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Constructive Colloquy

LOWELL HOUSE . . HARVARD UNIVERSITY

CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS 02138

February 14, 1971

Mr. Eliot Porter
Route 4 Box 33
Sante Fe, New Mexico

Dear Mr. Porter:

The four of us whose names appear above are all undergraduates at Harvard College — three of us are juniors, and one a sophomore. There is nothing about us that should distinguish us from the thousands of college students all over the country, and that is what we think makes us particularly well qualified to share an idea with you, and to ask your help. We have called our idea Constructive Colloquy. It is to be a non-profit syndicated column for college newspapers through which the thoughts of distinguished individuals, leaders in all fields of American life, can be directly communicated to the students of this nation. Our search for prominence in various professions has led us to you.

In our limited experience, we have discovered that colleges are often very insular institutions. Professors are frequently preoccupied with research obligations; administrators generally have too little time to serve students in a broad advisory capacity; and the only area in which there is no shortage of publicity and discussion is the political arena. Most college people read their school newspaper, and most watch television. But in both media, political reactions seem to gain most of the headlines, and prestige is delegated only to the most outspoken politicians. In recent years, political interests have so preoccupied young people that they have lost their perspective on the many exciting ideas that transcend immediate politics. In short, there is a great deal about American life which should be said to students, but at present simply is not being said.

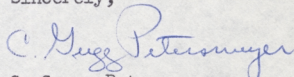
Hopefully, the Colloquy will help to remedy this most frustrating problem. The intent of this project is to establish a free transfer of ideas and encouragement from the experienced to the inexperienced, from the successful to the aspiring — a transfer unfettered by political overtones or institutional biases.

The first article that the Colloquy produces will be mailed out for use in fourteen hundred college newspapers throughout the country. Thereafter, articles will be sent at a rate of one per week to subscribing college newspapers for the twelve weeks remaining in this school year. By that time, our hope is to have communicated to college students some of the thoughts of the most distinguished men and women in a variety of fields, including journalism, medicine, art, business, law, broadcasting, and entertainment. Therefore, our purpose in writing you, Mr. Porter, is to ask you to write one of our first articles, five to six hundred words in length, directed specifically toward college students. The topic would be entirely up to you, although our hope is that it will not relate to political issues. Possible topics might include what initially fascinated you about photography, other meaningful experiences, the value of personal associations, or a philosophy of life. Certainly you would be doing us a favor, and we think that you and other distinguished Americans might appreciate this opportunity to pass on a special message to college students.

Both Walter Cronkite and John Gardner have agreed to write for the Colloquy, and we have already received an article written for us by Dr. Michael DeBakey. Due to our mailing deadlines, we would need an article from you as soon as possible. We know how little free time you have, but hope that you will still look favorably on our request.

Thank you very much for your time.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "C. Gregg Petersmeyer". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized "C" at the beginning.

C. Gregg Petersmeyer
President & Publisher