

Seeman School
El Monte, Cal

[1945]

Dear Nannie -

Thanks for believing that no news is good news, and for continuing to drop me letters and cards even so. There's something about this place that makes it impossible for me to take pen in hand. It is the worst period that I've ever gone thru in that way and I've almost forgotten how. Let's see:

Edmund was inducted July 21st, and on Aug 11th went to the reception center at Camp Cullington about 50 miles South of here. He is still there and will be taking his basic training there, and is teaching a class of illiterates (sounds like Seeman School!). We've heard very little from him but he expects to be up next week end to give details.

On the night of July 28, E and I waited seven hours to get a place on a bus to Santa Maria arriving there 8 AM the 29th, staying with Claire Franklin. Peter Churchill (Sergeant) arrived a few hours later just 2 days out of the Army and still in uniform. He had acquired his American citizenship and a thin varnish of American soldier style. On the 31st we went on to Oceans and stayed two nights with Ella Young, spending one day on the fog-shrouded dunes and one at Avila. The house surely did have a feminine touch and it looked horrible: fancy frills and ruffles everywhere.

which looked ridiculous in a weatherbeaten old shack. Most of the young trees were still alive tho the garden had retrogressed. The corner "key" lot which I felt the estate needed had only recently been sold to a Portuguese fisherman who is patching up the shack on that place. It went for \$1600. However I am trusting in fishermen's improvidence and that he will some time need to sell out.

I realized on that trip more clearly than before how much more attractive that section of California (San Luis Obispo County) is than this. Here in the L. A. region there is just too long a period of glaring sun and enervating heat - The evenings and mornings are ideal tho - and perhaps I would not feel the stifling afternoons so much were we not running about continuously under the cloudless sky. The help problem at the school has been a continuous crisis; even the most inefficient and undesirable ones dont stay more than two weeks and they turn out to be drunkards or kleptomaniacs or benevolent ninkompops. Having more or less inherited Edmunds job of supervisor, I am supposed to fill in the temporary gaps which are more than too many; they are continuous. Fortunately for me, Richard Bennett, one of Peggy Lerrers author artists and an old acquaintance of mine from Seattle appeared on the scene (Peggy did too for a day or so and we all ate from breakfast to lunch one Sunday morning at the Biltmore) and offered to be a stop gap at the school for a while. He is pleasant company, and he has a most charming

cousin, Daisy Browne who lives with her mother in L.A., and we get together often on Sat evenings. Between the two of us we are giving our boys an intensive course in painting: - art symbolism of the subconscious. The results are a great success. Not only surprisingly interesting but lovely to look at. We have big ideas in our heads now about sending them travelling for exhibition.

The clay work, and wood work and all other hand craft has gone by the board, in the excitement of the discovery of this talent.

Our other teaching continues to be a farce. It is like playing school among infants and I sometimes find myself behaving just as madly as my pupils - in self defense. And I secretly believe that the adult personnel here is madder than the boys - and this does not exclude the directress.

The days are never dull. somebody runs away (I had a nice visit recently at the Pasadena jail and at the Arcadia jail fetching two of them back) or some boy starts a fire, or one smashes all the clay work or Mrs S. gets banged up by one of her soldier boy friends, or a horse goes lame or the cars break down or a baby falls into the septic tank, or our poor but decent old maid school teacher dyes her hair a new shade of red, or the old witch Talbot pours kerosene on the plants of our garden that she doesn't like, or a 100 year old pepper tree crashes to the ground on a quiet Sunday afternoon. But each Sunday noon I preach the sermon with a new under-

standing of life, all learned on these small 11 acres.

For relief Richard Bennett and I rush down to Main St. on Saturday afternoons and see more life in the raw. Main St. is certainly one of the most colorful spots in America today and I always feel that I should be spending my energy there recording it and not at this long and futile routine.

Your view of Barneget Light and Pier is very handsome but can it compare with Ovila's? But I'm sure the swimming at Barneget was better anyway.

It was sad going down the Moy Mell ("The Vale of Honey" to the beach cabins of Gavin Arthur to find them deserted and empty except for a few dead birds that had beaten themselves against the windows, and to think of the quiet and serious endeavor that had once been there. The end of an epoch!

Love

Tom