

COMMUNICATIONS

Communications Editor: RICHARD L. TOBIN

"If You Can Keep Your Head When All About You..."



EDITORIAL

By Richard L. Tobin 53

LETTERS TO THE

COMMUNICATIONS EDITOR 54

JFK, THE MAGAZINES, AND PEACE

By John Tebbel 56

THE WONDERLAND OF SUBSIDIARY RIGHTS

By Paul Nathan 58

MAVERICKS ON MADISON AVENUE

By Peter Bart 60

LETTER FROM A BROKER

By Peter Wyckoff 62

UNIONS NEED PUBLIC ACCEPTANCE, TOO

By L. L. L. Golden 63

BOOKS IN COMMUNICATIONS

By Richard L. Tobin and James F. Fixx 64



"... in spite of incredible deadline problems. . . ."



BEING a newsman of whatever stripe in time of national tragedy is a privilege and a care most human beings are ill equipped to handle. Special talent and training are required. It took built-in coolness under the fire of highly-charged events to put together the total television coverage of the Kennedy assassination story, with only a few human slips here and there. But the job done by the three major news magazines in getting almost everything into their current issues in spite of incredible deadline problems over a hectic weekend was something quite special.

Newsweek's technical problems were fairly typical and somehow surmounted. *Newsweek* and *Time* usually start their press runs on Sunday for distribution early in the week. In dull weeks, final copy comes in long before the Saturday midnight deadline and is set instantaneously by teletype-relay at huge printing plants, chiefly in the Middle West. By 6 A.M. Sunday, therefore, both *Time* and *Newsweek* have, in ordinary circumstances, begun to roll, with only a few news watchdogs around for emergency service. *Time's* circulation is somewhat larger than *Newsweek's* 1,600,000, but their press runs are approximately the same length, so changes can be made through the press run, and in this tremendous story many were.

The Kennedy assassination took place at approximately 2 P.M. Eastern Standard Time on the Friday before the news magazines' Saturday midnight deadline. In as professional a job of shifting the contents of a magazine as one could care to see, both editorial staffs tore out huge holes at the front of the book. *Newsweek* ended up with twenty-five completely new pages in the Kennedy story; *Time* used seventeen, including its departmental encomium to TV coverage, its tremendous cover story on Lyndon Baines Johnson, and its usual sharply edited précis of the news.

Both *Time* and *Newsweek* replated during their press runs Sunday afternoon as soon as the Oswald murder had taken place. Both used the amazing *Dallas Morning News* photo of the Oswald slaying, replating once more so that large segments of their circulations got both story and picture. *Newsweek* used for a second time a cover it had run on January 21 showing President Kennedy in color profile. *Time* had four-color plates of a painting of President Johnson (as it has four-color plates of many famous personages) in stock. *U.S. News & World Report*, which has a Friday afternoon deadline normally, used a Johnson color photo and simply tore its whole book apart and started over again inside, ending up with about twenty pages of fresh type, including its famous telegraphic newsgrams. It was quite a job, but all three news magazines came through with colors flying.

Where television was concerned, the largest audience in its history—an estimated 100,000,000 people—tuned in on tasteful, sensitive coverage of the President's final rites and burial in Arlington. Television truly came of age in its handling of the Kennedy story. All commercial broadcasts, indeed all programs except news, memorials, and coverage of the Kennedy story

itself, were canceled all along the line, a decision that probably cost the networks millions of dollars of revenue but gained them honor, prestige, and gratitude that simply cannot be calculated in money.

There were touches of pure television, as when President Kennedy's "Ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country" came over the audio while the video focused on the flag-draped casket of the man who had given everything there is to give to one's country. There was the unforgettably poignant sight of Mrs. Kennedy kneeling in the Rotunda of the Capitol with her small daughter Caroline, kissing the flag covering her husband's coffin. There was the quick but tear-rousing flash of tiny John-John saluting the caisson outside St. Matthew's. There was the towering figure of de Gaulle and the exquisitely small Emperor of Ethiopia, both in uniform, silent before the President's grave. There was the fantastic murder on live TV before our eyes in a Dallas jail corridor of Lee Harvey Oswald, the man who had been accused by police as the President's slayer.

THE press, while it did its usual thorough job, was hopelessly outflanked by total TV and radio coverage. It could recoup only when its content was better than reality, as in the case of James Reston's magnificent Washington column the day after the assassination. But the *New York Times* was guilty of a piece of atrocious editing in its Monday morning issue of November 25 when the top banner line read as follows: "President's Assassin Shot to Death." The fact is that Lee Harvey Oswald had not yet legally been indicted, much less convicted, of President Kennedy's assassination. The *New York Times* had no right whatever under American law or the standards of journalistic fair play to call the man "President's Assassin." He was not the "President's Assassin"—he had simply been accused. By that point in the whole horrible story, the *Times* ought to have known better.

