

Seaman School

Dec 17, 1943

Dear Mrs S. h. Handforth -

It seems to me I used to write letters to you a long time ago. I just received one from you which indicates that I am letting you get out of touch. I do still remember the date of your birthday, however, and I am still at the Seaman School. That address is just another for the same place. I am very much here. Each day I say I won't be so busy tomorrow and that's when I'll write. Now I'm busier than ever preparing an Xmas program with minus talent to work with. Hence it will be mostly stage scenery and lighting by myself. Music banged out by Mr. Bennett. If only Edmund were here for the music we would really have something to talk about. Maybe we will anyway. We will have some photos of it so I won't go into details now. Bennett and I put on a spectacular Halloween party, with many handsome and grotesque costumes designed and constructed by same, but alas our professional photographer failed to arrive.

As habitual here we've had little to do with the outside world but considerable quietly nevertheless mixed with the tragic. For a while we took up roller skating in South Pasadena, only one of the Director's boy friends and I being able to skate. There was general improvement but not painless. And then a period a dancing hither and yon. I do cover a good deal of highway as there seems to be more and more driving for some reason or none, and less and less teaching for me. We

had one grand day recently almost to Ventura to  
a Palamino Ranch as prospective buyers of a <sup>riding</sup> horse  
on the way back stopping at Minna Parks and  
at the Colin Clements both very remarkable  
places in very different ways. And to horse auctions.  
Our work horse ate too much barley and exploded,  
so we got another as big as an elephant. And  
our horse buying is not done. With the Christmas  
rush over we'll be at it again, as we have  
in mind two more Pintos for riding. You can  
understand how fascinating the horse trading milieu  
is.

Besides the exploded horse, we had last week:  
lady-help steps off porch breaks leg in three places,  
our near-Herculean youth solves another's jaw, challen-  
ging it; a depressed case attempts suicide by  
drinking Black Leaf 40; our tiniest freckle faced  
red head runs away and comes back with \$500  
and a new bill fold. A soldier friend on a  
3 day pass settles down on us with ulcers.  
Then we are all having the "little flu". And so  
on.

And our art takes us places too, i.e. to  
Galka Scheyer who house hangs like a bird cage  
precisely the highest peak of Beverley Hills. It  
wonders for me to attempt to describe such a place  
- I wish you could see for yourself, some of  
the dream-like establishments of this Southland.  
I'm just beginning to find out myself what is here.

Dec 18

Two weeks ago I sent off a Christmas gift to you. I am apologetic about its shoddy wrapping and more fearful about its packing which seemed insecure to me. If it is broken to bits let me know. It is the sort of thing that is not considered good taste at present, but as it charms my imagination I hope that it will yours.

I do not know any one by the name of Finchley. Might it be Pat Finley? He is an artist whom I knew well, first during my Provincetown days then Paris but have not seen much of him for years. The last time was once during the 35-36 winter in New York. He's a pleasant fellow but don't bother about him if you don't care. I think Stan did meet him but he wouldn't remember. That was when Stan was at Columbia!

The \$2500 bond was a nice surprise. Was there a letter with it? I have seen no announcement of such a bonus, except that something of the sort was being discussed by Congress. Did it come from Washington or Jefferson Barracks or where?

As for the tombstone for Walter I may be the only one in disagreement but I am very definitely so, that is if cremation is still possible. For one thing I am dead set against any encouragement of tombstone art. Secondly why perpetual care for the grave of one

who did not ask that attention in life, and won't be getting that attention by his relatives in person at his resting place? No! It is merely <sup>one of the</sup> dull and stupid and ugly ways of <sup>trying to</sup> satisfying a convention. Much better give the money and more to some fund which would have interested him. I do not know if the MacDowell Colony for instance would accept a memorial gift but we could find out. or give it to a library, or purchase fund for a museum, or a hospital, or to St. John the Divine Cathedral for some little altar items etc. Of course the amount may be too small to be recorded as an individual memorial, but I would like to know exactly how much it is, and I'd like the others to know that I consider tombstones to be not only ~~mean~~ poor sentiment but hideous abortions which I would pay to have destroyed, not manufactured. If we lived in an age when family plots, or tombs had a meaning, it would be different. But we don't. There are many better ways of remembering the dead. A hunk of highly polished granite is too easy a way out.

A wild and reckless Xmas to you both  
and the 5005 nephews!

Love, Tom

P. S. The Rotarian Magazine will soon be publishing some illustrations which I recently did for a very good Pearl Buck article.