

Dear Js,

12/21/72

One of the late-coming realizations in a lifetime large parts of which were full of stress is that perhaps the best single means of overcoming it is constructive work that is also challenging and, with one dedicated to an objective, advancing that objective. 43

I could spend more than a year without leaving this place, working to the limit of my physical capacity, and do nothing but constructive work. That is not the kind I'm talking about. I have done some modest carpentry, blocklaying, electrical work, things like those, and they have a slightly calming or pacifying effect, as Churchill seems to have found bricklaying.

With a writer who has much writing ahead, I think the only way he can really shed what to him are serious stresses is in feeling that he is advancing on another front, so not advancing or falling back on the one left isn't all that terrible.

I can feel the difference in me for the past year on such occasions, of which there have been too many. I don't have the satisfaction of advancing on another front because I'm at a point where I now can't do any writing until other things are taken care of. Not with material as complicated as mine and my desire to make it as detailed as possible in the record I make with it. Nor can the other things abide a divided mind.

These thoughts came to be this afternoon when I learned that Frame-Up is being advertised as a remainder in Washington, got nowhere in phoning Outerbridge, and then learned that the Giant stores, which are remaindering, got them from Marlboro, from whom David was supposed to have effected the return of all they had. My last word to him on this, a repetition of earlier requests, was that Alexander Graham Bell ought not to have been born and lived in vain-to use the phone.

By now David has learned that he has, really, made himself a legal mess. The one thing I did learn is that he has turned it all over to his lawyer, who is preparing a letter to me addressing each point I've made, or each claim. Supposedly. If he can learn, this experience should teach him how costly it can be to be a crook.

I'd expected to use what I didn't have, some in-between time, for a note in amplification of the letter to the LATimes DC, written in haste this a.m., rather early. They handled the entire thing as stupidly as possible, no doubt pushed further in that direction by solidly Establishmentarian counsel. They played into everyone else's hands, including those of the forces of repression, took a stand on the weakest ground, and on the least-solid legal points. Aside from the fact that someone should have established precedent on this under a reasonably rational Supreme Court, they made a claim that had been ruled legally invalid by the present Court.

Bitman, Justice et al were smart. It is generally government that makes the demand of the press. If it was in this case too, legally it was the defendant, whose rights are quite different than those of government. I'm not at all sure that there should be an immunity when the life or freedom of a human can hang in it. So, the only reasonable defense, the only honest one, was an attack, to allege that this was really a government request, and they would not be party to a charade (ever hear that phrase?). To this they should have added the allegation that it is premature until Baldwin is a witness (which I think is the point in Jencks). Baldwin could die, the government could change its mind and not call him. When he was forced to agree to the delivery of the tapes to keep the reporters out of jail, the need of repressors was served: future Baldwins if not the press are intimidated.

If I think there is no a good prospect of my hearing from them on this, there would have been less if I had written more fully.

There was a bit of relief in the NPR news tonight. The VN part was good, with Sidey, Dudman and Joe Harsch plus an English and a Japanese reporter. There was a fine sequence on Whitehead by a drama critic for the Balt. Sun, who laid it out straight. To date, these shows total just under two hours for the first four.

I had wondered what had happened to Joe. I knew he'd gone from NBC to ABC, but then, almost immediately, I heard nothing. He is editorial writer for the Christian Science monitor. He worked for them when I first met him, in the late spring or early summer of 1937, in the little county seat of London, Laurel County, Ky. He was there to cover the trial at which I was the representative of the Senate and the consultant (esp on duces tecum subpoenas) to the Department of Justice. There were 1910 people in London when the court was not in session, and prior to the influx for that trial. And there were some pretty seedy things that happened, including some of the more respectable members of the press.

Not Joe. But a fair percentage of the large crew of FBI agents. (There were not enough secretaries to go around, and two would have nothing to do with men, so except when they recruited local talent, the usual limit was four using a single bedroom at a time, two in bed, two on the floor. Aka "taking it where you can get it".)

Now was quiet and gave the appearance of solidity, the picture of the tweedy but relaxed man (no tie when not necessary, saddle shoes, once partly white). Somehow, he lacked confidence on that story. I helped him lay it out when he asked, backgrounded him, and then read it. Not his day-to-day stuff for the Monitor. A special piece for either the Nation or The New Republic.

I think I once mentioned that I was the unofficial official rum-runner. Brien McMahon would have the armored 1933 Buick gassed up and I'd drive to Lexington, Ky., or Jellico, Tenn., for the week's need. The local bootleggers were too anxious to retire on the one trial's attendance.

There was a tragi-comedy one night. It is a night I didn't begin at the party because I wasn't fond of Ray Daniell, who was covering for the NYTimes. He had rented one of the larger private homes in town, only a couple of blocks from the court house. He had a real bash that night. I was sitting in my room reading or something when I got a phone call from one of the secretaries who'd paired with a great (I mean it) agent who had the most dismal marriage I've ever seen. And Catholic. This man later got to be an Assistant Attorney General in two different divisions and after going into private practice took security cases. Not the typical G-man, as they were then beginning to be called. And warn human being. I used to ride shotgun for him when there was no agent to do it. He taught me how to disassemble and reassemble his automatic before he'd trust me with it. He'd give me that because he believed (rightly) the revolver was more dependable. And I liked him. And his girl friend.

