

Dear Jim,

1/6/76

Your 1/1 could not have picked a better time to get here. We are about to have another snow, this is going to be the third straight day broken up by someone coming for help I can give, the mail has only what is disagreeable and cannot be ignored, and there is nothing else good I can think of. So getting my mind of something else before it gets grim is good,

I did not make myself as clear as I should have on the taping situation. You do correctly perceive that part of it is separation of the already overcrowded band. In the long run your advice of getting the most sensitive and selective radio and using a separate recorder may be best.

I'm ashamed of not having consulted a station engineer! When I used to do radio and should have known.

What I had planned is to be able to tape in my own office, where I can watch and not have to hear unless I want to, as the hearings of the committee might be broadcast. Most of the day I can get a clean, good signal from two of the DC public FMs on the Craig, and that means no problem recording. I also have the Craig next to the TV, which means no problem recording from TV. Here all the trouble and expense I went to for an aerial tower so I can enjoy the drama on the public stations will help because I can get good signals from four public TVs. If there are hearings I will have to take in and they are on TV, I suspect they'll also be on the major FM public stations. If I watch them I already have the Panasonic deck connected to the inexpensive hifi. On it I can generally get what I do on the Craig better than any ordinary portable will permit because it is served by an aerial 40' in the air. Sometimes public stations the Craig cannot get. With the same problem, built-in AFC, which guarantees less selectivity.

The problems come from the crazy FCC, which is lousing up FM as it did AM. I can no longer get the original Washington good-music station because other signals kill it. It used to be out best. The only signal on FM that I want that to now has never been broken up at some time, including today, is the American University station. It is an authentic public and educational station, with mature and public-service scheduling. With other area stations offering what I would want, it would, as from the past would not change its scheduling for mere duplication. The non-college Washington public station to which I listen most and would depend on for these broadcasts is a powerful station but already is being interfered with. I used to have no trouble on the car radio with it now never make a trip into town without having it broken up with hard rock.

I feel I will want to make and keep full tapes of all committee hearings broadcast, and not for myself.

We are fairly high up and while blocked by what is above us, as you are, on FM we are not. On TV my next neighbor gets as good a signal on rabbit ears as we get do with the tower and aerial. However, it is not unusual for me to get what is theoretically impossible on FM, Philadelphia and Hershey, Pa., both over 150 miles away. Hershey might well broadcast what I'd want but now is not a dependable signal. However, this also illustrates the interference problem.

I may wind up taking your advice. I have an inexpensive portable one of our college girl friends left here. I had it fixed and she had replaced it so she gave it to me. It does not have AFC and is newer than any other I have. I use it in my office, which I'm still reorganizing. The changes seem to be working out well. They include a device called a desk organizer. It is a shelf with compartments. Now that I have it I have the radio on it so I will not have to take my legs down, take the blanket off them and turn around to behind to tune the set or turn it on or off. It had been my thought to keep the radio-recorder where it is most of the time and be able to operate it and tape

while doing other work and without all the motion and adjusting.

I'm not clear on when or why but I think after I asked you I thought of the French TV producer who has been here several times. I've been of much help to him, taking much time for hi, and expect to be in the future. He is to be coming back soon. What I did not think of with station engineers here I did of his engineers and the probability of his being able to buy a first-rate set for much less than I could. So I asked him to ask his people for an opinion and if they can offer advice and it is no problem for him to add that to all he'll be bringing with his crew anyway to let me know. I've not heard.

I think I also had in mind that I might want to tape some of the early jazz shows I hear in the early a.m. This I could do at the desk, where I hear them, and not elsewhere. This is not essential and if I can't get a sensitive and selective radio with recorder built in I will follow your common sense suggestion. It will make a clutter while I tape but that won't be daily. However, I want to keep what I have to have on the desk to a minimum because I also have an old portable TV that works and there may be times when the hearings are telecast and not broadcast, judging from the past. The portable TV is so old it does not have MUHF, however. It was given to a student by one who was leaving and the student who had it did not need it and did not know another who wanted it so it was left here. ...

From what you say about your weather I believe your guess about the jet stream is correct. We are already into a colder period than usual for this time of winter. The local explanation is that the jet stream for this part of the world is about 200 miles farther south than usual. If it shifted east-west and it has north-south you are correct.

My vet neighbor had to build a metal lean-to against the back of his house to thwart the eastern raccoons. Wherever they are they seem to be pretty clever. I burn the paper, compost all that will rot and they have no interest in cans and bottles. ...

Of course you are right about the AP's B wire. I never stopped to think of the changes. No, it is not the regional wire. It is a state wire and I know it is out of Baltimore.

China: I've found the Post's extra attention interesting. A provocative piece this morning. I'm accumulating another 3cl mailing.

The accuracy, even precision of my forecast about the House committee is dismaying. In today's mail I have a mimeograph copy of its report. The report will be printed in time. If you want a copy let me know. I've have to get and to Livingston's latest - and in this case literal - insanity.

