July 2, 1998

Ms. Naomi Schneider, Executive Editor

University of California Press

2120 Berkeley Way

Berkeley, CA 94720

Dear Naomi Schneider,

I'm sorry it's taken me so long to get back to you about America Day By Day. Here's comment, though it may not be of much use:

"Europeans have always written curious and fascinating books about America, but America Day By Day must be one of the strangest. Just at the beginning of the Cold War, Simone de Beauvoir arrives with all her prejudices and preconceptions intact, so that much of the book takes place in her own head. Yet she's also almost girlishly giddy to be here, and her powers of observation and vivid descrip­tion are formidable. What the book recaptures so well is a striking moment in the often tone-deaf dialogue between European intellectu­als and American culture, a conversation by turns passionate, obtuse, breathlessly expectant, and coldly condescending. Since neither the Americans nor the French are anything like this today, this is a historical document of considerable value."

Sorry I couldn't do any better than this. I hope you're planning to correct some of her mistakes, especially in the spelling of people's names, like Horace McCoy and Dashiell Hammett, for which her original book was much criticized. (Near the end, for example, she calls Sidney Hook "Sidney Brock," and not deliberately either.) There was something tone-deaf about her.

All the best,

Morris Dickstein