
MICHAEL HIRSH PRODUCTIONS, Inc.

March 10, 1985

Prof. Walter Capps
Department of Religious Studies
University of California at Santa Barbara
Santa Barbara, California

Dear Professor Capps:

"...some who were rear echelon and feel
oddly guilty about that..."

When I ran across that phrase in today's Los Angeles Times article about your work at UCSB, I got one of those strange feelings that are impossible to describe.

On December 17, 1966 I came home from Vietnam where I had been a combat correspondent with the 25th Infantry Division. Despite the fact that I spent 11 months in Vietnam, I considered myself among the fortunate ones over there. The captain I worked for used to tell us that if it came to a choice of getting a good story or picture and possibly getting killed, or getting out of a situation without the story or picture--get out. So although I did go in on a number of helicopter assaults, I normally exercised the option to go in after things had cooled off--and if things started to get nasty, I could and did exercise the option to get out.

That never really bothered me over there, and strangely, it never seemed to bother the men in the two infantry units I covered (1st and 2nd Bn., 27th Infantry). Now, 18 years later, I find myself dwelling on the fact that I had an out and the other guys didn't. In the course of doing some research for a screenplay I'm working on I had the opportunity to talk with a VA psychologist in Cleveland. Mentioning these feelings to him, he told me the logical extension of what I was feeling were the guys who are saying that unless they got killed, they didn't do enough.

In the course of writing, I discovered one of my characters saying that he's going through feelings that don't make sense. (The character--really me--was a company clerk in a combat outfit. He processed all the morning reports--the kia's, wia's and mia's--but except when the basecamp was hit, he wasn't in real jeopardy.) On the one hand he feels guilty because he didn't have the guts to refuse the draft and either stay and face the consequences or go to Canada; on the other hand he feels guilty because he wasn't out in the

Professor Walter Capps

March 10, 1985

Page Two

field with the line units, heavily involved in the fighting and killing. As I said at the outset, 18 years later, it makes no more sense than it did in 1966--but I think about it more often.

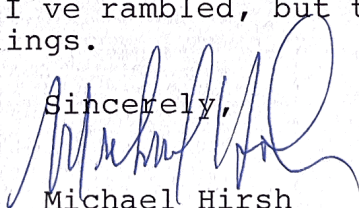
I used to think that I managed to come home from the war with memories, but unaffected. I know now that's not so. What I don't understand is why the feelings are getting stronger rather than less intense with the passage of time.

Enclosed with this letter is a copy of a letter that I wrote to that psychologist I mentioned earlier. As long as I live I'll never forget how it felt when he said "thank you for going over there."

I've enclosed a resume, not because I'm looking for a job, but because I'd like to ask a favor--and before I do, I'd like you to know the kind of work I've done. I have an arrangement with the public television stations in Chicago and Los Angeles to develop and produce programs. I think it's time I did one for me--and for the other Vietnam veterans. If you have the time, I'd like the opportunity to come up to Santa Barbara and discuss some ideas with you.

I'll follow-up this letter with a phone call toward the end of the week. Sorry if I've rambled, but the Times article triggered a lot of feelings.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Michael Hirsh", written over the word "Sincerely,".

Michael Hirsh

December 14, 1984

Dr. Walter Knacke
19801 Sussex Road
Shaker Heights, Ohio 44122

Dear Dr. Knacke:

Thanks very much for taking the time to talk with me this evening. You provided me with a considerable amount of useful material for the screenplay that I'm working on, and I sincerely appreciate your offer to take a look at the draft when I finish with it.

I have to tell you that what you said at the end of the conversation left me with one of the strangest sensations I've experienced in years. All you said was, "thanks for going over there."

When I hung up I thought about that, and realized that in 18 years, no one has said that to me. It affected me so profoundly that at our Sabbath services which began only half an hour after I got off the phone, I had an opportunity to talk about it. It was just something I had to talk about. I realized that I had this urge to track down (so far unsuccessfully) a medic who I really believed saved my life, and that I had talked with Dennis Ortman for the first time since 1966--and this all happened just two days before the 18th anniversary of my return to the world from Vietnam.

A lot of thoughts came back. Getting out of the army at the Oakland Army Terminal at 11pm and paying a cabbie to get me to the San Francisco Airport in time for the last plane to Chicago...only to run into an abusive ticket clerk who could care less that I was 24 hours removed from a combat zone...who said that if I wanted to get on the plane I had to pay full fare; she wouldn't guarantee standby for me, there were other people waiting. I never thought about the kind of welcome I got because I was just so glad to be out of there that it didn't matter. Only when you said "thank you" did I realize that it did--it does--matter.

Thanks to you, too. Cordially,

Michael Hirsh

MICHAEL HIRSH
26148 Adamor Road
Calabasas, CA 91302
[818] 880-4202

Producer/Writer/Director/Reporter

January 1985: Several projects in development for PBS through stations WTTW/Chicago and KCET/Los Angeles, including a 90-minute behind-the-scenes look at CHEERS.

December 1984: M*A*S*H NAPTE syndication sales presentation (14-minutes) for 20th Century Fox.

October 1984: "Making FAME"--On air 11-minute promotional piece for MGM/UA Television provided to all stations carrying syndicated first-run episodes of FAME.

March 1983 to June 1984: Program coordinator for AfterMASH, produced by Twentieth Century Fox Television for CBS. Worked with Larry Gelbart and Burt Metcalfe developing story material for the series; involved in pre and post-production.