She called me in terror that night. I was a kid, the junior of all there. She was sobbing so all I could make out is that she was at Ray's place. She had a broken leg, apparently broken in avpid Ray, who pressed with diligence and without discouragement. (He must have been awful drunk to risk crossing the G-man, who was also a very large man, as Ray was not.) Wellser, as they said down there, here was this cupie-type rather nice young woman, laying there with a broken leg, surrounded by a bunch of drunken reporters and drunken women, who-all I don't now recall, and none of them could do anything. Ray, of course, had desisted. Naturally, I started looking for a doctor. There were only a couple and they were out. Rugged mountains, lousy roads and needy people. Believe it or not, her leg was set by a local vet, the only pro I could get. I had local friends, the solid, woodsman type, really solid citizens, if uneducated and unsophisticated. When there was no doctor and this gal was in pain, I checked the vets out and phoned the recommended one.. She came through it fine. I saw her later in Washington.

This is what Joe Harsch got you into!

That was where I learned other than from reading and thinking of Hoover, his power, his pettiness, his spy system (internal) and his willingness to use his power. Several ways of learning. First was right away. There was an agent I correctly felt would not stay with the Bureau long. An accountant named Stevens. He drew me aside the first week, when we were in Harlan, and wised me up: all the agents had to report on all the others if there was any rules infraction. Because my room was next to and connected with the one used as an office, I'd be under special surveillance. Also, I was the only one not of the Bureau or Department. So, be careful who you lay where and how drunk you get. (I didn't philander anyway, and getting back to Mil, when I could, was both an adventure and a physical drain, transportation being what it then was)

A movie-type reporter covered for the NY Daily News, at first. Named Crosson, as I recall. One night we were having a male drinking party in the other of the two small hotels in town and he made a crack about Hoover being a fag. He was yanked the next day, replaced by the late George Dixon, then rather a radical, including in looks. Hair like an anarchist ~~was~~ caricature, too. George, flippant, irrepressible, sacrilegious, rather iconoclast, got a room with a preacher whose house was actually at the intersection of Divinity and Sublimity Streets. This was long before he got rich, conservative and melda Chavez. Patterson just wasn't that kind of guy, from his rep, but he could not have yanked Crosson faster. And I never heard another of the corps make any reference to Hoover's character.

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You know about how I know about the brambles, from those early-morning walks with the old judge who was "Line Worker's" counsel for the region. Let me tell you about travel in those days for a man in a hurry, with two, full-time jobs, one always so far away.

DC2s were still the standard planes, the best. Remember them, two rows of 12 seats separated by the aisle, 24 capacity, one male steward. Well, going there from DC I'd fly to Cincinnati a little after noon, from old National Airport, where the Pentagon now is. Scraping the tress was not an adventure, it was that common in taking off. At Cin. I'd take a late-night, sleeperless L&N that stopped everywhere. It got me into London, if it was not late, about 3 a.m. And it was always very uncomfortable, that train. Wooden seats, if I remember correctly. Going to Washington I took a supertime Greyhound to Knoxville, about 120 miles away. There a cab for 14 miles to the airport. Funny think about the schedules there. There was a plane to and a plane from Washington once each way each day. 1:13 p.m. going west and 1:13 a.m. going east. Both stopped at Bristol, which was divided by the Virginia-Tennessee line, and I think one other place. Not uncommon to run off the strip at Bristol. Pretty short. Got to Washington 5:34 a.m. I could be in bed before I'd got out of it.

The last time I left while in an official capacity I did more good than the trial. Within the next two or three days six of the gunthug/deputies killed each other. I was a bit leery when I took Lil there in 1939. Hitler invaded Poland while we were going there. Stopped off in Pittsburgh to see a lawyer friend from there then working in Pgh. He had to go to Chicago for a couple of hours on union business, so we took that long detour with him. Then we went back to Pgh, got our car and drove to his home outside London to await his coming. From there we returned via Harlan town. I'd never do it today, not with what I'd done and caused, but I did. We lunched with George Titker, of whom you've been reading lately. He is now badly crippled. It took guts for him to go to Harlan then. He lived right in the middle of Harlan town. I called first. When we got there he, personally, had prepared the meal. Best spare-ribs and sauer kraut I ever tasted. And a superb grape pie. White grapes! But I was careful to get us out of Harlan before dark. We went a little past Bristol, into Virginia, before stopping for the night.

That last night this same friend, one of the Clays and the only one on the people's side, drove me to Knoxville, because I'd discussed what I planned doing with him. First he lost his headlights in the mountains, and we shuddered, but he stopped while we were still on the road. Then the plane had carburetor trouble and I sat in it for two hours while it was fixed, Homer and Dolores standing outside to be sure I got off or to take possession of me if I didn't. The wonder is that nobody got Homer. He was a militant, one of the early militant lawyers, a friend of Don West's and people like him. The people loved and remembered him and paid them in what ways he could. Thus he was able to build a magnificent log house, paneled inside in beech, for \$2,500 cash. Seven rooms on eight acres, with the living room two stories high and all the upper floor bedrooms giving onto the same balcony. But Homer has changed. Haven't seen him in years. He had recruited for the Spanish Loyalists, too, but a Catholic wife did it to him. Daughter of a Portuguese diplomat. She got more and more religious and conservative as she got older.

Homer and some of the rustics used to drive up to see me once in a while, in DC, which bugged the eyes of all but Homer. They loved it and so did I. Life was different, more elemental and much healthier and natural then. I still have the subcaliber dueling pistol, now a .22 and accurate as a rifle, one of them made and gave me.

Well, I hope I haven't bored you. I've worked my way out of that mood. I hope you do have a very good holiday, and that you are still tasting it when you get this!

HW