

DEGLER! 167 FEBRUARY 3, 1967 ALL PICKERING ISSUE

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Note: This issue is taken up with a letter received from California; regular news continues next week. --Andrew Porter.

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Stephen E Pickering is a liar and a thief. I shall cite chapter and verse below. If Pickering wishes to make any threatened legal reprisals, my name is William Bond Warren, my address is 5451 Fernwood Ave., Hollywood, California 90027. My telephone number is 463-4063 (Area Code 213).

The background of my involvement in the Pickering affair: Saturday morning, December 17th, my wife and I arrived at the Ackermansion to be in photos in the LA Times which were taken there that afternoon. We were met at the door by a young man I hadn't seen there before, who identified himself as Steve Pickering, the person who came down from Bakersfield to help Forry organize his house. Being Forryphiles ourselves, my wife and I volunteered to help Steve work on the place for the next two weeks. Shortly thereafter, I drove Steve to a grocery store to stock up on food for him for the next two weeks--Forry paid for Steve's food by giving him a \$20.00 bill. (He had already paid for Pickering's cab fare from the bus station.)

So for the next week, every night except Thursday, my wife and I, after I arrived home from work, drove over to the Ackermansion to help sort things out. (The reason we didn't go over Thursday was because we went to the LASFS Christmas Party. Each guest had to bring a gift to be exchanged, and Forry supplied Steve's.) The house was in a shambles for that week, as Steve went through every room in the house getting out everything that had been put away, even going into Forry's bedroom which he had been told to stay out of, searching the house over, turning everything upside down, digging into every corner. Pickering's statement "Probably Forry had inexpensive duplicates" and the implication that he thought there were duplicates for the things he took is false. Pickering himself knew better than Forry if duplicates there were, and not one of the things he took (except a few stills) could possibly have duplicates.

Pickering came to the Ackermansion with the sole intention of robbing Forry Blind. He has cited the things he brought in his suitcases again and again, and what he cited could not possibly fill even one suitcase. He only needed one, he brought 2. He brought material for a one week stay, as he told me he planned to take all his dirty clothes home with him over Christmas. Yet after he left, many of his clothes remained behind. And he left with three rather large, very heavy suitcases. I know this for an absolute fact, for on the day of his departure I carried all three suitcases at one time or another; in fact, I drove him to the Greyhound bus station that day myself. In addition to these suitcases, during the previous week while in my company he had mailed to himself 3 magazine sized envelopes, each 2 inches thick, liberally plastered with 40¢ stamps from a sheet of such stamps that Forry kept at his house. Furthermore, when he rode the bus back to Bakersfield he carried in his lap several packages wrapped in gift paper he "borrowed" (without permission) from Forry. He says these were presents he bought for his brother, mother, and girlfriend while in Los Angeles--but I was with him everytime he left the Ackermansion (except when he went to lunch with Forry, and when he accompanied Forry to the LASFS party), and while in my company, the only things he bought were one copy of the LA Free Press, a copy of Cahiers Du Cinema (in English) and a hamburger and milkshake. If Mr. Pickering bought these "gifts" from Bakersfield (as he had alternately claimed), would he not have wrapped them there, instead of bringing them 100 miles to wrap?

While he was there, Steve made at least 7 phone calls from Forry's house to Bakersfield, without Forry's knowledge and at Forry's expense.

While we were helping Stev with the house, he showed us many things he said he had given him. Among them were many animation stills, from "King Kong", "Son of Kong", "Mighty Joe Young", and several Harryhausen movies; also a pres-book from the original "Dracula", of which he said Forry had nine. (When I mentioned this statement to Forry, he gasped with shock) Plus some clippings from Dutch newspapers about Ackerman's visit to Europe, which have not been recovered as of this writing. There were many other items, which my wife and I glimpsed as mere pile of material, all of which he claimed Forry had given him. I feel rather guilty about one thing --many rare items I happened across while digging in the maze that is the Ackermansion found their way to Bakersfield rather quickly.

I would sincerely like Mr. Pickering to tell me, as a fellow Bradbury fan, where I might obtain "inexpensive duplicates" of original manuscripts? The very nature of original mss. is that there are only one of them. And he took several large boxes of original mss., one of which is valued conservatively at \$1,000.

About never having referred to himself as "FJA Fan #1"--well, he told us something like that. He didn't say he had referred to himself in such terms, but he did say that Forry Ackerman had introduced him to others as "FJA Jr." and "FJA Fan #1". Forry denies this, and says he has seen letters from Pickering signed with just such terms.

