

[1968]

November 1

Dear Dan,

All Soul's Day.

I will probably not be in London this year, and for a very good reason: After numerous delays I am apparently actually going into the army. The word is that I'll be in the first draft call after Nov. 28, which may mean December or may mean January. Under the circumstances I would sooner than not simply blow some money and spend some time in London, as a sort of farewell to civilized life, but I have to stay here at least until I get a definite induction date. My consolation is that I have put off the army so long that two good things have happened. (a) I am 26 years old, instead of 18 or 21, and I think the army will be less able to do me positive ~~harm~~ harm than it could ~~have~~ have at a relatively earlier and more unformed period of my ~~life~~ life, and (b) the war seems to be ~~winding up~~ winding up, and a year of duty in Europe would not be unpleasant. I know a lot of former army draftees who say it is unpleasant, but my personal idea is that, given imagination and the proper use of available resources, no year spent in Europe could be altogether a bad thing.

I went to the New York Film Festival and there met Richard Roud, in the process disliking him. His name is his game. During a question and answer session moderated by him, I made what I thought was a perfectly intelligent observation about a W. German film. Then I stopped. "But what is your question?" he asked. "I have no question, as you can see," I said. The director ~~of~~ of the film went on to comment on my observation, etc., but what interested me was that Roud, with all his pompous program notes and his personal sponsorship of bullshit films like the much touted "Chronicle of Anna Madgelena Bach," would be unable to conceive that someone in the audience might have an observation. That was supposed to be the monopoly of he and the director under his wing. More than one I sensed a director restive under Roud's sponsorship, notably Norman Mailer, who clearly thought Roud a bore.

This week I have been seeing previews of the Chicago Film Festival, and they have one film that is extraordinary: "Innocence Unprotected." It is impossible to describe. Suffice it to say that ~~it~~ it includes the complete footage of the very first Serbian talkie (1942), newsreels produced by Hitler in Yugoslavia, and a kind of running flash-forward to the acrobat ~~who~~ who was starred in the talkie and later suffered a fall which made him (we are informed) precisely 4.5 cm shorter. This done with ornate ~~subtitles~~ subtitles and various enigmatic references to such misadventures as the time the acrobat's assistant was killed being shot out of a cannon. Also authentic footage of the acrobat hanging by his teeth from an airplane and (30 years later) bending a bar of steel in his mouth. All this done with a nostalgic commentary by the principals ~~30~~ 30 years later, who have

~~been told a documentary.~~

25-1

been told a documentary is being made about their original film, and apparently do not find it curious that they are asked, in the ~~course~~ course of recounting their memories, to have a picnic in a cemetery and walk on a housetop. In the course of which they break out in mutual jealousy and each claims credit for himself for the first Serbian talkie, the director stating: "I promise you the entire Yugoslavian cinema came out of my navel. In fact, gentlemen, I have made certain enquiries, and have convinced myself that, what's more, the entire Bulgarian cinema came out of my navel as well."

On Tuesday we have an election here. Today on "Meet the Press," Richard Nixon acknowledged, in response to a question, that he supposed he did not have charisma.

In fact, I would very much like to come and take that walk you write about. I wonder why I never take walks here, but walk miles whenever I'm away from home? I took a walk in London last May that was certainly not original, but nevertheless had never been taken by me before: through Hyde Park, although what I think is called the Serpentine, starting at the gate across from the Royal Lancaster Hotel and walking straight through across the bridal path and under the arch of a building onto a street where, to ~~be~~ my delight (and ~~just~~ just in time) I ~~discovered~~ discovered the semi-legendary The Bunch of Grapes pub. Another night I took the bus down to whatever that famous road is (King's Road?) where there's an old Classic cinema, and for the first time saw "Jane Eyre." I remain convinced that Jane Eyre's very young friend in the opening scenes is Elizabeth Taylor before "National Velvet."

I had an interesting surprise yesterday. When I dropped out of the UofC doctoral program in Spring 1967, I did so under the impression that I had flunked a reading course--I knew I had the reading to do (for the 75 book exam) but didn't know I was supposed to literally turn in the list of 75 books. When I found that out at the last moment I threw up my hands in despair. . . the full load was getting impossible anyway. So I wrote the dean a letter of resignation from the program, thinking to beat him to the punch, and taught at Bogan last year in an effort to keep a deferment. And I never got around to picking up my grades. Last week I finally had to mail off for a transcript, and found to my surprise that in fact I was given a P-for-passing in the reading course, and am actually still in good standing at the UC. This news rings a shade hollow on the brink of the army, as you can imagine. Still, perhaps when I get back I'll return to the PhD program, this time one or two courses a quarter instead of three.

Of course I still have to pass French.

I will be a civilian long enough to answer another letter or two. In any event, you can always reach me c/o the Sun-Times or through my mother (whose name again is Mrs. Annabel Ebert) at 703 E. Colorado, Urbana.

Peace,

*Rosen*