

# MEMO

From

[REDACTED]

28/Aug/05

Brian:

When I started this letter two days ago, I thought of you as Mr. Lamb: But I spent so much time talking to you, I began to think of you as Brian! Brian, this is probably more of a missive than you either needed or wanted, but if you get through it and the enclosures, I think you'll find it well worth the trip.

All The Best,

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] / Henderson, NV 89014 / [REDACTED]

26/Aug/05

Brian Lamb,  
CEO C-Span,  
400 No. Capitol St.,  
Suite 650,  
NW.,  
Wahington, D.C.,  
20001.

Enclosures: 'The Garrison Tapes'  
'John Barbour on Munich'  
2 photos  
1 Review, LA Times.  
1 Review, Variety.

Dear Mr. Lamb:

With the Republicanizing of PBS and with the anemic state of objective journalism in the mainstream media, it almost looks as though our reporters have even become domestically embedded, what you, your co-hosts and network are doing is needed now more than ever.

To try to help you improve and expand on the excellent public service you are already providing, I am going to make some observations and some suggestions. To show you that I didn't just fall off a turnip truck, and that I am really more than qualified to make such observations and suggestions, I am going to tell you a little about my background and experience, a background that really no one else has. But first, a word about you:

Right now you are the best interviewer in television. There isn't even a close second place. And I'm sure you didn't start out when you founded C-Span thinking you were going to be a host. You probably had no choice in the beginning. And if you evidenced more of your suppressed sense of humor you would be able to replace Letterman and Leno who are nothing more than mild amusements. Larry King is a celebrity-sucking sycophant and Hannity and Colmes and their ilk are nothing more than often, rude, opinionated placards. The best of all the commercial late night hosts, as you may recall, was Jack Paar. He introduced to America countless unknown artists, iconoclasts, entertainers, raconteurs, and even politicians than Johnny Carson would ever have the courage or ability to handle.

And the reason you are so good at what you do may not be obvious to everyone; but it is to me. And yours is a style, for lack of a better word, that I'm sure you insist your fellow co-hosts employ. First of all, you make your guests feel physically comfortable and unthreatened. Second, you ask short, simple, direct questions, with your follow-ups determined by the answer and not by a predetermined next question. You give the impression of sincerely wanting to know what your guests have to say. Very importantly, we the viewers, do not know where you stand politically. Mercifully you appear objective. But most importantly as an interviewer you do not try to impart information in your questions, trying to impress us with your knowledge of the subject.

It is for this last reason alone, you should never have abandoned 'Booknotes.' Although I literally have thousands of books, which I got free, and read, before interviewing the hundreds of authors I queried on television, after watching you with an author I'd often go out and buy the book being discussed. Now though, Brian, if I may be so informal, 'Afterwords' is an absolute disaster! By booking guest interviewers who

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are supposedly learned on the subject at hand there is no uniformity to the show. At best it is haphazard. And at worst by having two so-called experts you have created a two-headed talking monstrosity with no focus: Almost every host is battling to hog the camera and the microphone to let us know how smart he or she is! Nowhere was this more evident than a few weeks ago when you had on an author who has just written a book about Thomas Paine. Thomas Paine was and is the intellectual foundation of the American Revolution. His words and observations are probably more important today than they were then. But the interview was an irritating hodgepodge. One of the most important things about Paine's life was his death and what happened to his body. This tragedy is as telling of contemporary America as it is of fledgling America; but with these two guys fumbling at verbal tennis, they dropped the ball and we learned little; it was an hour of sound and flurry signifying nothing!

My second suggestion is: you need a permanent host for this spot. My third suggestion is: let me audition for it, at my own expense. Or maybe better still, have open auditions for it and let the viewers decide. If you do that, I guarantee I would win hands down; of that, to quote Mark Twain, I'm as confident as a Christian holding four aces!

Another reason you and your co-workers do such a nice job is the way you handle the callers. You let them say what they have to say, often you ask them further question, giving them the feeling they are really contributing to the dialogue, and they are. You have no idea how good this makes the people feel compared to the crudeness and crassness of nearly every other call-in show in the country.

Now we're at the part where I'd like to tell you a little, or maybe a lot about my background, and why, even in a small capacity, I could make an important contribution to C-Span and to the viewers.

In 1969 I was under contract to [REDACTED] as Merv Griffin's replacement. (They made a mistake and went with [REDACTED] even though my ratings when I substituted for Merv were better or higher than Merv's.)

