

Dear Jim,

7/7/81

We were glad to get your letter of the first yesterday and, of course, the bay leaves with it. Lil has done little real cooking lately because of the heat and what bothers her more, the high humidity, but she will get around to learning whether she likes the dried ones better than the fresh ones or vice versa. She was quite happy to get them.

Our temperature has gotten to close to a hundred several times and it's again going above 90, with high humidity until yesterday. The weather out there has made news on east coast TV, including the fires so close to you.

I'd thought of phoning you on Sunday but never got around to it because Lil was not free when I had the thought in mind. I spent most of the day concentrating on preparation for deposition testimony or making another affidavit in the old spectro case where, to use Fensterwald's phrase when he heard about what I have, I may cut them a new asshole. When I was thinking of this I was thinking of nothing else.

You had mentioned your friendship with the Snows and we are familiar with his great work, which we admired contemporaneously. While I do not now recall exactly how, I was aware of his widow's book and however I heard of it was quite favorable. While I walk less and listen to the all-news radio less, it may have been there, less likely on TV news. It is fine that she is able to follow up his great work with what appear to be quite worthwhile endeavors of her own. She also may introduce him to many of a generation who know little or nothing of him.

The sinking of a concrete pier under the house does sound serious. Hope it is corrected easily. I suppose some of the new support will have to be of masonry, but the way houses are built out there, there may be techniques I've never heard of.

There isn't much news here. I try to get a little exercise and if little, always it makes me feel good. If I can't do anything else I'll spend an hour sitting before the sawbuck sawing firewood. When it gets bad we turn the air conditioners on and I walk around in the hours periodically. I am not able to do it for long at a time and I've not been able to rest while standing and then resume it, as the doctor thought I might. I do get a fair amount of walking in most days but never for as long as I'd like. To the road and back remains the limit and by the time I'm back I'm uncomfortable. Except for sinus and her arthritis problems Lil has been pretty good. She's been spending a little time freezing berries I've been able to get locally, things like that and vegetables. She's also taking advanced tax studies at CPA level, a CPA course, and is enjoying the work and the challenge.

Our at-house rabbit population has increased to the point where Lil is distressed. ^{and} they eat her flowers now. The chipmunks are cute as they climb pipes to get at bird feed, which they appear to be storing for the winter.

Pat Hest

1 July 1981

Dear Harold and Lil:

Herewith the latest offering of bay leaves, including some that dried on the tree and fell off. During these hot dry weeks in the summer (when it never rains) the sap apparently does not reach many leaves, which then turn yellow and brown and drop to the ground. They seem more aromatic than the green ones that I pick directly from the tree.

I tried some bay tea and have to report it's pretty pallid stuff. I found it was necessary to break up the leaves in small bits to get enough flavor from them to make any difference.


Let me know which, if either dry or green leaves work for you, and I'll keep you supplied. Or with both, if you'd like that. The supply is unlimited.

The two weeks I worked full time while the other may was on vacation turned out to be the hottest for this time of year in most memories and all sorts of local heat records were broken. Nothing like the humidity you have there along with your heat, but it was not pleasant. This week, however, we have returned to the normal Northern California pattern of foggy mornings and clear afternoons, when it may get up to 75 in the shade but rarely higher. This is a most comfortable state of things, but very dry and the fire hazard is extreme. They had a bad fire last week in the mountains just to the east of the Napa Valley in which dozens of very costly homes were wiped out. Another more recently in the Big Sur country just south of Monterey. In the old days the Indians deliberately burned off the brush on the hills so that accidental fires had nowhere to go, but the palefaces are only beginning to conduct controlled burns to any great extent. Until they do, every summer there are very bad fires in the hills, and in very dry years a constant danger of widespread conflagrations.

At one time or another I may have mentioned that our best friend in Peking during the 1930s was Edgar Snow, the American reporter who put the Chinese Communists on the map. When he was dying of cancer nearly 10 years ago in Switzerland Mao Tze-tung and Chou En-lai discharged what they could of their debt to him by sending a medical team of three doctors and three nurses who provided much the same loving care to their old friend that Hospice does here today. He died just as Nixon was leaving for Peking, on a journey that would not have been possible without Snow's work. His widow, Lois Wheeler Snow, was here last week, plugging her latest book, "Edgar Snow's China," which is based on his efforts to report on China from 1928 until his death and consists mostly of excerpts from his many books and articles during that period, plus more than 400 photographs, many never published before. Random House did a good job on the printing, and the book is a very useful summary of some superb reporting and of how it was mostly ignored. Lois is a fine person, in good shape, and is planning another trip to China next year.

I have a big job coming up here; a concrete pier under the house is sinking and must be corrected and supplemented with another pier to take some of the weight. A contractor is coming around soon to look it over and give me the bad news.

Otherwise, everything fine here. Take it easy and accept my best,

 jdw