

217-367-4921.

2204 Vawter Drive
Urbana, Illinois
April 15, 1966

Mr. James B. Reston
Washington Bureau
The New York Times
Washington, D.C.

Dear Mr. Reston:

At the suggestion of Professor John Schacht, I am writing to enquire about the possibility of a position in the Washington bureau of the Times. Professor Schacht proposed that I send you some particulars about myself. I hope that what follows will be adequate.

At the present moment I am completing work on the M.A. degree in English, which I hope to receive from the University of Illinois in August. My plans at that point are rather indefinite, in part because of my own hesitation between two possible careers, and in part because of my draft status. I received my B.S. in journalism and communications from the University of Illinois in June 1964, and then decided to transfer into the field of English. I entered the Illinois graduate college in September 1964, and after a semester I departed to spend a year at the University of Cape Town, South Africa, under a Rotary Fellowship. At Cape Town I followed a program of supervised reading which left me a great deal of time to look around South Africa. I found the country fascinating, and the government depressing. My own opinion is that the Nationalists cannot avoid, eventually, a bloody clash with the rest of the world; and that will be an unnecessary tragedy. In the meantime the country moves stubbornly to the right.

After two months spent en route up the east coast of Africa and in Europe, I returned to Illinois to complete my M.A. degree in English. At the same time I am finishing work on a book which will be published in February 1967 by the University of Illinois Press. The book is an informal social history of the University's first century, compiled rather freely out of the complete files of The Daily Illini.

The two years since I graduated in 1964 have given me an opportunity to reconsider my decision to go into English, and at the present moment I have swung back to journalism again. For this reason, I was particularly happy to hear

April 15, 1966

of your conversation with Professor Schacht. I would certainly welcome an opportunity to work for The New York Times, particularly because of the good associations I have had from time to time with some of your staff members. One of my good friends is Steven Roberts, who is apparently performing very well on the city staff after working with you for a year. Last January Mr. Max Frankel agreed to speak to a conference of college editors which I helped to organize, and afterwards was kind enough to spend most of the night--and miss his train in the process--in a bull session with a roomful of college students. I suppose every young journalist wants to work for the Times, and I am not an exception.

Perhaps I had better give you some of my newspapering background. I went to work for The News-Gazette here in Champaign-Urbana in September 1958, as a sports reporter. I worked for the paper about 25 to 30 hours a week during my junior and senior years in high school, spending the summers of 1959 and 1960 in full-time work on the city and state desks. In 1960 I won the first place prize in the Illinois Associated Press Sportswriting Contest.

In September 1960, I entered the University and continued to work for The News-Gazette. I abandoned sports for cityside, and from 1961 to 1964 worked the Saturday night city beat, for Sunday morning's paper, more or less regularly. This was valuable experience because the newspaper maintained only one reporter on Saturday nights, in addition to the various editors, and he had to cover anything that came up. Catastrophes seemed to occur in groups, spaced by several weeks with nothing more exciting than births and obituaries.

During the spring of 1961 I also edited a weekly, liberal newspaper at Illinois: Spectator. It was a six-page printed tabloid that survived for the entire semester and only lost \$300. That summer I abandoned independent journalism and joined The Daily Illini, writing a weekly column and working one night a week as night editor. During 1962-63 I was news editor of the DI, and during 1963-64 I was editor-in-chief.

In January 1963 I won the Overseas Press Club award for the best writing on international affairs in a college daily (for a series on South Africa, which I visited for six weeks in the summer of 1962 as press agent for a touring group of paraplegic athletes). In May 1963, I won the \$1,000 Award for Excellence in Collegiate Journalism, given by the American Association of Advertising Agencies and Associated Collegiate Press.

