

From: paul krassner <[REDACTED]>
To: "jeffrey E." <jeevacation@gmail.com>
Subject: Subject to change?
Date: Thu, 07 Dec 2017 21:57:54 +0000

Hey Jeffrey,

Please let me know if I'll get a check this month since I've been blessed "only" \$20,000 this year, and will I be getting checks next year?

I hope our contract will continue until I'm dead. I'm 85 now. That's the new 84. There are three obituaries already prepared — NPR, NY Times, Associated Press — ho-hum.

So here's why I'm, er um, begging for money:

I was able to pay friends I've borrowed from, and I've given some to others needing.

My writing has been enabled by you for me to work without a burden on my mind.

For example, I've trimmed down from 700 pages to 400 a collection, "60 Years of Investigative Satire: The Best of Paul Krassner."

Andy Borowitz, prolific funny fake news in the New Yorker, has written an introduction [see below].

Growing up in New York, I never learned how to drive. Recently, my wife Nancy Cain [author of her memoir, "Video Days," and there's a praised documentary, "Here Come the Videofreex"] drove me to my therapeutic massage, and when she returned home and she heard the sounds of a thief.

She screamed out as loud and long as possible. The crook ran out of the back door and jumped over the fence.

He took our cellphone, but beyond fortunate our computers were on the floor of the living room, waiting to be stolen.

We got a security company, fixed smashed windows, and remained in shock.

After that, my daughter Holly, her husband, and their 5-year-old [adopted at birth} live in Napa, where there was a fire around the whole town, spread by powerful winds. They evacuated at 4 a.m., but their house was saved, and the heavy smoke has dissipated. We could hardly concentrate on anything during that week.

Blah, blah. All my problems are luxuries.

I use a walker just to get from one room to another, and Nancy has excruciating pain when she stands and walks.

We go to the local gym, where I can walk on a treadmill and she can ride a stationary bicycle. The other day a woman was practically dancing on the treadmill next to me. I asked her if she wanted to race. She looked at me surprised. I said, "It's OK, I'll give you a head-start."

My cripple situation had developed gradually over the decades, originally beaten by a couple of cops when I got caught in a riot.

There was a merely 7-year post-verdict of a trial I covered in San Francisco. An ex-cop had done a double execution, murdered in City Hall the mayor and Supervisor Harvey Milk, the first openly gay politician.

Nancy's cripple situation was caused by scoliosis. Doctor after doctor said there was no cure. No surgery would help. Until now, though, there could be cell stems via many injections judging by her X-rays.

She just called me. There's no guarantee, but I reminded what my mother said, "Nothing ventured, nothing gained." It will cost \$10,400.

So that's my story and I'm sticking with it.

High gratitude,
paul

Introduction by Andy Borowitz

Is satire dead?

When the President of the United States is a former game-show host with the self-control of an incontinent hamster, that's a reasonable question. With satire under daily assault from an increasingly absurd reality, satirists can't be blamed if they sink into a slough of despond, or consider driving for Uber. How can you satirize a world this moronic? But maybe that's the wrong question to ask. Maybe, instead, satirists should ask themselves, "What would Paul Krassner do?"

This collection of Krassner's work couldn't have come at a better time. It serves as a welcome reminder that satire has been under threat from reality before — almost continuously, it seems -- and as a bracing demonstration of how an indefatigable satirist faced down that threat and won, again and again.

It's undeniable that the current leader of the free world, through his uniquely demented brand of infantile performance art, has raised the bar for satire to an almost unreachable height. But over the past sixty years, Paul Krassner faced similar challenges from such daunting surrealists as Richard Nixon, O.J. Simpson, and Sarah Palin -- and never blinked.

At this point, you couldn't be blamed for thinking, "Wait. Things have been fucked up before — but never *this* fucked up. Things are so fucked up now that readers can't tell the difference between a fake news story and a real one." It might be reassuring to know that this supposedly new problem is not, in fact, new at all. In 1967, when the historian William Manchester was preparing to publish a book about JFK's assassination, *The Death of a President*, members of the Kennedy family succeeded in having sections of the manuscript removed before publication.

Always trying to be helpful, Krassner published a satire, "The Parts That Were Left Out of the Kennedy Book," which was outlandish, ridiculous, pornographic and, naturally, widely believed to be true. There are at least two lessons in this episode: first, that a satirist cannot be held responsible for others' reading comprehension skills; and second, if satire has become indistinguishable from reality, it's probably reality's fault.

It's impossible to overstate Paul Krassner's impact on American comedy. He has influenced everyone from George Carlin to Harry Shearer to Lewis Black, and will continue to inspire the satirists of the future — assuming, of course, that there is a future. But as tempting as it is to enshrine Krassner as a comic legend, worthy of our reverence and genuflection, let's not. That would mean saddling him with the kind of respectability that, in his work, he reflexively mocks. Given the choice between respect and laughter, Krassner always goes for the laugh.

And, finally, that's the most important reason why this book couldn't have come at a better time. It's full of laughs when we need them most, the kind of laughs that lift us out of despair and help us see the world more clearly. Somehow, through the alchemy of his genius, Paul Krassner, the pot-smoking Yippie provocateur, emerges from these pages sounding like the sanest man in the world. If only there were some way to give him control of the nuclear codes. We'd all sleep better at night.

New York City, November 2017