

5 January 1972

Dear Hal:

This is an attempt to clear away a lot of underbrush that has accumulated since the last time we were able to write you a real letter, probably early in November. I shan't burden you with details, but it is simply that we had left many things to take of themselves too long and simply had to take time out and attend to some of them. This is, I think, the eighth weekend in a row that we have been almost entirely occupied with trying to catch up with some of the ordinary details of living. And, as you probably realize, weekends are about the only time we have to try to deal seriously with anything. Poor Jenifer is more than five weeks behind with the NY Times, if that's any indication.

You very kindly have offered to send us various and sundry tapes you have made of certain TV programs, including one of John Stewart Service, two NBC programs on Veet Nam and one CBS do on surveillance, possibly others. In any case we do not now know when we would be able to listen to them, so will pass with thanks. But we do appreciate your thought, especially regarding Service, who is an old friend. However I have seen several press accounts of his interviews and agree there is little new in them. This also goes for the NBC and CBS transcripts you mention -- no time, we'll just have to pass.

A couple of items from back in November. You mention that in taping Service you found you picked up a buzz from a fluorescent light nearby when you were using an external mike, but did not pick it up when using the built-in mike in the TC-40. I suggest this may be because while the cord to the external mike is shielded, it cannot completely filter out the buzz which a fluorescent lamp broadcasts. The built-in mike, having no cord, apparently does not pick it up. In this connection, the Sony 90 and 120-minute tapes we went in Lil's package have that automatic sensor at each end which will make your TC-40 sound a buzzer when the tape runs out. These are available here in case you still can't get them there. Last we'd heard, you could not find the sensor-equipped Sony tapes; that's why we sent them. If you need more, please say.

In a letter dated Nov. 11 you mention that you wish I could go further into a confidence from a younger member of the Kennedy family. I wish I could too, but there is too much danger of it's being traced if I told you more. Suffice to say I have every reason to believe it absolutely genuine in the terms I described it to you. In the same paragraph, your reply that I am correct on Bobby not mentioning the assassination until Krakow, but that I forgot San Fernando State. [^]Do, I didn't. He replied to questions at San Fernando only AFTER he had first done the same thing a few weeks earlier at Krakow.

Dr. Noguchi. I was extremely surprised to learn of your impression that he had been fired, and that it stuck. He was fired, of course, but his staff and friends raised so much hell they had to reinstate him -- a remarkable performance all round. To make sure, I checked with our LA bureau over a private line and the answer came back, no doubt about it, he's still coroner.

From a letter dated Nov. 8, you raise the possibility that some of your letters reach us with postage due. Nothing of the sort has happened. Your postal scale is okay.

Re the Paul Cook-KPFA interview, you appear to have gained the impression that Mancino is back in California. If so, we've heard nothing about it. As far as we know he's still being held in Nevada as a sort of courtesy to the California prison authorities. If there were any honest judges in Nevada, a good lawyer probably could get him out on a writ of habeas corpus, since he has committed no crime in Nevada and they haven't got a thing on him except that their pals in the California prison system want him kept on ice.

Re the 10-27 clip on court refusal to give George Jackson's mother his effects, we have seen nothing further on this, and we think we would have spotted anything.

Jenifer has just run a check and finds nothing further on the Babun brothers (this is in regard to Castro's "piracy" of two Panamanian-registered ships owned by some Cuban exiles). The name does seem to ring a bell here, as it apparently did with you. In this connection we heard a sort of second hand interview with a woman on KPFA who had telephoned someone in Cuba, and there is no doubt in Havana that these two ships were CIA sponsored.* It's apparently an article of faith there, if nothing else. We agree that Castro wouldn't have done what he did if he hadn't felt absolutely sure.

Regarding rechargeable batteries, no experience here.

We haven't seen the Rosemary James interview with Gervais. N.O. Mag has never appeared on any newstand that I know of here. It sounds interesting, but as of now I'd say it's doubtful that it would be worthwhile to send it to us, considering our present state of too much to do and not enough time to do it in.

Apparently I missed the story about the attempt to assassinate Cesar Chavez. Thanks for the date. I'll look up our files and see if we have anything on it at the office.

We heard on the news today that the White House Correspondents association had refused to back up the Washington Post on its policy of disclosing the sources of background briefings and leaks. Not at all surprising, and it's too bad that the Post didn't get a little more support. Leaks and trial balloons are such an established practice all over the world that -- the world we know, anyway -- that I doubt if the Post can maintain such a policy much longer.

Under separate cover we are sending you a mass a stuff, including several things you asked to have returned, the New Orleans file up through Dec. 28 (from the S-I only; we don't see the T-P) and a few clippings from local papers that may interest you.

Among them is a review from Saturday Review on the three versions of the Pentagon Papers -- the New York Times, Sen. Gravel's, and the Pentagon's own version. Haven't read it, but it might open up some possibilities to you.

*The woman interviewed (whose name, alas, we do not remember) said it was known that the captains of both ships had been involved in the Bay of Pigs.

We have not studied the PPs, in any version, but my persistent impression is that the NY Times version, anyway, constituted a leak, especially when you consider that a) the CIA came off well relative to all others, b) so do Republicans in general, and c) there is that critical gap between the two assassinations in November, 1963.

One thing that puzzles me is the person of Ellsberg himself, not having even seen him on television and therefore having no idea of him as a person. At one time I entertained the idea that he might have been given to understand that nothing too terribly drastic would happen to him if he made it possible for the papers to be published. I am now wondering if he was used as Sirhan may have been used, unknowingly. One of the most interesting of all circumstances seems to be the fact that Fulbright had access to the same material and didn't bite. One is tempted to infer that someone was determined that their version of the Vietnam embroilment get out before some other version did.

I'm sure the same thing has occurred to you that has to us -- that Nixon, presumably with Kissinger's advice, is attempting to run a two-sided show: winding down the war for the benefit of the public which wants out, but not really winding it down for the benefit of the military (at least part of it) and others who have no intention of getting out of SEA or similar situations anywhere. In this sense he has to send up a continual stream of signals which mean one thing to the peace faction and quite another to what we shall call, for want of a better term, the hawks. I agree with you that the resumption of bombing was a drude example of doing something largely because no one could think of anything better, but it also could be reassurance that the whow is not over by any means. It could, for one thing, stall off a possible assasination attempt, or ~~another~~ another Gulf of Tonkin incident which can be pulled out of the file at any time. If fact, as the time draws nearer, I begin to doubt more and more that as things are going, that Nixon will be allowed to make his trip to Peking. If he does, he will find that the bombing resumption and his cheap and transparent use of the POW issue is going to make the Chinese tougher than ever. They can read him like an open book. His vacillation and eventual swing -- too late -- to support of Pakistan is not going to make his stock any better with them, either. THEY supported Pakistan for their own reasons, to counter India and therefore Russia, but Nixon's bumbling ended only in weakening Pakistan, strengthening India and possibly giving Russia bases in the Indian ocean. About all this will do is strengthen the Chinese in their probable conviction that Americans know only how to support collapsing dictatorships.

This brings us up through your last letter received, dated Dec. 31. Inadeauate replies, but at least I have the impression I've left nothing of importance unanswered. One last thing, on going back through the file I find your inquiry about the Process in LZ. Never heard of it, but I'll keep an eye out for it. More elsewhere.


jdw