April 15, 1966

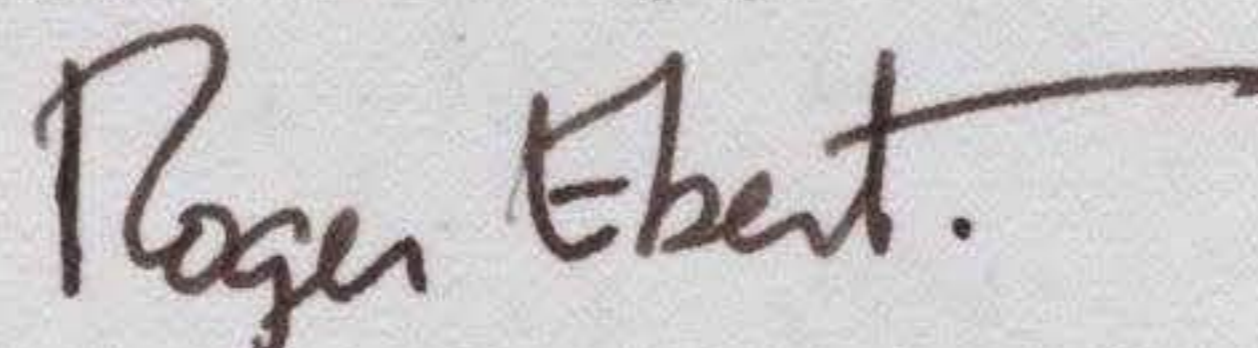
In August 1963 I was elected as the second president of the United States Student Press Association, which is the national federation of college newspapers. USSPA, much larger now than then, publishes Collegiate Press Service and is concerned with a free student press. My interest in college journalism remains. I first met Steve Roberts when he was managing editor of the Harvard Crimson, and we were both on the first staff of the Peace Corps News, a quarterly recruiting newspaper edited for the Peace Corps by USSPA members and distributed with all the nation's student papers.

During 1963-64 I won the Illinois Legislative Correspondents Association Award, given to a promising UI journalism student, and in May 1964 I was awarded a certificate from the Chicago Headline Club as the outstanding student in an Illinois journalism school.

I would very much like to go into newspaper work after receiving my M.A. degree in August, but I'm not sure my draft status will permit it. I have a student deferment at present, but in order to maintain it I would have to take a full load at a Washington-area university. I understand Steve Roberts is enrolled at Columbia while working for the Times in New York, but I'm not sure this is an entirely satisfactory solution. I'm thinking right now of enlisting in August and getting my military service out of the way. In any event, I would certainly be interested in a position with the Times sooner or later, and I'm grateful for your encouragement, expressed via Professor Schacht.

Thanks very much for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Roger Ebert

Roger Ebert

Recent Publications

- "The Bulwark," an essay on Edmund Wilson. Illinois Political, April 1966, pp. 21-23.
- "Watershed," an essay on the report of the Berkeley faculty committee. Collegiate Press Service, March 31, 1966.
- "The Moral Anarchy of War," review of A Tract of Time, by Smith Hempstone. Chicago Daily News "Panorama" magazine, March 12, 1966, p. 7.
- "Paul Goodman: Anarchist with Portfolio." Moderator, December 1965, pp. 44-47.
- "Toward a Free and Responsible Student Press." The Student Journalist (South African National Student Press Association), July 1965, pp.32-40. Reprinted in Readings on Student Press Freedom (Washington: U. S. Student Press Association, 1965).
- "Plain Talk on College Newspaper Freedom." NASPA, the Journal of the Association of Deans and Administrators of Student Affairs, July 1964, pp. 9-12. Reprinted in Freedom and Censorship of the College Press, edited by Estrin and Sanderson (Dubuque: Wm. C. Brown Company, 1966).
- "These People Never Believed the African Was Creative." An interview with Miriam Makeba and Benjamin Leshoai. Chicago Daily News Panorama magazine, July 17, 1965, p. 3.
- "Student Unrest: The Pursuit of our Lost Humanity." York (Pa.) Gazette and Daily, editorial page, January 27, 1965.
- "Growing Up Absorbed." An interview with Paul Goodman. In The Triple Revolution, a pamphlet issued by Liberation.
- "Bizarre Krebiozen Controversy . . ." From The News-Gazette, December 8, 1963. Reprinted in the Congressional Record, December 18, 1963, p. 23883.