

17 December 1972

Dear Harold:

Perhaps we should go to third class mailings. Your P beat in by a full day a first-class letter mailed the same day! Through your 39, there are a few items that should be dealt with in addition to the separate notes and memos enclosed, which probably will be split into two envelopes.

First of all I hope that when your copy paper finally arrives you can give us some of the most important stuff on Mrs. Hunt which you've had from Chicago. Only one story on her has appeared here, dealing mostly with the insurance policy taken out in her name before she took off. I enclose what we've been able to pick up here, which isn't much, together with a memo on this crash and a couple of others it recalls. Have you been able to form any opinion yet? It seems certain that she would have been called as a witness. Any clue as to how Hunt himself got to Chicago and back so soon? Air Force 1?

Let me remind you once more, in case our clippings appear to be haphazard, that the mails are thoroughly screwed up as far as newspapers are concerned. For instance we still are missing one NY Times from November and several in December before the now-normal time of one week for delivery. It used to be five days. Generally they all come in eventually, but we don't expect any improvement now until well after Christmas.

We were very glad to have the dupes of your memos and notes on Mrs. Hunt because, as I said, we had heard so little about it but even with that little were thoroughly aroused. I suppose that, in connection with the mention of the former ambassador to ~~xxxx~~ Paraguay, you recalled Hunt's listed service in Montevideo. And presumably the possible implications of the hypnotist's card (along with one from a neurologist) are not lost, although ~~xxxxxxx~~ we understand hypnotists often are used to help people overcome drinking and even smoking problems.

In p3 of your 10dec memo to LF, you question the police saying there is no way to connect the money with Mrs. Hunt after finding it in her purse. This seems to be another clear case of local police talking frankly with local reporters at first and then having to climb down after higher authority has intervened and said to shut up. The first version usually is much closer to the truth. I've seen this sort of thing happen a number of times, as you no doubt have too.

If and when you emerge with a tape of the Earl Warren interview we would like a dub, but no hurry. Meanwhile we have four of your tapes which we'll be returning soon, when we make up a third class mailing.

One other minor item: your bewilderment over the ~~tarring~~ tarring over of the manhole covers. My thought at the time was that the reporter used "tarring" to refer to the usual paving mixture of tar-and-gravel, since as you point out there would be no point whatever in covering them with tar alone. Tar and gravel, however, has considerable weight and would make that much more difficult finding the left-hole in each manhole cover, which after all is quite small, and no doubt would discourage anyone who was crazy enough to arrive early, with the

idea of lifting the cover, getting in with a gun and awaiting the moment to rise up firing. Even if such a nut could find the lift-hole through the fresh paving material over it, the cover would be that much harder to lift, and the fresh break in the paving would be readily noticed. If this is what happened, can anyone doubt that it was done by the city department of public works or whatever at the request of the Secret Service? There is no imaginable reason the city would do such a thing on its own that I can think of. Manhole covers are solid castings, usually a couple of feet in diameter with a hole toward one edge into which a hook ~~can~~ be inserted to lift it out of its recess. Most covers must weigh at least a hundred pounds, being a couple of inches thick in order to carry heavy traffic. Add 50 pounds of tar-and-gravel on top of that and you have quite a problem 1) locating the hole in the first place, and then lifting the whole thing up in order to get in, letting it back down to a closed position, and then rising up -- raising the cover again -- for an ambush. Another point is that covering the manholes over with paving material made certain that no phony work crews could be operating in any of them on that day, nor until the paving material was removed.

We continue slogging through the files, trying to get them a bit better updated but seriously hampered by the erratic nature of the mail. But every day we bite off a bit more and are that much closer to some semblance of having the whole mess in some sort of controllable shape. The weather has been excellent for such indoor sport -- we've had the annual cold spell, and you should hear the natives scream about four or five days below freezing. One day it actually snowed for a couple of hours. When it hasn't been too cold it has rained most of the time, fine weather in which to be snug and comfortable indoors with a view out one window down a mist-shrouded valley, out another at a bank of green ivy decorated with the red berries of cotoneaster and firebush, and out a third at a moss-decorated bay tree. Even in a leaky house -- all California houses leak heat like sieves -- on the coldest days our hot-air furnace ran almost continuously -- it's fun, especially when you can knock ~~it~~ off work any time you feel like it and put together a good, cold-weather Chinese meal. I know it doesn't sound like it, but we really do accomplish something now and then besides eating or planning to eat.

As I mentioned, the locals are outraged at the cold weather (few have any cold weather clothing, for one thing) and there was a heartbreaking story the other day about a woman who wanted to cover a precious azalea and could find nothing except a regular blanket. During the night some longhair took it, replacing it with a tattered and dirty blanket and a note of thanks, and the woman's only recorded thought was one of gratitude that her azalea had been saved. The garden club types are beside themselves, of course.

Which hardly describes us, with whom the good life continues.

Best from us both,


jdw