In 1969/70, after a half a dozen years as a modestly successful stand-up political monologist, I auditioned for and got the job as the original Host of a new, live 90 News-Information show on [REDACTED] called [REDACTED] (In 1965 I put out a comedy album with liner notes and assistance from Dick Gregory, called, [REDACTED]. The material still holds up today, but the performance is still a little nervous. In 1975 I put out another album with liner notes by Neil Simon called, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] This material is also still very good, although the liner notes were some of Neil's least successful writing'.) Anyway the ratings when I began this time slot were .03. Within six months it was 5 and we often outdid the national 'Today Show.' Within this show I became the first person in America to review movies and TV on TV. We initiated having live phone calls from viewers, and even though we were in the heart of Hollywood we would never book a celebrity unless he or she was involved in something of some public import. At the height of the Viet Nam war while the Government was denigrating Mohammed Ali, next to Howard Cosell, we were the only ones who would put him on live television. When Reagan ran for his second term as Governor, he chose our show rather than the 'Today Show' to begin his campaign. He was to be our sole guest with open phones. Fifteen minutes before air-time his Press Secretary asked me for my list of questions. I told him I didn't have one. Ten minute later he re-appeared minutes before air-time and asked again for the list I must have. I pointed to my head and said that it was in there somewhere. He then said,

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'In that case the Governor cannot do your show.' I told him that that was fine; I'd just do the show with the viewers and tell them why the Governor suddenly cancelled. Two minutes later, Reagan shook my hand, sat down, and said, 'No questions, eh! This should be interesting.' And it was. Our show, because of our sole coverage the the Chicano Moratorium March, was the only show in America that Ceasar Chavez would appear on! And in spite of our enormous success and my first of six Emmys, I was let go from the show partially because I bucked management and booked former DA Jim Garrison on the show after reading his very obscure book about the Clay Shaw trial called, 'Heritage of Stone! Garrison never got to make the appearance, and I wouldn't get to meet and interview him for ten years when I created 'Real People.' More on that later.

In 1972 I was the media and film critic for [REDACTED] (From '69 to '79 I was also the film critic for Los Angeles Magazine.) On the day of the Munich Massacre I was about to review a film when I caught Johnny Carson's live feed to the East Coast. Here was an enormously in-human, horrifying event, and here was the so-called King of late night TV with an opportunity to say something, anything about what had just happened. I was stunned that he said absolutely nothing; I was even more appalled that his jokes were mostly about Ed's drinking and Doc's wardrobe. I was so disgusted by his public indifference to this tragedy, I tore up my review and sat down and wrote a short piece about what it must be like to be a Jew in such a world. Within two weeks of this unknown critic's commentary over 50,000 copies were in circulation. For two years it became the Official fund raising film for the United Jewish Appeal, raising over 40 million dollars. I won a golden Mike, and the Guardians of America made me an honorary Jew, and I ended up as the Media critic at [REDACTED] Some of the Jews who had embraced me in 1972 sort of recanted though a few years later when I reviewed Jerry Lewis' telethon and suggested that perhaps they could raise twice the amount of money if every man, woman, and child who never wanted to see him again sent in a quarter! During the five years I was with [REDACTED] where I won three more Emmys, I never would sign a contract because doing so would give them ownership of my words. Three times I was fired for 24 hours because of my commentaries or reviews; once for the Jerry Lewis thing where they had to hire guards to protect me, once for saying that Charles Champlin, the film critic for the LA Times, never met a Hollywood movie or starlet he didn't like, and once for reviewing Dick Gregory's and Mark Lane's book about the King assassination, 'Code Name Zorro!' Each time I was brought back, though, because their research indicated that I was responsible for at least ten per cent of the viewers!

I quit reviewing when I created [REDACTED] the Godfather and by far the best of the reality shows, because I thought it would be a conflict of interest. (God, is that an old-fashioned concept these days..conflict of interest.) For the three years I was with the show as Co-Producer and Co-Host I wrote and edited nearly every one of these hours in its entitety. For over a year and a half it was the number one show in America, often garnering in a three network universe a fifty to seventy share. It literally saved NBC which had lost the Olympics and had not yet come up with 'Hill Street Blues.' But while we were obviously an Entertainment show, I felt that since we had such a large audience we should occassionally tell real stories that had real meaning for all of us. So, I told the story of John Walsh's son, Adam; as a result we helped John get The Missing Childrens Act passed. I told the unknown story of The Navajo Code Talkers which resulted in President Reagan's appearing on the program to give them a Presidential Citation. Now, while the Vietnam War Memorial Wall in D.C. is now taken for granted, in 1980 there was considerable opposition to it. So, I told the story of an unknown teacher in New Mexico whose son,

David, was killed in Viet Nam. High on a hilltop in New Mexico this teacher built his own memorial to his son and the sons of hundreds of others who had fallen. Long before the internet, as if by osmosis, literally hundreds of mothers and fathers somehow heard about this chapel and travelled thousands of miles to have their children's photographs included alongside David's. After this episode aired, the Governor of Utah ordered 100 copies to send to every Senator he knew. Later he wrote to us saying it indeed made a difference. And the wall was built.

