

15 October 1972

Dear Harold:

Your letters through 15 all here, and it's that time again for rounding up odds and ends.

I was so appalled at Mrs. Gonzalez' swallowing of the Striso crap about China and drugs that I was moved to do what I could to back up your excellent reply to her. ~~XXXXXXXXXXXX~~ You're welcome to forward the enclosed friend of the court effort if you think it will help.

In connection with the Kaplan case, we did get a copy of that issue of Playboy and clipped the Asinov, Hinckle-Turner piece. It seems pretty thin, and I'm sure Pore Pearl can do much better.

Speaking of Turner, when I mentioned the movie in an earlier letter I used the French title simply because I could not think of the English and was too lazy to go down to the basement to look it up. My recollection is that the movie used the English title, and have none whatever that the French title was employed. I'm sure I'd remember that.

We have received intact the Watergate indictments, along with a whole string of photocopies of stories about Mme. Mitchell, all of which glad to get, and I'm sure they must be complete. Also very happy to get the extensive clippings on the recent Washington Post treatment of Watergate developments. Locals used stories based on them, and fairly complete, but many essential details left out. While I'm talking about these recent Watergate developments, one thing that remains to be explained in my mind is why Baldwin is talking, why the FBI is letting all this stuff out. No explanation thus far for either, and we wonder if it isn't a matter of CREEP thinking it's better to let such stuff out under conditions they can control to some extent, now, rather than to see them sprung ~~xxxx~~ later by someone they may not be able to control as well, and at a more critical time. Be very interested to know your thinking on this.

In a recent letter you thanked us for sending you a Kleindienst quote about the FBI not hurrying to investigate the WG caper because people might think it was a shitewash. Turns out you have it. You sent us a photocopy some time back of a WX Post story dated Sept. 24 which has it. The story is a series of questions and answers to and from Kleindienst, and the quote you want is in the fifth column of the story, 21st Q&A series, or the 7th Q&A from the end.

You also inquire whether we have anything on the Yockey case. I remember it dimly, but unfortunately it happened before we began keeping that kind of file, and we have nothing on it. My only recollection is that he was a right wing nut, that his death was completely unexplained, and that our impression at the time is that he was assassinated, probably by a confrere, but that's just an impression.

As far as we know, no radio station here carries NPR material. All are unreconstructibly commercial except KPFA, and it's difficult to imagine any of them using it because of the absence of commercial spots and what they imagine is the short attention span of their audience. We'll keep an eye out for it, however, and would be glad to hear some of it if we had the time. As it is, we erase many tapes we make from KPFA simply because we never get around to listening to them. Maybe after Jan. 1 we'll have more time.

Enjoyed your dissection of Bob Johnson, whose reminiscent piece in AP World I had read with considerable nausea. On one thing you are wrong, or rather your memory is. The long-time AP correspondent in the press ~~l~~mousine with Merriman Smith was Jack Bell. I knew him quite well in WX, and saw him a number of times since during presidential campaigns when he would come this way. You may have him confused with Bill Beale, a contemporary of Bell's ~~s~~x who later became WX chief of bureau following Morin and who retired about the same time Bell did four or five years ago. Bell went to work for the Knight newspapers, I think, under Paul Miller who was WX COB preceding Morin. Maybe it was the Gannett chain. Any difference ?

On Johnson, he seems to me to be a typical AP executive type whose talents run more to a hardnosed gladhand in dealing with members, which is the important thing for an AP executive. A certain shrewdness, but no ~~br~~ains brains and even less conscience, particularly regarding the news and the responsibility of reporting it. He is exactly where you'd expect him to wind up -- general sports editor, where his talents are employed in composing seven-page, singlespaced instructions on how to handle pro football games. Among other innovations, he now forces news staffs all over the country to file BULLETINS on a collection wire every time a pro football score is made. At the end of the game, (you should live so long) you then file a final score (in a precise form), a game-ending bulletin, a 200-word add, another 200-word add, scoring summaries, team statistics, an optional lead with quotes, individual statistics, and then a regional add, all in that order, with wordages and forms all spelled out minutely. AND you have to do it on a cathode ray tube transmitter which has a keyboard with more than twice as many keys and functions as a typewriter. We had two hours instruction recently to learn it. Twenty years ago the teletype operators had 75 hours of paid instruction to learn the teletypesetter keyboard which is perhaps as complicated, although in a slightly different way. Do you wonder that I look forward to retiring ?