About his being a liar, as mentioned above: he told Ray Bradbury on the phone in my presence that he had seen Fahrenheit 451 4 times since his arrival in LA. Since Pickering was utterly without transportation when neither Forry nor I was at the Ackermansion (he was totally ignorant of bus schedules), and since neither Forry nor I took him to see the picture, and since it was playing only in New York and Los Angeles (or was at that time; certainly not in Bakersfield), and since I can cite Pickering's whereabouts every night that he was in Los Angeles that week, I can say with assurance that he didn't see the picture at all. He told us that Bradbury hates and despises Robert A. Heinlein, as a writer, a person, and as a political thinker. My wife and I had the occasion to ask Mr. Bradbury if indeed he did hold such views; he was surprised, for he certainly does not despise Heinlein; he said, "Heinlein was my teacher, and I always respect my teachers." He praised Heinlein as a storyteller as he praises few other writers. Pickering claimed to be on virtually intimate terms with Bradbury by correspondence; Bradbury told me that this was not true, that indeed he had reason to suspect that Pickering had obtained material from him under false pretences (i.e., a phoney name). Pickering said that Forry told him that Heinlein is actually a member of the Minutemen. 4w cannot recall having made such a statement. Further, Pickering said that he had made many visits to the Ackermansion for purposes of straightening out and organizing it. He had been there 3 times, including his thieving visit. And he said he started FJA's biography, later turning it over to another person. (Pickering will no doubt deny that he said any of this, but my wife is my witness; however, he probably believes that he didn't say any of this, for a chronic liar's version of reality is something quite different from that of a mentally normal person.)

One of the most vile things about Pickering's rebuttal is that he tries to exonerate himself or absolve himself of much of the blame by claiming to be deeply involved in politics and civil rights activities, as if he were trying to coin a new cliché, "innocence by association." He told us that he was friends with Mario Savio and Stokely Carmichael--but I don't believe this (does anyone?). He claimed to have taken 7/14/9 LSD trips--in my presence, he cited all 3 figures to 3 different persons. He said that "all the negroes in Bakersfield know me and what I have done for them." (Do they fall down on their knees and moan, "Massa Pickering, yo' is sho' good to us po' darkies"?) He claimed that he was removed from his job as a Teaching Assistant (this later became "a reader", and still later, "a janitor") because he had made leftist talks on a local radio station, and was getting the ACLU to take his case. He told Ricky Schwartz that he was a member of Friends of SNCC. This is the sum total, as far as I have heard, of his involvement in politics and civil rights activities. (He is also a member of the Young People's Socialist League, he says) And still it does not exonerate him from the blame of his willfully criminal act. (An incidental lie--he claimed that, at 19, he had been living by himself or with a roommate for 3 years. He could not even heat up a can of beans, quite literally.)

Cont. next page.

Now as to why I amso angry: I liked Pickering. I drove him around LA, I offered to loan him money, I offered to write an article for his magazine, I invited him to saay at our home whenever he might visit LA in the future (note to Steve Pickering: all offers are off), because I thought that, for the first time since moving from Oregon to this area in October, I had made a friendship that would last for some time. Even the day after XMass, when the thefts were discovered, I did not believe he had done it; even when everything pointed to him. (Much of the material that was missing had been last seen in the paws of Pickering). The thot simply did not occur to me. I didn't think he had taken the material any more than I thot my wife had. And even after Forry & Walt went to Bakersfield and recovered some of the stolen material (he returned some more later, going againstthe terms of an agreement he had made with Ackerman) I still harbored good thots toward Pickering, and drafted several plaintive letters which were never sent, in which I begged him to return more of the booty, for his own sake.

What finally made me decide to come into the open about this were the incredibly santtimonious and hypocritical letters which he sent to Forry and you. Pickering attempts to absolve himself of his blame by saying that his giving in to the temptation (which he thinks everyone who visits 4e is faced with) makes him but little different from those who simply feel the temptation and do nothing about it. He further attempts to let his claimed but not mentioned civil rights activities prove him an all 'round good guy and Captain Nice. What blatant Bullshit. And how disgusting--not the slightest trace of remorse for having violated the trust of the nicest man infandom.

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Pickering should be cut off from all fannish contact by everyone who reads or hears of this. Please do this. He does not deserve the friendship or even the contact with any fans whatsoever.