Now, back to Jim Garrison. In 1979 when [REDACTED] took to the air, the House Select Committee on Assassinations ruled that because a fourth shot had been fired in Dealy Plaza, a conspiracy to kill Kennedy had to exist. This appeared on page 13 of the LA times. I thought this News might partially vindicate Mr. Garrison, so I called to congratulate him. He said, 'I feel like a blind man who has received a very small trophy in a dark room. Only I know I got it'. I asked him if I could get in line to do an interview with him. He said there was no line, no Tom Brokaw, no Peter Jennings, no Dan Rather. For one of the biggest stories in the country I was the only one to call him, a semi-famous Entertainer!

A few months later I was in New Orleans doing stories for [REDACTED] and while there I sat down with Mr. Garrison and put him on tape for four hours. It was the most soul-disturbing and enlightening interview I have ever done or heard. And I felt it was a story others should hear. As the creator and force behind the number one show in the country I felt there would be absolutely no problem in telling a 90 minute real people story, or more to the point, letting Jim Garrison tell his own story unhindered by the Federal Government and unfiltered by the Mainstream Media. But I was wrong; the obstacles and resistance were enormous. And I ended up being let go from my own show by the owner of the program, George Schlatter, living proof that greed is the one human vice that is bottomless!

It was another ten years before I got the chance to let Mr. Garrison tell his story. Around 1990 Oliver Stone announced amidst a flurry of outrage that he was doing 'JFK.' To help and encourage Oliver I called him to let him know that I had this four hour exclusive interview with Jim and that what Oliver should do is following the film he should co-Executive Produce a documentary with the real Jim Garrison perhaps even hosted and narrated by Kevin Kostner. Much to my surprise Oliver said he wasn't interested. So, on my own and with the financial assistance of some friends, I made the documentary, [REDACTED] It went on to win the [REDACTED] Film Festival Award, was a huge hit in Europe and Australia, but went almost unseen here in America. In spite of excellent reviews from the few popular papers that happened to see it, not even A&E would air it; and they have aired some of the weirdest and most irresponsible pieces about the assassination that one could imagine.

So, here is my next suggestion: On book TV on C-Span 2 on the weekends, you have countless hours of re-runs. Why not run some meaningful documentaries? Now, before you say 'no,' hear me out. Think of the documentary makers as authors who write on film! There are scores of them, I am sure, who would be happy to contribute their work free to C-Span for the opportunity of their work being seen and their words being heard. Have the film-maker on live; let he or she introduce the film, then following the showing let them respond to the viewers. And to inaugurate this wonderful and meaningful expanding of C-Span's public service let me introduce 'The Garrison Tapes,' explain how it came to be made, then show it, and afterwards for an hour or

so take calls from your viewers. You will be astounded by the quantity and quality of their comments, questions, and/or observations. I assure you, in show bizz parlance, it would be a smash! The day to do this would be Sunday, Nov. 20th., two days before the 42nd anniversary of the killing of John Kennedy, an event that thoughtful Conservatives and Liberals feel marked the decline of American morality and distrust in their Government! Or at least the beginning of the decline!

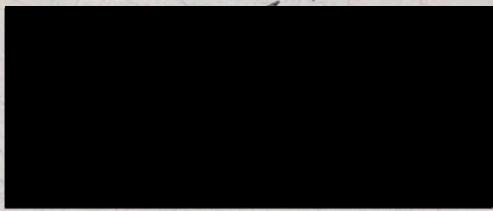
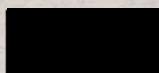
Please think about this. Seriously. It will work.

Thank you for getting to the end of this; and now one last word or observation why I can add a certain dimension to your broadcasts. And I'll try to say this with the objective humility of a critic. Johnny Carson could never tell a News story, and Ed Murrow could never tell a joke: I can and did! I know of no one else who could do the same. Because of my background as an Entertainer and Newsman I have certain sensibilities and experience which allow me, I think, a little more insight into a wider expanse of authors from either field. Boy, I hope that sounds more confident than pretentious!

If you have a modicum of interest in meeting with me, I would be happy, again at my own expense, to fly in.

Regardless, though, keep up the good work; and do change the format of 'Afterwords!' It really is terrible.

Warmest Wishes,

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