Best, and many thanks for the trouble,

1 January 1977

Dear Harold:

A lazy, rainy day gives me a chance to let you know that I've not yet been able to catch Mark in his shop to ask him about your reception problem described in your note of Dec. 15. Since I suspect your problem, being a local situation, is most likely to be solved locally, or at least lessened, I have one suggestion you might be able to follow up while I'm trying to snag Mark to ask him a few questions. I gather you want a radio receiver for plugging into your Panasonic cassette deck, a receiver that will be selective enough to provide reasonably dependable reception of one particular station, or perhaps one of a few who may be carrying the hearings you want to record. I think Mark is unlikely to be able to make much of a guess from here, although he may be able to suggest certain models that might be more selective than others. In the meantime why don't you try getting in touch with the chief engineer of whatever station you think may be useful. He would be the person most likely to have the information that really could help you -- and it's likely to involve special aerials and other equipment capable of separating stations on adjacent wavelengths. One problem is that most receivers on the market these days simply are not really selective, and to get into those capabilities I think you'll find equipment is involved that only a radio engineer would know about.

The radio-recorder we use most is a Sony ~~TC3000~~ TC300, no longer marketed here. In any case its radio side is lousy and not at all selective. We have ~~mother~~ other radios which are little better, and I know of none which is. Mark may, and I'll ask him. But in the meantime I think you'll find most engineers want to be helpful, ~~if~~ particularly if reception of their own station is involved.

The gentle rain which began two days ago is the first we've had in 42 days. Meanwhile this is the third driest year in California history and the third dry year in a row. Marin County water customers voluntarily cut their use of water by 25 per cent this fall, but the water district's reservoirs are so low that it's thinking of asking a further cut of up to 57 per cent.

Ordinarily from October on rainstorms hit us every week or so from the Gulf of Alaska, but recently there has been a high pressure area standing offshore which has kept the storms safely out at sea. We've had about two inches of rain this fall. Ordinarily it'd be in the range of 20. In varying degrees, the whole West Coast has been similarly deprived. One wonders about that high pressure area, whether some change in the jet stream pattern is responsible, and what, in turn, could have caused that.

Kept indoors by the rain, I've had to belay finishing the cleanup of the carport job (carrying extra lumber down the hill and stowing it under the house) and such vital touches as building a racoon-proof stockade for the garbage can. These animals can get into any garbage can I've ever seen, and the only solution is to keep it in a cage of some kind which they can't get into. I hesitate to guess how many times I've clambered nearly 100 yards down the hill to retrieve a can they've wrestled off the carport and sent tumbling down the steep slope, strewing its contents along the way.

Before I forget it, one more thing I forget to mention about the radio. I don't think you are likely to find a ~~music~~ receiver with built-in cassette recorder which is sensitive and selective enough for your purposes. The Craig has the best radio in that respect that we've seen in such a combination, certainly far better than the Sony we got to take its place. I think therefore that you'll have to concentrate on finding a selective radio and then patching it into a cassette recorder of some kind. Anyway, I'll ask Mark and let you know what he says.

We want to thank you for your thought in sending along the piece by Julie in the Ladies Home Journal. We had meant to look it up and copy it at the library, ~~xxxxxx~~ just for the record, in spite of the fact that it would turn out as it largely did, a plug for Papa more than anything else.

Also we're most appreciative of the good stuff you've been sending on the Chinese situation. Outstanding in that respect was the Ross Terrill article on the likelihood of a Sino-Russian detente. It strengthens our own expectations along that line, based on their long history of getting along with each other, the while cordially hating each others' guts, but always somehow managing to avoid major conflict. China has had contact with Russia longer than any other Western power, and it is inconceivable that both parties have not learned from this long experience. Both know well how to get along with each other, and can turn on and off at will the histrionics necessary for internal political purposes.

There's something I've been ~~xxxxxx~~ meaning to mention to you for some time and now finally have remembered. You sometimes refer to stories in the Frederick papers as coming from the AP B wire. This is conceivable but not likely. As you know, the A wire carries major stories of the day and goes to all big mets that are members. The B wire carries secondary stories, also usually of general interest but not urgent enough to put on the A wire. What a paper like the Frederick member is likely to get is a regional or state wire circuit which carries boiled down versions of the main A wire stories and sometimes also from the B wire. Such circuits are filed usually from points like Baltimore, Philadelphia or Richmond and their content is tailored to regional and/or state needs. It's actually quite complicated, with a member like Frederick getting a wire that may be filed regionally for several states from such a point as Richmond or Charlotte, but on which state points like Baltimore can cut in and file news of what seems to be mainly of Maryland interest. At one time, years ago, Frederick could have had the B wire, but is unlikely to have it since the present filing system was set up roughly 20 years ago. Theoretically, I suppose, such small dailies as those in Frederick can get both the A and B wires, but this would mean paying more than they pay under the complicated regional-state filing system, and publishers being what they are, businessmen, they do not often go in for such increased costs on any long term basis.

Been meaning also to thank you for your kind offer of some time back regarding the small plastic boxes your dentist gives you. We have no specific use we can think of, so it wouldn't be worth the postage you'd have to pay at parcel post rates. Let's do it this way: if, sometime, you are sending something else and these can be stuffed in without trouble, you might send a couple of each size, as they do come in handy for silly presents etc. Otherwise, don't bother.

We're both fine and join you in a wish for a better year,

 jdw