18 January 1976

Dear Harold:

Sterling Green's address is 5337 MacArthur Blvd, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20016.

As I recall it, I've not seen his name mentioned in AP material since he retired, perhaps a year after I did. I suspect he may have a full-time job, as he's a very capable financial writer and easily could command one if he needs or wants it. Also, I cannot say with certainty that he handled the Hoover leaks, but my impression has been that he was one of those whose name was in some of the stories.

This is to thank you and Lil for the backstopping stuff you have been sending from the Sunday Post. It's much appreciated. This includes the Valentine piece in Potomac, which naturally was read with great interest after first trying to make out just what disturbed you so much from all the memos you had sent along earlier on it. Frankly, I still don't fully see what the trouble is, but do understand that it is only one among many such things, including an article in Oui which you've also been objecting to, and many previous things which I won't try to specify here. At any rate, I certainly never got the impression that any of it was petty or without reason, and do understand that it's very serious business as far as both you and Lesar are concerned. Good luck to you both.

By now you are profoundly experienced with the failure of all the media to live up to their obligations to the public and the truth, and with the concomitant failure of individuals within the media to do the same thing. Yet somehow I get the feeling that you do not quite understand just why this happens. Perhaps a perspective from one who has been part of the establishment press might be useful, might supply some small angle which hasn't occurred to you.

The problem is the system. The media are part of the business establishment and, like business itself, are most comfortable when they can work in concert, or at least without too much friction, with the government establishment. The whole instinct is to be part of the establishment. Anything that upsets this tendency causes trouble. The reporter who digs up a story that will embarrass the establishment has to get it past his editor, who has to get it past his managing editor, who has to get it past his board of directors and/or owner, who is part of the business establishment and usually on good terms with government and wants to stay there for purely business reasons if not personal inclination.

Very early, every newsman has to make up his mind: he will be either a whore or a scrubwoman or get out of the field entirely. What individual newsmen do with hot stories depends upon what choice they've made along this line or have to make now, every time they're put on a hot story. There are gradations according to circumstances, but these are the principles involved. It is idle to expect either newsmen or news media to treat news solely on the basis of what is new and true. Too often this is the last thing taken into consideration. Everyone is under the gun. Unless you're willing to get out entirely, there is no escaping choices over which the individual often has no control whatever unless he is prepared to quit. Tough, but that's the way it is.

Best, jdw