

January 2, 1999

Dear Robert and Barbara,

Another year, what can I say.. They come all too fast these days. This holiday has been too cold to go skiing more than a couple of times so we have amused ourselves at the bridge table. Charlie is a fine player as is Jason. I tag along behind convincing myself that this is all for the good of brain cells. It's rather like all that talk of the walk as delightful exercise when the golf game goes awry. Jason has spent most of the holiday here with us, I suspect for the good food and the bridge games. He's spoiled by me and thinks Charlie is an ideal role model. They both have that kind of computer like mind that I envy. Jason is taking a first year computer course at nights at the University while in his last year high school, to avoid taking welding he tells me. Of course he leads his class and his high school teacher asks him to teach that class when the teacher takes time off to go hunting in the fall. All in all he is a computer nerd and a cracken fine bridge player. He still plays in the school band and is a prime mover on the robotics team. Lila is the athletic one, small but swift. She is a fine gymnast, a good horse person and copes with the pressure of piano recitals with aplomb. Her social life is her greatest delight. This goes with being a girl of course. Jennifer's kids are both well adjusted solid types. Both do well in school and seem to cause no immediate problems. Jennifer and Brian are moving to Southern Ontario which is nice for me even though it is farther

away from Fredericton. I always feel as though I'm coming home when I drive among the great flat farms with puffy trees and no ditches, like a salmon returning to familiar waterways, I suppose.

Douglas and Ruth with grandchildren had a nice visit with Jennifer's family in the summer when I also was in Montreal with Jason and Lila. Ruth's health was good and Jennifer handles hordes of people for meals very well. One would starve visiting Linda unless Tony was about to do the chores. More and more Linda is turning into an absent-minded academic. I brought the kids home by train, sleeping in births, meals in the dining car, the whole enchilada, and a grand time was had by all.

The farm is now certified as "organic," and Tony makes a palatable blueberry wine and sells berries to the natural food store along with various types of garden produce. The horses are all well. Linda now has tenure and received an excellence in teaching award last year. She works extremely hard and has various grants going with different departments of justice and Mediation Canada. I think she loves the research and teaching part of work but as you know Academic politicking leaves something to be desired.

Jennifer has close down the dog grooming business for now as they are in the throws of trying to sell their house. Seagrams has transferred Brian to a place near Windsor called Amherstburg, not too far from Rene's family in Michigan which pleases Jennifer.

We had a very fine Christmas with the Rhinelander family, Daphne's (Charlie's daughter from his previous marriage) family which includes two little grandsons, and also Sarah (Tony's daughter from a previous marriage) and her little two year old

daughter. This makes Tony a grandfather, Linda a grandmother, and us great grandparents by a rather circuitous route.

As you can tell, all those cheese snacks and crackers were very useful. Every one loves cheese and crackers and its a good thing to be able to haul the kids off the candy canes for a short while. Thanks loads for the good stuff.

We are still planning to ski in Utah and Wyoming in March which is our annual trip. We try to ski most days here during the winter and we are working-out hard at the gym in preparation for the high altitudes of Alta. We are also hoping to go to Nepal in June for three weeks with the Elderhostle. We'd fly no-stop from Toronto to Bangkok which is quite an undertaking so we can't put this sort of thing off till we reach really-old age. Charlie has never been to Bangkok so I'll be able to show him around a little though we decided we wouldn't linger there in route or returning. It's the most polluted city in the world to my eyes but the great floating masses of water hyacinth on the rivers, the river boats and the palace of the King of Siam are well worth seeing.

On rereading your letter I must comment on how busy you all seem with loads of accomplishments. It's a good time in one's life. It's too bad Dad didn't live to witness the accomplishments of his grandchildren and great-grandchildren. I think he would have thought that he'd done his job well. I remember when I once asked him what he would change in his life if he had it to live it over again. His answer was that he'd like to have been a better parent. He married good women though at least till he got to Evelyn. However he adored her so that

counts for something. I found her Life's Story quite interesting, how she carefully avoided feeling much except in the context of her own prideful self. She truly loved Dad though and I'll honour her for that.

Love as always

Happy new year and love to everyone.

*Dylan
Charlie too*

Our Dog Dylan is a great success. He retrieved twelve pheasants during the hunting season just as he'd been taught in dog school. I thought your poem written to the Siberian husky was excellent. It's true they never forget what's etched in their genes. Perhaps none of us do.

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