

Friday 11/20/78 4:45 p.m.

Dear Shirley--

We are looking forward to receiving your brochure on the B & B. I think it is a great idea and I sort of envy you and your involvement although you certainly will make a much better hostess than I would. We can't see how it can help but be successful there, just from our experience this summer. As you probably remember Elva and we stayed in several when we went to Switzerland and Austria so we are real authorities. I have seen the local one. We had a Women's Center Fund raiser there. Faye seems real pleased about it, too. She did not acknowledge knowing about it until we called her last weekend. I should think your many contacts at the school and around the town and state would be real helpful. Keep us informed, please.

Yes, I am very sad about Jane and angry, too. We spend so much money putting people on the moon and for stupid bombs and Star Wars and so little on really important things. Things to make this a healthier, safer, and better world to live in.

I wrote our Congressman again today--probably the umpteenth time about no more aid of any kind for the contras but if he thought he had to vote for 'humanitarian' aid to funnel it through the Red Cross. I also wrote Speaker Jim Wright and applauded his actions. The jackass in the white house has always treated Congress with such contempt that I am glad to see someone take him on. I can hardly wait until he goes and takes his Meese with him. Like you I am afraid of what more damage he can do before he goes. Our Republican Senator--Phil Gramm is a bastard, too. He is trying and has been ever since he has been there to get rid of any legal aid programs for the poor among other lousy ideas he has.

We have not heard from anyone in Michigan since Jane died except the brief letter that Elva wrote to Ashley, Bob, and me. I called her for details the night we got it. I am still very curious to know what the real cause of her illness and death was and I don't think I will be comfortable without an answer. Can't you imagine what a shock it was to Nancy and Betsy when they got to the hospital and she was already dead?. I hope Nancy persists in getting some answers.

Like you, I have concerns about the family. Joe and Christy have had quite a few reality shocks in their young lives already and now to add this one will be so hard on them. Janis seemed to think Joe was doing real well but Christy is apparently still drifting. I am glad they all are living there where they have all the family support.

I wish I could have seen the boys in their Halloween costumes and heard all the talk that went with it. The kids next door were so busy at group activities that we did not even see them. So, of course, we had to eat all the little snicker bars we had.

I'm following your letter--more or less. If you make it too nice for your family when they come to see you they may decide to come often and stay longer so you better be careful with your offers.

The Community Intervention Task Force for Drug Abuse sounds interesting. I look forward to hearing how your five workshops turn out. And I am curious about the \$46,000 dollar grant. Are you a special friend of Nancy's had have been afraid to let us know about it? It sure is a joke. Her much touted program and then he cut so much of the money out of the program.

I am glad the Iran-Contra hearing report did not exonerate the president. His fellow travelers deny anything but a 'few mistakes' but most of the people who care at all will not be fooled. What I like is the way his far right supporters are falling away and criticizing him. I have to admit that I hope the special prosecutors get Deaver, Meese, Poindexter, and North--to name a few. They may not (and I doubt it) be criminals but they have no sense of ethics and I doubt if they know right from wrong. I think Reagan likes Meese because they are equally stupid and ignorant.

Billy is flying home for Christmas, gets here on the 18th and will be going back on the 30th.

The Youth Shelter here is functioning but they are struggling. Some of the board members are stinkers and some are lazy and some really care.. Most of the work has been done by the director and for that reason I have gotten involved. I am helping her with the volunteer program and the just past and new president~~s~~ of the board have asked me to help with board development. I don't think I can do a lot there but I will do what I can and then back off.

I recently accepted appointment to the city Planning Commission and that means quite a lot of reading, riding around and learning more about the city and especially issues that we will make decisions on plus three regular meetings monthly, and attending some other meetings. I only had a half hour to make up my mind or maybe I would not have taken the job. But I do have a lot of respect for the people in the planning department and several of my friends are on Planning and on Zoning so that helps a lot.

Right now there is a big todo about the possibility of the state putting a pre-release 500 bed prison unit here. It would be a good thing for this town but those who are without sin and live in fear are very vocal and rest of us have to work a little harder. They do expect to have a volunteer program and I am talking that up and saying I will be a part of it. While they are here they will be concentrating on reading, writing, GEDs, AA, etc. I think there is something terribly wrong with our prison system when we have to keep building more and more prisons--of course, the wrong is long before they get to prison. I think I told you I was very impressed with Jean Harris' book STRANGER IN TWO WORLDS. More people interested with sociology and prisons should listen to intelligent women like her. (Intelligent that is except when it comes to men,)

I thought you might be interested in the two enclosures. Sorry the Senator Kerry one isn't a better copy.

Take care and keep us informed on what is happening.

Love,
Lisa

Paying the price of Reagan's isolation

WASHINGTON — At the end of the year, the proprietor of this column customarily reviews the previous 52 weeks' output. For the amusement of the customers and the mortification of his soul, he highlights some of the more flagrant mistakes of fact and judgment of which he has been guilty.

A rereading of the past year's columns turns up the usual rich variety of howlers, including the inexplicable shift of an errant service secretary from his proper place in the Eisenhower administration to the strange surroundings of the Kennedy sub-Cabinet. Another theft from the memory bank.

But, when I tried the other night to write amusingly about my goofs in 1986, it seemed petty and self-indulgent. As every Washington journalist knows, we are being asked serious questions about our role in the story of mismanagement and deception which has washed over the Reagan administration in the past two months.

My mail on the subject — which is heavy — is of two types: Many want to know why the media are zapping a popular President with daily doses of disturbing information. Many others ask why it took us so long to reveal the shortcomings of this White House.

