

Dear Jim,

6/9/79

We enjoyed your letter of the 5 and particularly Clear Time and your and Jenifer's old pieces in it much. I'm glad you found space for fairness to the Japanese when you had so little space. If it is not enclosed with this that is merely because we are waiting for Lil to be able to make a copy for Dave. We'll return it.

I've never seen your place except at night and then when hardly fully conscious. My clearest recollections are of the elevation and the magnificent view from the largest window. So when you speak of clearing the hillside I do not know if my experience is appropriate to your situation. For whatever it is worth one of what Lil has come to call my toys might make it easier and faster than other tools. You are probably familiar with the small electric gadgets often called something like a grasswhip. First I got a little one, battery operated, running about 30 minutes on a charge and suitable for grasses and small weeds were a mower can't get. Then, thanks to the National Enquirer, I was able to get a larger but still light (12 lbs) 2-cycle job that uses a much heavier nylon cutting cord and for which I also got both brass and tree blades. Both also work well. Now I have seen TV ads for smaller and lighter models and I've seen the Homelite 7 1/2 lb job. It appears to have nylon only. This will break on a briar or wild rose. It will handle most coarse weeds. Also 2-cycle. Where you can maintain a footing without having to use one hand these kinds of things will be great labor-savers. I am well familiar with sickles and scythes and spent days on end swinging a scythe as I clear out Hyattstown land. With brush this Echo tool I have, Japanese make, does a better and faster job and with enormously less effort and fatigue. However, where there is danger from not having firm footing, I'd be uneasy about it. It takes little time to switch from cord to blades and for accessible places, for trimming and cleaning up where a mower won't get, the nylon of the heavier machine is much better, more effective, less likely to break and lots faster. I now use the battery job only near the house, around steps, edges of flowerbeds, etc. A charge of gas-oil mix (in this case 20-1) lasts at least an hour, depending on the intensity of use. (An automatic clutch disconnects the mechanism and lets the motor idle when one lets up on the trigger gas feed.)

After perhaps two more mowings of weeds where I can do it with a light-weight 20cycle mower I'll be unlimbering the Echo for doing what the mower wouldn't and for heavier stuff. It probably isn't practical for you but I got this light mower, put larger and ball-bearing wheels on it cut to set higher, and I go over and into anything with it, including saplings and the bases of roses, grapes and other vines that are 50 and more feet in length. I'm now thinking of looking for another like it to use as the trimming walking mower for where I can't get with the tractor because it is so much lighter and earlier than the regular 4-cycle job, which sometimes winds me.

I guess that since being put back on the coumadin, now at a third lower dosage until Tuesday, I'm improving. Each of the past two days I've been able to put in two long periods of hard mowing of heavy weeds and brush on rough, hilly grounds, even with the heat near 90 and humidity high. I enjoyed working up the heavy sweats, too, and have lost some weight I've wanted to lose.

There has been more on the local Hospice. Lil has clipped it. I don't know whether it was in this week's mailing. I'm glad you got in touch with the local people. I hope they respond. If they do please let us know so that perhaps if there is the occasion we can make some kind of suggestion.

I found the Shheer-Ehrlichman interview interesting. Sending to Dave. On Rittenberg, I was abed and exhausted several night ago when he was on a show on WAMU-FM, the E American university station. I tried to stay awake and didn't. But I formed the impression that he remains an honest, clear-headed man in the little bit I heard. I was so tired I didn't even think of getting up and putting on a C120 cassette for you, for that much of it. It was the day I was in Washington and for some reason the weakest one of recent months for me. Everything was a major effort.

The cork hotplate is simple and beautiful, I'm sure effective. Lil likes it much. I was impressed with the perfection of the carpentry at the corners, as was my neighbor Russell, the retired vet who comes over for an occasional afternoon gin and tonic with me. You'll never teach nurses to make clean, perfect corners like that, particularly not when they require sanding that makes rounding them so easy. I kind of suspect that Lil will show it off this weekend when our friends the McDonalds (he formerly London Times) return for their dog we've been keeping for the month of their holiday. Return, that is, if the DC-10 crisis does not keep them in Europe. I fear that his father, former editor of the Times, will not be able to help when even Freddy Laker can't get a plane over the water. I hope they had a tour with a 707 rather than regular air passage, which is probably all chaos by now.

I guess the determination to which you refer has not slacked off that much but the energy has. I'm averaging closer to 7 hours of sleep now, the night I was so tired even 8. With a fine young woman named Rae helping me several hours every working day or 5 days now that school is over I am more productive than without what she does for me and she is doing for me and me what otherwise would be undone. Toward the end of last month I was able to draft an affidavit that after cutting ran about 40 legal-size pages in a day and a half. Editing took much longer. Yesterday, with several hours of outside work and periods of reading while resting after it I still did a number of appeals drafts one of which is 16 double-spaced pages like this. But there are now days when I can't begin to work like that and they are of increasing frequency, unless the change in the weather permits increasing physical activity that appears to be restorative. Both parts of both arms are now firm again and despite their problems I believe my legs are at least as good as those of the average man of 66.

If there is any chance that the machine I referred to above can be practical for you I strongly encourage you to shop around and give one serious consideration, staying away for the plastic models to the degree possible because my all-steel one (except for such small things as the gastank) weighs only 12 lbs and even that comes in a lighter model, without the blade features. You will also find that being able to keep up better can give a lift, a feeling of accomplishment and without any real exertion. With mine, the weight of which is on the shoulder with a wide belt attached to a half-inch flexible cord-like arrangement, all I need do is guide it with the left hand and keep the right index finger on the trigger. It really is no work at all except when I lean over and stretch, as I did around the pond last fall. And was able to cut off 3" alders at the waterline. They can be fine if the situation permits their use and around the house, for close trimmer, superb. The cheaper ones have nylon projecting on one side only. Mine does twice the cutting by having the nylon extending twice 180 degrees apart. Much faster and if one breaks you don't have to stop because the remaining one does a good job until you do stop. I can't even tell when I break one off, as sometimes happens when I hit a sapling.

Our best,