I always have felt that the entire American press, but most of all the daily press, fell flat on its face in reporting the assassination, and that both news agencies collaborated fully in this miserable failure.

Articles like Johnson's only reinforce that opinion. I think the truth is that none of them dares to admit he was wrong in any respect, in a ~~sub-~~conscious fear that to admit AN~~T~~thing is to open a Pandora's box of questions to which there will be no end.

There is, I think, only one extenuating thing that can be said for the news agencies (I regard AP and UPI as equally reprehensible) and that is the matter of deadlines and deadline pressure in contrast with those facing the newspaper. Many newspapers now have only one real deadline a day. In 1963 a considerable number still had several. Agency writers and editors have one every minute of every 24 hours, because somewhere some member is about to go to press. This increases enormously the pressure for fast handling, but the diverse membership also increases enormously the really terrible pressure not to make a mistake. There is reason for that conservatism in handling the news. You have to satisfy the liberal member publishers better than your competition and at the same time not give some reactionary member like the late Col. McCormick or Bill Loeb an opening to clobber you. And remember, it never is AP or UPI management which is at fault when such complaints come in. It is always the writers or the desk editor who erred, and who pays. Be glad the symptoms of this disease are not worse than they are.

To move on to a more pleasant subject, we are delighted that you find the Craig working out well, and that you're able to tape directly from both TV and radio.

Your account of the painful episode of Lil in the bathroom who could not hear well while you were taping a program leads us to deduce, however, that you haven't yet realized the full convenience and time-saving benefits available to you. Why the hell didn't you play the tape back for LIL AFTER she was out of the bathroom? Why HAVE a tape recorder if you're not going to use it to get away from the tyrannies of other people's schedules?

We use ours so much that we more often than not listen to tapes rather than live broadcasts. You never know when you're going to need a tape of something anyway, so we usually tape anything we think may be interesting, regardless of whether we're listening at the time. If we listen to the live broadcast, no harm is done; we roll the tape back to the beginning and are ready for the next time. If we don't listen, we then listen to the tape when we're damned good and ready. This avoids trying to concentrate on a live broadcast and something else at the same time, such as cooking. It also protects one when the phone rings in the middle of a program. The ~~rec~~ recorder is going, so we just turn down the volume and ~~can~~ hear the tape of what we missed later.

For this sort of daily use, if I haven't mentioned it before, we use good Sony tapes that don't jam or wear out. They're always available to dub from when needed. We use less expensive, usually inferior tapes to dub to. They get little wear that way, and are just as good to keep a record on.

Tonight we listened to Patman on CBS' Face the Nation (or rather we taped it while listening to the tape of an earlier news program from KPFA) and then listened to the Patman tape. We wondered if Herman or Schorr had been primed with any questions from you, but could detect none. Also heard Jean Westwood on Capitol Cloakroom, but nothing there. Like you, with the recent WX Post disclosures about the extent of the political chicanery and fifth columning, we had begun to hope that someone was going to take this whole question and run with it. I have a sneaking impression that all the media have been conditioned by the Warren Report and similar earlier whitewashes and frauds ~~that~~ to feel that it's just too dangerous to challenge them. They have no spine themselves because of the real or fancied dangers of libel and slander suits, and they get no encouragement from a public so brainwashed by commercial television and other soporifics that it never dreams of questioning or protesting. If that's true, the country will get exactly what it deserves, Richard M. Nixon.

With this happy thought, good night.


jdw