

October 4? 5? Anyway it's Tuesday

Dear Harold,

Always glad to hear from you. Penn is in Ft. Worth with Howard Griffin (BLACK LIKE ME) and Professor Maritan, if I am spelling that right.

We have just returned from an 8000 mile jaunt to the West Coast — *also Denver, etc.*
Penn did probably 8 TV and/or radio things, plus one lecture. It appears that he may have picked up a publisher. But let me tell you this, honey, in every single appearance he takes a copy of your book and gives it a real great plug... Funny thing for ~~xxxx~~ an author to do for another author? Maybe. Unless you know Big Daddy. That crazy, lovable, honest old boy knows a great book when he reads one.... Have you gotten any orders from that area? I see people writing down your name and address.

Now, as to your questions: We have one copy of the Dallas phone book, and one criss-cross index. This is for 1963. We use them constantly... Feel sure he will get copies to you if he can. If not, we can check anything out for you here.

The Oklahoma address is bound to be Shirley Martin. And the reason she didn't sign her name is that she has a tendency to be absent-minded. We get letters addressed simply, "Penn and L. A., Midlothian. Texas. But she has worked on this thing every waking minute since it happened. She's a wonderful gal, (pretty good-looking too). We are both just crazy about her.

Now, Harold, let me talk to your wife for a minute. Mrs. Weisburg, do you ever have the feeling that you are absolutely sinking into a swamp - a morass - on the work our husbands are doing? I do, and if you don't, then you're quite a girl indeed. Write to me sometime. Maybe we can buy some sympathy cards and send them back and forth.

Harold, we got the same information you did on Nancy. Who ferreted it out, I'm not sure. Could have been Sylvia, Shirley, or both.

We got in at 4:30 a.m. on Monday morning. 9/10 dead, you may be assured... But the nuttiest thing happened the afternoon before (Sunday). Our house almost blew up, and there is considerable speculation whether it would have taken the whole block, or one-half the block.

It really scared a lot of people, but what happened we honestly believe was a mechanical failure in our central heating. We do not have central heating upstairs, only down. Two out-of-town friends came by, and I have talked with the gal since, and she said that when they got within 15 feet of our front door they smelled gas, and plenty of it. This was on the afternoon of Oct. 2. I haven't seen our Mexican housekeeper since we returned, because I was bushed, and all I have done is sleep.. But her time book shows she came in on Oct. 29 to air out the house.

Vicenta and I can smell anything (good or bad) a block away. I know she was here, because the earth in the pot plants was still damp.

What happened was this: A cold wave swept in, and although it takes a lot of doing to get the thing going when we turn it on in the fall (stand on your head, hold a red button in, etc.) this time the gas came on without the pilot being lighted. The automatic cut-off was faulty. We can really turn the whole thing off with a switch on the wall beside the thermostat, but it didn't occur to us until all this happened.

Thus the poor old central heating (and it is a big unit) was roaring gas all over the place, but it wasn't raising the thermostat, so it just kept on roaring gas.

We were saved by several things: Penn's bookkeeper knew where the key was to get in; I had failed to close all the upstairs doors as I usually do when leaving. Have always felt that it might halt fire if only briefly; the high wind was coming from the southeast, and in that area we have six pilots in the kitchen and one in the utility room; we have a drafty old door that leads from the utility room to the outdoors. So the wind kept the gas from these seven pilots.

How long the wind could have held it, I don't know. But the six rooms upstairs were filled with gas, and probably four rooms downstairs. Our friends called the police, the fire department and probably everyone else they could think of. They said that everyone was hollering, "Don't light a cigarette!" "If we get in, don't turn on an electric light!" "Pray God, the telephone doesn't ring!" All that kind of stuff.

The man from the gas company came, turned off the gas out in the alley, and when he told me about it, he turned slightly green. Then the bookkeeper arrived, found the key, and they opened up the house. She said they opened the doors very gently, but said she almost passed out when all the odors came out. I don't know whether it is a state or national law, but in this area they are required to put a malodorous in the gas so that it can be detected.

Then everyone sat around outside for several hours until they were satisfied the danger had passed....

Well, so far as material property is concerned, I don't care much. But there were some heirlooms, etc. that I would hate to be destroyed. And of course Penn with his 6000 books. Much more important were the lives of our neighbors. Our house is not fine, but it is BIG, and you take 12 gas-filled rooms - it would have gone off with a BOOM....Enough of that. Nobody got hurt, that's the main thing.

People have said, "You Jones never seem to have a dull moment." I feel like saying, "Oh, for a glorious dull moment."

Write us if you need any information. We'll do the best we can.

With friendship,

V.C.