

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 delay 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,