Worse yet, Gladwin Hill, writing under a Dallas dateline the lead article upon which this false headline was based—without the possible excuse that headlines often oversimplify—stated point-blank in that day's *Times*: "President Kennedy's assassin, Lee Harvey Oswald, was fatally shot by a Dallas night-club operator today as the police started to move him from the city to the county jail." The *Times* said on its editorial page that the Dallas police had prejudged the Oswald case over TV. But what did the *Times*'s own banner line do if not prejudice without trial, jury, or legal verdict? —R.L.T.

Letters to the Communications Editor



Memories of McVarish

THE ARTICLE "What Makes a Good Public Relations Man?" [SR, Nov. 9] concerns the late Charles E. McVarish, an old and dear friend of mine. I want to tell you how happy and proud I was to see it and to assure you that it does justice to one of the finest persons I have ever known.

I have been a newspaperman for thirty-six years this coming January, some twenty-five of them with the *New York Times*. I have dealt with public relations people of all kinds all over this country, and I would unhesitatingly say that the most able, talented, loyal, discerning, high-minded, and principled public relations man I ever met was Charlie McVarish.

He was a remarkable American for these times. I watched him perform his duties for clients on dozens of occasions—always decent and understanding of all aspects that affected the newspaper's special needs and special role in such relationships. No advantage was ever worth even a hint of dishonor. I know scores of newspapermen who admired Charlie.

Mr. Golden refers to Charlie's avocation: helping people get jobs. I personally know of a score of such instances—newspapermen whose jobs vanished and a lot of ex-Marines who had hard sledding in adjusting to the postwar years. I served with Charlie in the Marine Corps, both at staff level and in combat ones, and he was courageous, compassionate and so remarkable in his gentle kindness to his command subordinates that to this day he is a legend whenever they gather to recollect the dimming war years. . . .

Unfortunately, Charlie's death didn't produce the obituary with depth and understanding that many of us had hoped to see. Charlie wouldn't have cared in the least, but a lot of us did, and your magazine and Lou Golden have done a very wonderful job of reporting on a truly wonderful person.

JOHN N. POPHAM,
General Managing Editor,
Chattanooga Times.

Chattanooga, Tenn.

YOU ARE TO BE commended for the admirable article on Charles E. McVarish. He was a friend and helper of an almost infinite number of people in all parts of the country who should be grateful to Mr. Golden for articulating what very many of us have always felt about him.

His aphorisms were legion. They were mainly unprintable, but I have a suspicion that they were an attempt to hide a very gentle nature. Some day someone should start to make a collection of them.

SYDNEY MORRELL.

New York, N.Y.

More on Mencken

I WANT TO REPLY to the letter and editor's note that appeared in the October 12 Communications Supplement. I want to do this chiefly for the guidance of future historians of the *American Mercury*, about which so much sheer fantasy has been written, as much as about H. L. Mencken himself.

Mr. Wallace, publisher and editor of *Reader's Digest*, tells Mr. Knopf, who tells the managing editor of SR, who does not tell me, that he, Mr. Wallace, was always in the habit of dealing only with "top editors and publishers." I regret to remind him that in the mid-Twenties he himself was not yet a "top editor or publisher," and he had to talk to me. To save his face I want to add that he had little choice. Mencken spent most of his time in Baltimore, and I was the only editor in charge in New York. Mr. Wallace, of course, dealt with Mencken and Knopf, too, but that was after he had had preliminary discussions with me.

Mencken probably did write that letter in praise of *Reader's Digest*. But note the year: 1934. I dealt with a much earlier time. That Mencken could have written such a letter was another mark of what had happened to him. Not too long afterward Mencken found much to praise in Alf Landon, who was running against Franklin Delano Roosevelt, whom Mencken considered as little better than a Communist. About the same time Mencken was, to put it gently, of two minds about Adolf Hitler. . . .

CHARLES ANGOFF.

New York, N.Y.

More on Groome

HARRY C. GROOME, in his article "How to Criticize Advertising" [SR, Oct. 12], says that criticism of advertising must be stopped. If nobody attacks advertising, nobody will have to defend it, and all will be well.

He writes that when businesses wish to expand, they *always* advertise. SR itself reported recently that Hershey sells more chocolate than any other producer—*entirely without advertising*. And Wilkinson Sword has recently put the whole razor blade industry in America to rout by its success—*without any advertising whatever*. The Edsel's history embarrasses some advertising apologists, but not Mr. Groome.

He associates advertising with "the very human urge to get rich, to be a VIP, and to have the accompanying perquisites." So bald an appeal to selfishness and to class-consciousness I have seldom seen.

And not a word about misrepresentation, not a word about insults to good taste and good sense, not a word about billboards on highways—not a word about any of the problems that advertising has never hon-

SR/December 14, 1963