

1 January 1980

Dear Harold and Lil:

Thanks for your good letter of Dec. 25. I want to reply now, before the shortened but probably intensive remainder of the week, to the problem of the Maio boy.

Let me see what I can do from here with the Berkeley police. There has been no opportunity thus far since your letter came because of the holiday. Before I retired I had some dealings with one of their information officers which were quite pleasant. The problem is whether they have any regular routine for watching out for such cases. John/Kevin presumably has no police record, so they may not see why they should be interested. Anyway, let me try. If I don't get anywhere perhaps they can suggest something. I'll keep you informed.

Meanwhile I think your advice to Mike was entirely just right. I think you also could tell him that since Jonestown all groups like the Moonies have been holding extremely low profiles. Certainly I've seen nothing about them from Berkeley and in fact never heard there was a Moonie colony there, although it was to be assumed there was one.

So if John/Kevin has to be among them, this probably is the best possible time for it to happen, with the least likelihood of his getting into trouble through them.

From what you say, John/Kevin's record suggests he is in retreat from the obligations and duties of the traditional Chinese family relationship, particularly those falling upon the eldest son, and meanwhile is seeking something with which to identify, to belong to, after several traumatic experiences: 1, flight from the mainland; 2, alienation experienced in the environment of Taiwan (where mainlanders are not popular with the locals for good reasons in the past); 3, still further disorientation when the family moved to this country. The stresses met here are manifold. Not simply a new culture and vastly different value system. Even the American-born Chinese are alien to a newcomer from Old China. They usually do their best to be as American as possible and don't bother with their Chinese heritage.

In the Moonies John/Kevin found a refuge in a slick and simple system of values and in a kind of fervent fellowship which for all its phoniness answers the most immediate needs of those whose lives are empty enough to make them feel the need for it.

The hope is that being Chinese and intelligent, John/Kevin will see through the scam sooner than most. His scholastic record is impressive, and cannot but help him as he moves toward realizing what an elaborate system of rationalization he must have accepted in order to feel at home with the Moonies in the first place. They make him feel like someone, someone who belongs to something. The only question is how long it will take him to realize that feeling is not the same as being.

In any case, try to reassure Mike and Julie that there could be much worse places for John/Kevin right now than the Moonies. Things are quiet, the Moonies are staying pretty much out of sight, and there is little likelihood of trouble in the foreseeable future. He at least believes in something, that he is doing the right thing, and it is of great significance that this is important to him.

You are correct in your insights about what troubles Mike. Family obligations were of supreme importance in Old China; there was nothing else one could depend upon. The thought that the family could not be reached if John/Kevin got into trouble is deeply upsetting to someone reared in this tradition. Even more typical is the fear that no one would know what to do with the body if the boy dies or has a fatal accident. This is rooted in one of the coats of superstition which Confucianism acquired over the centuries, the idea that if the mortal remains of a family member are not treated according to custom and tradition then the soul is doomed to wander forever in a sort of purgatory and never can join those of its ancestors.

You also are exactly right in your advice that the family indicate no alienation or criticism of him or the Moonies, that they imply nothing but confidence in him and his eventual decisions, and that he always belongs to the family. And I agree with Mike that he would be upset if he knew Mike was working around behind him to take care of any emergency. This is an important point. Tell Mike I'll do what I can as carefully as I can, but it may not be right away. I've had no dealings with the Berkely cops for seven or eight years, and will have to play it by ear.

I had a very nice, quiet Christmas, thank you, dinner with good friends plus a couple of parties both before and after with still more good friends.

There seems to be a good chance that I may join a team to China this spring. An old friend from Shanghai days turned up recently after conducting several such tours, from which I've had good reports from those who went along. I figure that if I'm ever going it had better be soon before inflation removes it from the realm of the possible. Probably back to North China and Peking, which I knew best, and I hope down to the Yellow River cradle of Chinese culture, including Sian with its spectacular new archeological discoveries.

The hospice work continues and expands. We're getting more office space to handle expanding staff. Recently John Burton got Califano (before he resigned from HEW) to ~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~ suspend some 19 regulations, which will enable hospice care to qualify for compensation from Medicare and Medicaid for hospice patients. The two-year pilot program extends to 26 hospices around the country, including Hospice of Marin. The program represents a systematic approach toward setting reasonable qualifying criteria and compensation scales for something much bigger and more permanent. Both Big Labor and Big Industry are getting interested in working hospice care into their health insurance programs, and so on and so on.

I'm fine, sleep and eat well, and am fully occupied. The rainfall has been normal this year. Cold, but not miserably so. I've kept the thermostat at 60° this winter and in spite of increased rates my fuel bill is about half what it was a year ago.

All the best to you both,