1971 to March 1983: Executive Producer for WTTW/Chicago Public Television. During this period was responsible for many local and national award winning programs. Among these:

MAKING M*A*S*H, a 90-minute film examining one of the most popular programs in the history of American television. Nominated for a National Emmy Award. Winner of Gold Plaque at the Chicago International Film Festival.

CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE: WHAT YOUR CHILDREN SHOULD KNOW, a series of five programs aired on PBS in September, 1984, and hosted by Mike Farrell. The series included a 90-minute program for adults and four programs aimed directly at young people by grade level. Included was a 30-minute show for grades K-3; a 30-minute program for grades 4-7; a one-hour theatrical production for junior and senior high school students; and a one-hour program for senior high students that dealt primarily with "date rape." The series received a 1984 program award from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting; it was also awarded a Chicago Emmy.

AS WE SEE IT: LITTLE ROCK CENTRAL HIGH, a 30-minute program in a series of 26 produced under contract with the U.S. Office of Education examining desegregation in American high schools. Winner of the GEORGE FOSTER PEABODY award, and the Ohio State Award. Hirsh was executive producer and project director for this series.

THE POLITICS OF ABORTION, a 30-minute film documenting the political activity of the anti-abortion movement during the 1976 general election campaign. Winner of the DuPont-Columbia Citation; the Peter Lisagor Award for Exemplary Journalism, presented by the Society of Professional Journalists-Chicago Chapter.

GUESS WHO'S PREGNANT?, the first network documentary examining the problem of teenage pregnancy and potential solutions. Winner of the DuPont Columbia Citation and the Ohio State Award.

GUESS WHO'S PREGNANT? AN UPDATE, a second 60-minute program produced three years after the first, examining changes in both the problem and public policy related to it. Winner of the Maggie Award from the Planned Parenthood Federation of America.

COLLEGE CAN BE KILLING, a 60-minute film looking at the way American colleges and universities respond to the emotional needs of their students and making the case that lack of a proper response leads to an inordinately high suicide and suicide at empty rate. Points out that the support level provided by a college should be a consideration in the selection of that school by high school seniors and their parents. Winner of Chicago Emmy Award.

WHAT THIS COUNTRY NEEDS: AN IMMIGRATION POLICY THAT WORKS, five half-hour programs dealing with consequences of U.S. immigration policy, its history, and efforts to change it during the Reagan administration. Awarded 1983 Chicago Emmy Award.

SINCE THE AMERICAN WAY OF DEATH, a 60-minute investigative documentary film examining the American funeral industry ten years after Jessica Mitford's book. Winner of Chicago Emmy Award; Corporation for Public Broadcasting awards as best documentary and best locally produced public TV program of 1974; San Francisco State University Broadcast Media Award; Jacob Scher Award for Investigative Reporting.

THE CONSUMER GAME, a series of half-hour programs aired on the Central Educational Network covering a variety of consumer topics ranging from airbags and auto safety to retail sales techniques to restaurant sanitation. This was the first regularly scheduled consumer program in the country. Winner of Chicago Emmy Award; National Press Club Consumer Journalism Award.

THE SELLING OF ABE LINCOLN: 1976, a 60-minute documentary examining the question of political broadcast advertising. Winner of Chicago Emmy Awards for programming and writing; CPB Award.

CHICAGO'S SECRET WILDERNESS, a 45-minute nature film shot over four seasons within a 30-mile radius of downtown Chicago. Winner of three Chicago Emmy Awards. Winner of National Park and Recreation Association video award.

WHO'S THERE FOR THE VICTIM?, a 30-minute film about the work of a Chicago volunteer group known as Rape Victim Advocates. Winner of bronze Cindy Award for informational films.

OTHER PROJECTS: 1970-1984

EXPRESS, a series of 55 half-hour radio programs dealing with coping issues for teens and pre-teens. Series was aired on WLS, the ABC-owned radio station in Chicago. Received the 1981 award from Action for Children's Television, marking only the second time in nine years that ACT has honored a radio program. Also received an Ohio State Award.

ONE YEAR IN THE LIFE OF THE GREATEST COLLEGE JAZZ BAND IN AMERICA An independently produced 60-minute combination documentary-performance program featuring drummer Louis Bellson and the Northern Illinois University Jazz Ensemble. Fed by PBS in December, 1984.

TWO WEEKS IN RUSSIA AND POLAND, independent documentary following the adventures of two dozen American college students as they travelled to Moscow, Leningrad and through Poland at the height of the Solidarity tensions.

GUERRILLA WARFARE IN CAIRO, ILLINOIS, a radio documentary for WBBM-FM/Chicago which received a 1970 Writers Guild of America Award.

UNITED STATES GYPSUM COMPANY--Video consultant to USG for development and production of a quarterly employee video-magazine, "USG VideoNews." Produced pieces and served as on-camera reporter. Winner of two awards for industrial video.

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Michael Hirsh was born in Chicago, Illinois on April 13, 1943. Educated in Chicago and Southern California, he received a BA in Mass Communications from the University of Illinois at Chicago Circle in 1968. He served in the U.S. Army, spending nearly all of 1966 as senior combat correspondent with the 25th Infantry Division based at Cu Chi, Vietnam. For ten years he hosted a bi-weekly telephone talk show on WLS/Chicago. He was also news director of WBBM-FM/CBS Chicago, hosting a nightly talk show for more than a year. Prior to that he worked for WBBM-AM/Chicago, as a writer, reporter, environmental editor and documentary producer. He was the first broadcaster in the history of the Chicago TV Academy to receive four Emmy awards in a single year. He was married on June 16, 1968 to Karen Aronson. They have two children: William (b. 8/7/70) and Jennifer (b. 7/2/73).