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Addenda to Bill Warren letter by Forrest J Ackerman: I have read Bill Warren's communication and, insofar as I have firsthand knowledge of events described init, find it a remarkably accurate piece of reporting, the only very minor immaterial errors being as following:

1. The \$20 that I gave Pickering was not meant to cover 2 weeks' worth of food. When it was gone I intended to give him more. He almost immediately lost \$5 (or so he said, pointing to a hole in his pocket as the probable cause; butwith Pickering I can no longer seperate fact from fantasy). I took him out to eat on several occasions and at the end of the 7th day gave him \$5 for further food. As far as I know he did not spend the money on groceries. Neither did he return it to me. The Pickering Caper cost me approximately \$100 out of pocket. Iake that \$108, with the phone bill that just came in containing 7 long distance charges.

2. Pickering as of this date (1 Feb 67) has sent no letters to me personally but 2 ~~lets~~ lets he has sne to Walt Daugherty have directly concerned me and have been turned over to me. In the 1st, mailed 10 Jan 67, he painted himself into a corner by claiming that the 304 items Daugherty and I retrieved "comprsed the 2 suitcases." My understanding of this letter is that he claims 1 smitcase(my own, stolen from my home) contained the 30 lbs. worth of material I retrieved less 4 cardboard boxes specifically containing Bradburyana, the Bradbury memorabilia (weighing approx'ly 10 lbs.) accounting for the contents of the 2nd suitcase and Pickering's clothing filling the 3rd. For one thing, Pickering left quite a few items of clothing behind when he interrupted his stay and returned temporarily to Bakersfield; in fact, some of his clothing is still here. Point: the less clothing, the lighter the suitcase. Yet Bill Warren tells me he handled all 3 suitcases at one time or another while helping Steve to the Bus station and that there were "three rather large, very heavy suitcases." So: in his letter of 10 Jan 67 to Daugherty, Pickering states: "I wish to reiterate that you have all that was in the 2 suitcases, as well as what was in the 3 mailed envelopes." And he claims never to have taken anything on previous visits. AND YET: to date he has sent back to me first 3, then

6 more packages! NINE PACKAGES! I have only had time to count, weigh and evaluate the contents of six: they come to 134 individual pieces valued at approx'ly \$571 (a set of Acolyte, for instance) and weighing ~~xxxx~~ about 15 lbs. Where did they come from?

It's nearing midnight now and I haven't any more time at the moment. I don't propose to go on for months with a new parlor game, Bickering About Pickering. But I will give you one final tabulation when I have it all figured out. So far the material retrieved that I have had time to sort through comes to 438 items worth approx'ly \$4346.75. This does not include the suitcase itself. Hardly petty cash or easily replaceable inexpensive duplicates.

(signed) Forrest J Ackerman

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AN OPEN LETTER TO STEPHEN PICKERING

by Ted White

Dear Stephen Pickering:

I was perhaps as surprised as anyone to hear about your theft of materials from the Ackerman collection, but I am, if anything, the more surprised by your curious letter of reply to DEGLER! #164.

You are quite right in asserting that many, if not most of us "make mistakes, whatever his age, whatever his profession." But this is hardly an excuse for the "mistake" you made; it is at best a call for compassion from fellow sinners -- not a ready-made alibi: "Well, everyone does it..."

You are guilty of an amazing degree of rationalization, from your assertion that surely everyone must feel similarly tempted upon seeing Forry's collection, to the notion that "there surely must be inexpensive duplicates elsewhere." (In the latter case, why shouldn't you seek out and buy these "inexpensive duplicates"?) In fact, the extent of your rationalization is pathological, and leads me to seriously suggest that you seek professional psychological help.

For example: Your thinking, as expressed in this letter and elsewhere--indeed in most of your writings--is confused. You buttress your arguments with non-sequiturs, and are apparently unable to realize the fact. In this letter you make reference to "those who may wish to jump the gun, and blast me when they know nothing of my personal political/civil rights activities." You add, in closing, "I suggest, before anyone makes any comments in print, that they, first, think about possible legal actions, and two, if they know of my activities outside of fandom, to reconsider any such statements." (I am quite prepared to face the full bore of your legal guns, in any case; your threat is a dud.)

Don't you yet realize that these references to your civil rights activities, to your membership in the "New Left" and your politics are totally beside the point? What makes you think that your membership in the Young Socialists exempts you from criticism? In what way does it have a bearing on the fact that, according to Forry's reckoning, you stole from him items worth several thousands of dollars, committing grand larceny?

You admit that you "made a very stupid, abominable mistake," that your "actions were completely uncalled for, etc.," and I get the impression only that now you've been caught and your actions exposed, you regret the fact, but only because you feel it will give people the wrong idea about you. I suggest that it is you who has the wrong idea about you, and that you are badly in need of clarification.

I repeat: Please seek therapeutic help. You stand indicted by your own writings as your own worst enemy.

-- Ted White, 1967