

7 December 1972

Dear Harold:

This is a catch-all reply to various points in your letters 32 through 35. We also have your N mailing. Some specific questions I've dealt with separately in other notes enclosed here.

We still have three of your cassettes, only one of which we've listened to, MacMillan's delightful discourse. Sooner or later we'll get around to the others. Been too busy doing exactly as we pleased these past few days. In any case, I suggest you send no more unless it's something you feel absolutely necessary, and in no case should you take the time to tape unless you're doing it for yourself. With your suit finally getting going, we want nothing to ~~doxxx~~ with us to interfere, even in the smallest way. Also you can, without causing us any pain whatever, reduce the clippings you send to the barest essentials. Stop buying extra copies of the Post, for instance, unless it's something terrific. Our needs, whatever they are, are more along the line of unique background material in the various areas we're interested in, not so much on day to day coverage.

To take a specific example, if you HAPPEN to run across that business of Barker laying for Ellsberg in Washington, we'd be glad to have a copy eventually, but the last thing we want you to do is to spend any time looking for it. Sooner or later it will turn up, and that will be soon enough. Meanwhile, if ~~xxxxxxx~~ there are any specific things we need and which we think you may be able to provide, we shall not hesitate to ask you for them if we consider them necessary. Agreed? Agreed.

In your 30nov72 on Nixonbrother, you mention that in some cases where resignations were said to have been demanded, they were not actually so demanded. We sent you yesterday, I think, an interesting clipping on how this was managed with Father Mesburg to get him off the Civil Rights Commission.

In a note dated -- well, now I see it's not dated -- anyway, ~~xxxx~~ you cite a Haynes Johnson series on the campaign, beginning with an article on the Eagleton affair. I foresee no compelling interest in this, and if Howard needs them, by all means send them his way rather than ours. If I had to define our interest in the campaign it probably would center on how it affected the peace caper.

In your recent mailings have been dupes of various memos which for the first time gave us much of an idea of what happened to you and your farm. From earlier material we had inferred a good deal of what is now spelled out, but of course could not be certain. How wonderful that you finally have got your attorney off his ass and that prospects seem to be picking up. We're keeping our fingers crossed for both of you. Above all, don't let anything to do with us delay you for one minute in attending to the tiniest detail concerning your case. We can wait. That's one of the great things we're gradually realizing, although it seems too good to be true: we can WAIT. Before, it was get it done, whatever it was, or something else would come along and preempt it.

We're not competent to comment on your case except in the most general way. First of all, we understand about noise, particularly irregular and unpredictable noise. Choppers and jets are among the few things to upset the STM, who also is sensitive to

higher frequency sounds which do not bother me. Secondly, your case seems well-bolstered with facts and background from an increasingly wide spectrum these days, and assuming your attorney or attorneys make the most of what you have to work with, it would seem that the only thing that really threatens you is whatever determination the government may have not to permit a precedent to be set. Your own determination to have the case well-prepared sounds very good. We wish you both all the luck in the world, and don't let ANYTHING interfere with it. We'll continue to look for anything that might be relevant and useful.

All along, the AP has had a noise problem, with offices all over the country full of teletype printers that clack 24 hours a day in a collective roar. To be heard above this din requires shouting in many cases, and to talk on the telephone and hear what's being said at the other end is accordingly difficult. In general, the AP has recognized the problem only informally, apparently fearful of coming to grips with it because of the costs involved if they recognize it officially and admit it actually exists. They're trying out a new machine now that is almost silent, printing with electronically activated little needles instead of a type face, and the machine is no bigger than your Hermes.

The Katie Graham story I sent you was my rewrite of an earlier story done by the man who actually covered her speech, so I can't claim to have had too much to do with it. It was written on a new gadget we've had for six months or so and which ~~are coming~~ is coming into wide usage, called a Cathode Ray Tube transmitter or CRT. It has a screen like a TV set, with a keyboard in front that includes the ordinary typewriter keyboard ~~and~~ but also has as many more keys that are necessary to provide linotype functions and certain other functions peculiar to the CRT itself. You type a word and it appears on the screen. You can erase, edit, transpose paragraphs and do all sorts of fancy stuff with the same keyboard. When it's done, you press a button, and the whole thing is transmitted to the computer in LA. A "header" at the top of the story tells the computer on what lines to send it, and with what priority. Meanwhile a monitor teletype machine in the transmitting office types it out and provides a record, a carbon of which I sent you and meant to explain but forgot about. Since the computer will gag and reject any story longer than 400 words, this particular story had to be broken into two takes, and I put my initials only on the last take.

This machine also is very quiet, and is fun to use except when you're trying to get off a bulletin or urgent, in which case all the fiddling with the header drives one quite crazy. You also have to have a signoff sequence which must be absolutely right or the computer will say Nyet very firmly and absolutely nothing happens until you make it right. The CRT costs around \$25,000 a set, but the AP is wild to get them into general operation because then it can fire all its teletype operators.

I should add that once the computer decides to accept what you've sent, can find no further fault with it, it then files it on the news wires as directed (and according to accumulated priorities from all bureaus) and the story comes out on teletype machines in member offices and in the form of perforated tape which can be fed directly into a linotype. It's really fast in that sense, but the problem arises in keeping the computer happy. One omitted or misplaced or extra symbol in the header, and you've had it, man.

Well, here we are five days into retirement, and already it is abundantly clear that this is the only way to fly. The pleasure of doing just what we feel like doing, and when we feel like it, is altogether astounding. We figure we have not felt this way about life since we left Peking, kicking and screaming, in November, 1941. What we can't understand is how we stood what's been going on since then.

It sounds ridiculous, but we've spent most of the time clipping, pasting and filing, and the ability to do such things without the accustomed feeling of pressure is absolute luxury.

We still have that lone leftover sandwich and still haven't decided what to do with it. And you know what? We don't care. It's in the freezer, not going anywhere.

If the house is bugged, whoever is listening must have decided that considerable less than rationality is in control here. For example, today the STM misfigured something she had planned regarding dinner and was going into her beating-of-breast and rending-of-garment routine to indicate ~~proper~~ proper remorse. I said the first thing that came into my head and offered the opinion that now we have TIME to make mistakes. She greeted this with a whoop of joy, flung herself upon this unworthy person, and cats scattered in all directions, convinced the good lady had flipped.

One of the things we've been doing is making Chinese food, a matter of rather particular preparation followed by split-second timing in the cooking. We've had to teach ourselves what little we know out of books, and they're few and not too helpful. In Peking the servants did all this and since it seemed to be quite beyond us at the time we didn't even try to learn. Oh Woe, oh Lamentations Unlimited. The sad fact is that there is very little decent Chinese food in most Chinese restaurants in this country, and it early became apparent that if it were to be provided we'd have to learn how to do it ourselves. We can do a few simple dishes, and the simplest are the best, usually, and gradually we learn more as we go along. It's not only exciting to make and eat, it's good for you, far better balanced than most American meals, and costs a fraction of what they cost. For example, our dinner tonight used only four ounces of pork, two vegetables and rice.* We were stuffed, as usual. Couldn't have eaten another bite if someone had held a gun to our heads. And, outside China, there is no better food in the world. I refer you to Mr. Alsop, enclosed.

Wish you both could drop in ,


jdw

* And a couple of dried mushrooms and a thin slice of fresh ~~ginger~~ ginger. If we'd had another young onion we'd have put one in with the zucchini, but we're down to only one young onion which will be needed with an egg Thing for breakfast tomorrow morning. It's a dish you get on train diners in China. Absolutely marvelous. Nothing better on this planet and probably not in outer space.