

14 February 1973

Dear Harold:

Herewith your rough Watergate draft, with a few reactions. We make all allowances possible for the probability you were working at top speed to get your ideas down on paper while they were ruining, but the fact remains that we had the usual difficulties with your sentence construction -- too many ideas crowded in, the payoff postponed to the last possible moment, the sometimes obscure and difficult sarcasm obscuring your main idea when a straightforward statement would have been not only clear but far more convincing.

A good example is your treatment of Mrs. Hunt's insurance policies. At one point I considered writing my own version of what you have to say, just as an exercise and to see what I could do with it, and I realized that there were places where I simply could not make out what you intended to say. The STM found herself stopped somewhere in almost every paragraph. Now, you know we both have followed this case, are in sympathy with your viewpoint even if we don't know enough to have opinions as strong as yours, but even so we had trouble. Think, then, how much more trouble anyone who knows even less about the case than we is likely to have with this draft.

As to substance, we think you have crammed into these few pages a remarkable selection of the salient facts, but the trouble is that there are so many of them and that they will be strange and probably unpalatable concepts to most other people. Most other people have been brainwashed. You have got to dilute this whole thing with more explanatory and qualifying detail to get it to where the average person can find it acceptable.

On one point I'm sure you'll have trouble -- where you say flatly that Hunt was Frank Bender and provide nothing to support the statement. You need to tell more of who Frank Bender was supposed to be, and, if you can (I realize you may not be able to for reasons I know nothing of) provide some reasonable grounds for the average person to believe you know what you're talking about when you say Hunt was Bender. If a man like Hunt, convicted of a federal rap through a guilty plea, can sue someone for libel, could he sue you? Of course he would look silly, denying the even bigger role in the BofP heroics you assign him, but couldn't he accuse you of being out to get him because of what you say he did to clobber Whitewash?

If Bender was important, say why -- that he was formulating and carrying out American foreign policy on his own, among other things. And, if you can, spell out why you think Bender was a cover name for Hunt. And remember, you are taking the average reader through terra incognita. And he may be going along unwillingly. Where you can, spell out the facts and let him draw his own conclusions. Example: Page 4, where you discuss in parentheses: (One of these revanchist characters later pulled the same ploy when Robert Kennedy was killed, his qualifications for becoming Dade County, Florida - Miami - Republican chairman). Make it: He later became Republican chairman in Dade County, Fla.-- Miami. He COULD have had other qualifications, couldn't he?

Sandy Smith: That was the name, remember, of the LIFE writer who did the series on the Mafia during the Garrison case which got McKeithen so upset. He no doubt pulled together the work of many others. At the time, I assumed, but still do not know, that he was a Sanderson Smith whom I met here during World War II. He was with OWI at the time, but I understood had Time-Life connections and presumed after the war he had returned there following his OWI job, but never heard for sure. Very decent guy, the one we knew. Should be about 60. Best,