbled something about maybe six months, so she was not unhappy to be able to tell him that she had stopped draining on the ~~29th~~ day after her operation. ^{32nd}

This was the second shock she administered to him that day. The first was when he examined her and asked how her stoma was getting along. (She had been much amused at the Madison Avenue way he had referred to it before the operation by ~~it~~ telling her she'd have a "rosebud" on her tummy where the colon stub is grafted to the surface.)

Believe it or not, the damned thing LOOKS something like a rosebud, like two tiny red lips about 3/4 of an inch long. Anyway, she had found an old colored German flower cutout of a rose with stem and leaves, and had cut out the rose (leaving a tiny baby bud for verisimilitude) and ~~it~~ taped the stem, with leaves, to her tummy with the stoma taking the place of the rose. It looked swell.

He saw it first out of the corner of his eye as he looked up from her file, and there is way to describe his reaction to what must have appeared at that distance as a case of galloping gangrene, or his relief when he saw what it was, or his pleasure at this "in" joke to liven up the doctor-patient relationship, or the prompt way he stopped her from throwing the cutout into the wastebasket, instead retrieving it and placing it firmly on top of her file.

Somewhere along the line he congratulated her again on her attitude, and told her that the nurses on her ward had taken a vote after she left and decided unanimously that she was the best and most cooperative patient they had ever had. "I agree," he said.

This probably was after she delighted him with a copy of the irrigation chart she has been keeping with the aid of her calculator, listing the events of each day, blow by blow, as it were, with periodic averages and an overall cumulative average for time, all neatly typed and tabulated. "I've never seen anything like this before," he said, and when she told him that was his copy he put it carefully into her file, along with the old German cutout.

Back here at the scene we've both worked on ways to stow and organize her equipment, and meanwhile have been acquiring those items we'd need for travelling some day if we ever get around to it. The equipment is good and well-designed, but the job involved is one that takes time and concentration, and it actually takes her longer to rig for irrigation and unrig afterward than it does to do the actual irrigation itself.

Many thanks for all the good things you and Lil have clipped and sent along. I'll try to find a copy of The Harker File, which I hadn't heard of. Does my memory trick me, or did the AP actually have a correspondent in Havana sometime after Castro took over named Daniel Harker ?

We especially appreciate the May 28 Maxine Cheshire column on Nixon's cancelled speech on world affairs to the USC trustees. The fact that the ~~SE~~ STM/W is functioning on all cylinders is demonstrated, I think, by the way she quickly figured out that this speech may never have been intended to be delivered, but was designed to be cancelled so our ex-GL could score brownie points with Ford by so doing in view of the conflict with the California primary.

Thanks also for the page from the New Scientist dealing with the Scully recording equipment in the White House. Sounds very plausible, and the publication date of August, 1974, is especially interesting. If you see any follow up on this aspect of the tape question we'd be interested.

We also were glad to get the Don Oberdorfer story on "Saigon's Secrets Siezed," which the Chronicle had used in abbreviated form, so the full version was most welcome. Your conclusions about the motives and approach of CIA people in developing the devices of power seem very sound. I'd add only one thought: Even without ignorance and avarice and arrogance, this would happen through the simple dynamics of a bureaucracy which is not accountable. I would agree with what seems to be your conclusion that they were determined on war in Vietnam, and always have thought it may have been central in the decision to off JFK. The promptness with which LBJ cancelled the scheduled withdrawal of the 15,000 Green Beret "Advisors" just after Dallas always has seemed a most important clue.

That's about it for now. Take care of yourselves, and best from us both


JDW