

7 December 1972

Dear Harold:

Before I forget it, I have been meaning to ask you to inquire from Ian MacDonald the next time you see him whether he ever ran across a distinguished namesake of his, C. Malcolm MacDonald, also of The Times.

Mac was in Peking for the Times much of the time I was there, and the last time I saw him was in the spring of 1945 on Pennsylvania Ave. in Washington. I left to come out here soon after that, and never heard of Mac again. Bill Lewis, of course, was the big noise for the Times in Washington in those days.

In any case, Mac was everyone's favorite, a confirmed bachelor until he surprised everyone by getting married on home leave during the late 1930s and bringing his bride back to Peking. They had a son, I recall, who was still a mere infant when they left Peking for good sometime before we got into the war.

My fondest memory of Mac goes back to a day in 1935 at his home, which he shared with another confirmed Australian bachelor, H.J. Timperley. Timp was the AP correspondent at the time, and also attended the needs of the Manchester Guardian, the Christian Science Monitor, the Australian AP, Asia magazine and God knows what else. Anyway, he needed help, and I was it. I used to go to their house at 15 Kan YU Hutung (Dried Fish Alley) where Timp had his office and living quarters on the east side of the courtyard, Mac had his on the west, and they shared a common living room at the back of the court. Mac had acquired a dog, named Glennie, which was allegedly Alsatian but I obviously had picked up more exotic ancestors along the way. Timp had a nondescript airedale named Jessie. I arrived one day to hear Mac shouting in the courtyard to their fat houseboy to "do something, dammit," and found Glennie and Jessie joyously coupled in the courtyard as Mac and the houseboy stood by wringing their hands. First I warned them not to try to separate them by force and suggested water, thinking, naturally, of a hose. At this point Timp emerged to inquire what was going on. Mac's irate reply was that "that bloody wonk of yours has seduced my Glennie, that's what." Timp grew purple in the face at the mention of wonk, a China coast term for a street dog or mongrel, and I following the two into the living room, thinking to separate them if they came to blows. They didn't, but there were extremely heated words having to do with the ancestry of certain dogs and their owners. I went back out into the courtyard as soon as things cooled off a bit, to check on the dogs and found the houseboy applying the water treatment. From a pitcher.

It was some time before Mac and Timp resumed speaking to each other. But that was not uncommon, and they always got over it, both being perfect gentlemen and truly great people.

And do tell Ian and Crispina we would be most happy to meet them if they should happen out this way.


jdw