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April 17, 2001

Mr. Brian Lamb
Chairman & Chief Executive Officer
C-SPAN
400 N. Capitol Street, N.W., #650
Washington, DC 20001

Dear Mr. Lamb,

Yesterday I was fortunate enough to catch your program on Lewis and Clark and I just had to take a few moments and write you a note to pay my complements. You at C-SPAN do such a fine job with your daily coverage it is hard to believe that you have the time and resources to present special programs on historical events.

The early years of my life were spent in a small town near Sioux City, Iowa where my father was the town physician. As most immigrants and first generation US citizens of the time, my father had an incredible thirst for knowledge about the history of the country and especially, the settling of the west. His family had immigrated to a German colony near the Lewis and Clark State Park area not far from Onawa, Iowa; so he and his brothers had grown up exploring the Lewis and Clark trail along the Mighty Missouri up to the Sgt. Floyd Monument.

On his days off during our summer holiday excursions along the Lewis and Clark trail were common to us. After father shared all the favorites of his youth we headed out into South Dakota. Those were the days before the flood control dams – before the Lewis and Clark Lake created by the dam at Gavins Point covered our and treasured hiking trails and the remains of Ft. Randall. It was pretty much taken for granite that we would find arrowheads, parts of tomahawks and Indian tools or even old US military shell casings as we kicked back at the remains of the original Ft. Randall or other favorite camping and picnic spots near Pickstown. As a result of our excursions, for me the stops along the Missouri in route to visit [REDACTED] in North Dakota were places like Ft. Yankton, Ft. Randall, Ft. Kiowa, Ft. Defiance, Ft. Pierre, Ft. Yates, Sitting Bulls Grave, Ft. Rice and Ft. Mandan. I was an adult before I knew that most people referred to them as Chamberlain, Pierre, Mobridge and Bismarck.

The fascination and exploration of “the trail” did not end there; at twelve I joined my brothers at a boarding school near Cody, Wyoming, which was run by a priest friend of my father’s. Sadly it is no longer in existence. It was on summer vacations out of Cody that I became familiar with new places along “the trail” like Williston, Wolf Point, Ft. Peck, Ft. Benton.

After college, the military and the Peace Corps, destiny took me to Washington and then on to a career in foreign affairs. For years names of rivers like the Seine, Tiber, Rhine, Amazon, Parana, Rio Sucio, Reventazon, Nile, Congo, and Niger were more familiar to me.

In the midst of all of that in the early 70’s I traveled to Seattle to attend the Golden wedding anniversary of my Uncle and Aunt and stayed on for a couple of weeks as my uncle was getting up in years (about the age I am now). In his camper, we traveled the state; first down the Pacific coast and then up much of the Columbia River from the Pacific to Canada with a side trip up the Snake. Once again my memories of Lewis and Clark came back and it was then that I vowed that one day I would get back to it.

It was not until eight years ago, when I was on home leave in the US visiting family, that my older brothers decided it was time for us to spend some quality time together by visiting some of the old favorites. As a result, we traveled from Ft. Pierre down to Pickstown and then on down river to Yankton to the Museum, and down to the Sgt. Floyd Monument above the River just south of Sioux City. Then two years ago we attended another family Golden Wedding anniversary, this time in Oregon. After the affair, together we visited the "End of the Trail Monument" down on the ocean at Seaside, journeyed on up to Ft. Clatsop and Astoria and then followed "the trail" up the Columbia and the Snake to Lewiston, Idaho. The magic of Lewis and Clark was back in my system.

Last year at about the end of May when I was on my way out to Omaha to speak at Creighton University I ran into you at O'Hare. You will recall that I forgot my manners and started talking to you at the urinal, got embarrassed over having done so and then tried to apologize which made things even worse. I once again apologize.

Once again on that trip, after my speaking engagement, my brother joined me in Omaha where we spent some time at the site of the Mormon winter encampment and then leisurely traveled west along the Mormon trail for ten days ending up in Salt Lake. I don't know if you on C-SPAN have ever done anything on the Mormon Museum and cemetery in Omaha and the Mormon Trail west but I was fascinated by it. During my years in foreign postings I have worked with many Mormons, some of whom told me of the travails of their ancestors as they left Massachusetts and headed to Illinois and then on to Utah. Knowing a bit about the hardships they endured it was exciting to visit those sites and find family names of my friends on gravestones and in the registry for those who had wintered in Omaha and elsewhere along the route.

I thank you for sharing your travels with me yesterday. Keep up the good work.

Sincerely yours,

