

26 May 1973

Dear Harold:

Your good mailing of the 24th came in this morning, and I'm throwing together the enclosed to get it on its way to you before the nation shuts down entirely for the Memorial Day weekend. Aside from a Hoppe and a bit from Herb Caen, nothing except bits which you might have missed there and which you should know about.

Many thanks indeed for calling the Post and taking care of the subscription -- it saves time for everyone. Their bill came yesterday and already has been paid. No papers yet -- the first cannot now come before next Tuesday, at which time we shall get the weekend's accumulation of both the NY Times and the Post. And you are right -- it will be much more easy to handle them when we have them arriving at the same time, more or less. The qualification is necessary because the postal service operates by fits and starts, particularly around long holiday weekends like this one. They come in erratic bunches, often out of sequence, and anything else inconvenient you can think of.

Over the weekend we hope to check out the references you ask for. No time now to do it, nor to answer your various notes otherwise. I would like to drop one thought, however, about how you work your own experiences into your book. This is entirely relevant and useful, even though it inevitably leads to the use of the personal pronoun more than might otherwise be the case. The big difficulty with it is that it involves ~~wrenching~~ ^{wrenching} the reader back and forth in time, and for that reason should be held to what minimum is possible and be handled somewhat parenthetically where it can, and, when the recollection is completed, should be carefully distinguished from the current events which are your real subject. In other words, one should clearly reestablish the return to the present in the reader's mind and not leave him confused as to whether you're talking about events 20 years ago or what's been going on recently. Handled with care and clarity, such recollections can contribute uniquely to what you have to say, but if not so handled can lead to confusion cluttering an already confused and unimaginably complicated story. That's why I have suggested that you strive always for the greatest simplicity, even where it's not possible, because while these things are clear to you, your reader in most cases hasn't had a chance to dip a toe in the water, much less be prepared to jump into the pool with you.

At the moment, we're pooped but recovering. Some friends from out of state had an emergency and rolled into the airport the other morning at 1:30 a.m., and we met them and took them to their quarters near an SF hospital where his father was dying of pneumonia. The old fellow did die yesterday morning, and the whole family has repaired to a town in the Central Valley for the funeral. We'll be hearing from them again after that, and as our friends return to SF to take the plane home, so we're not out of the woods yet, but let's hope it's not another business of being up until 4 a.m. again. Both are non-stop talkers and insist on both talking at once, so it's not too easy to emerge from several hours with them and not feel the strain of trying to keep up. Both are extremely interesting and have much to say, and are great people. It's just that neither of us can follow two conversations at once very well.

Anyway, this interruption, plus the extra hearings during the week, have combined to put us behind again, but maybe the long weekend will give us a chance to recover what had appeared to be a glimpse of the end of the tunnel.

Best, and more later.

 jdw