The first question is easy to answer. We are pursuing the story with all our resources because that is our job. It is specially our responsibility when none of the government officials involved has chosen to come forward in public with a comprehensive narrative and accounting of what he did and what he knew about this whole sorry affair.

We dish it out in daily dribs and drabs because that is the only way we can. No one gives us the whole picture, so we fill in a few gaps each day, necessarily repeating



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or revising what we have reported previously.

But those who say they don't want to hear it are in effect saying they do not care how the government they elected has exercised or abused the power it holds as a public trust. To reject such information is to reject an obligation of citizenship.

The second question is harder to answer. Elizabeth Drew, writing in last week's *New Yorker*, said, "The truth is that Reagan's popularity has had a high proportion of this town (Washington) cowed." Journalists and news organizations were certainly not immune from intimidation or seduction by the White House. But it is not accurate to suggest — as some are now doing — that Mr. Reagan had a "free ride" from the press until the Iran-contras affair exploded.

In September 1985, when Mr. Reagan's popularity was stratospheric, I wrote what were probably the harshest sentences I had ever set down about an American President: "The task of watering the arid desert between Mr. Reagan's ears is a challenging one for his aides When someone approaches Mr. Reagan bearing information, he flees as if from the leper's touch He knows what he thinks and has the power of his own beliefs. But he treats knowledge as if it were dangerous to his convictions. Often it is."

Nor was I alone. Later that same month, Jack W. Germond and Jules Witcover quoted in their column "a prominent Republican in the House, a conservative and

loyal Ronald Reagan supporter," who was worried that after Mr. Reagan's colon cancer surgery, "the President is even more disengaged than he was before the operation."

Indeed, Mr. Reagan's disdain for the complexities of the real world has been a reiterated theme for years in the coverage of thoughtful journalists like *The Washington Post's* Lou Cannon. At the beginning of 1986, he wrote: "Increasingly, the Reagan administration functions reflexively, with most of the work done by mid-level aides His (Mr. Reagan's) government often runs on automatic pilot, and he seems too distant from his subordinates' deliberations or the outside world's concerns to notice. Eventually, isolation is likely to extract a price."

Ten months later it did, and the public, which had overlooked earlier examples of Mr. Reagan's costly detachment, was shocked and disillusioned. But that is not an excuse for us.

Virtually every reporter in Washington — and politician, too — knew Mr. Reagan had only a fleeting interest in the day-to-day policies and operations of government. But too many of us convinced ourselves that it made no difference; that it was enough to be lucky and popular. Even those of us who were not so bemused generally decided not to make pests of ourselves by harping on our concerns about Mr. Reagan's limited intellectual energy.

For that, we can and should be faulted. James David Barber, the Duke University political scientist, is correct when he writes that we did not hold Mr. Reagan sufficiently to account when his words showed he did not "live in the real world." Eventually, that world intrudes, and a high price is paid.

Broder writes for *The Washington Post*.

The Wizard's incredible smoke machine

WASHINGTON — Senior pundits in this politics-obsessed city have been weeping buckets over our "crippled presidency." They've got to be out of their minds. Crippling this disastrous presidency was the best thing that could have happened.

Consider what Mr. Reagan already had done to us, to say nothing of what he had in mind:

An astronomical deficit that will leave us \$2.5 trillion in debt and threaten our economic stability for at least a generation.

Erosion of the manufacturing base cou-



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pled with a soaring foreign trade deficit due to failure to deal with stagnating productivity.

Creation of a permanent under-class for the first time in this country, along with a shrinking of the pivotal middle class.

Dismantling of arms agreements negotiated by previous presidents of both parties and a stubborn determination to launch a new arms race by spending at least a trillion dollars on the impossible dream of an impregnable missile shield.

A whimsical foreign policy based largely on covert operations that, by neglecting the Pacific Rim, Middle East and all Latin America except for Nicaragua, weakened U.S. influence world-wide to the benefit of the Soviet Union.

Naive bungling in Iran that made a laughing stock of Mr. Reagan's boasts of toughness with terrorists and on other matters.

Bringing such nonsense to a thudding halt, far from a national disaster, is the first step toward regaining our collective sanity and purpose.

The sad truth is this administration has been almost laughably incompetent from the git-go, but le tout Washington including the press elite, which has a stake in whatever power center exists, was never about to blow a whistle.

Mr. Reagan's inability to grasp complex facts, his anecdotal fantasizing, his stubborn fixations on irrelevant solutions were all well known. But he also had a unique

gift for creating illusions of strength and steadiness. He brought to the White House the most effective publicity machinery the town had ever seen, focused on each night's network news. He kept winning elections.

Such political talent, however unrelated to real-world problems, is highly prized here where winning elections is the key to all that is good and holy. That's one reason the local establishment overlooked the administration's ineptitude. Another is that we have only one president at a time, and inner Washington's oxygen supply is the White House.

So pundits and politicians pound their breasts now over Mr. Reagan's loss of credibility. They know he's never been up to speed, but he's the only president there is and they want him running on all eight cylinders, even if he's running us off a cliff.

The country as a whole knows better. It's saddened at the personal tragedy of a Bud McFarlane and at the sight of a popular president brought low by botching Iran and refusing to own up, but it doesn't kid itself the resultant debacle can be righted by such gimmickry as firing Don Regan.

Few find it possible to hate Mr. Reagan, however grievously he's damaged us. He really is Frank Morgan in *The Wizard of Oz*, cranking away on the smoke machines, creating marvelous fantasies about bloodless victories, standing tall and morning in America, until the music stops, the illusion snaps and there he is, a tired, old man, found out, naked.

He's what we got for fantasizing. It was fun while it lasted but now it really is morning in America and soon we'll be getting the bills for this odd binge.

Fain is national correspondent for Cox Newspapers.