

*Dear Robert and Barbara*

I just reread your August letter with a description of your summer visit to Ontario. I also visited Uncle Clifford and Lillian a month ago when I was in hamilton seeing a Sjogrens Syndrome specialist. Clifford was much as your described him. Your letter and a visit he made to Jennifer's reinforced my intention to pay him a visit and I'm so glad I made the effort. His mind is still fairly good and I was able to talk a fair amount about things past. I found that he, like Dad, has great difficulty talking about the women in his life. I still have no clear idea what his mother was like other than that she was a good woman who made him what he is and who died bravely etc. After he went to Florida this winter he did send me an account of the "Women who Mattered" which was meant to further appease my curiosity but which served to make me even more curious. How can a woman leave nothing behind except her worthiness in relation to the receiver. Were they spoiled? Were women equated with the family slave. Was she self disciplined to the point of extinction or are the males in the family simply 'men's men' as uncle Clifford claims who have successfully broken the ties with the mother figure as all true males are wont to do, a la Robert Bly's Iron John (great book, I thought).

We had an unusually hectic Christmas because one of Charlies daughters stayed with us for five days and during that time she was going through one of her manic phases which goes with her schizophrenia. Having someone shouting, laughing at odd times and general thumping about is more nerve racking than having a house full of people with the flu, I can attest to that. Even the kids were going for long drives, anything, to escape from the house. The sad thing is that I don't think she had a very good time. Mental illness is a real bummer. Anyway, there was a lot of family about and Santa brought his usual overload. Christmases are arriving all too frequently in my old age.

Your family appears to be in fine fettle, making the most of every day. You must feel very proud to have contributed to their success with a fine job of parenting though as I get older I attribute an increasing amount to the gene pool, but you've both done a commendable job and still going strong. My kids and grand

children all seem to be doing well too. Linda and Tony now have a farm about 25 mins from Fredericton, over a hundred acres with forests and streams, pasture for their horses and blueberry fields. It has an old house needing much renovation and a barn which they have already renovated to house the animal life. Being a professor with some free time to farm has its advantages. Tony has more time to parent as well. Linda is teaching criminology in the sociology Dept., practicing a small amount of law, and doing a fair amount of writing to get stuff published from her thesis. Although the kids are somewhat isolated on the farm they seem to thrive on it, enjoying the hill for sliding in the back yard and the cats and dogs etc. Jason is a computer addict. He does well in school and enjoys the pony club and skiing when I take him along. He tends to be a quiet loner and Lila is the opposite. She's four now and a noisy people person who thoroughly enjoys her day care and ski classes. She also has a memory like a steel trap so should have no trouble with school when she gets there. Jennifer and Brian still don't like living in Montreal where French sovereignty is constantly being tested. Brian and the kids are now fairly bilingual but they still feel like outsiders not having a french name though Brian's mother was french Canadian.

We are still skiing a lot, in a way more fanatically then ever. Most of our old ski buddies have either died or become too overcome with decrepitude to enjoy it any more and we know our days are probably numbered too. We'll probably get to Utah for a few weeks again this year and we'll make the most of it. We also discovered golf this year and find its more fun than previously imagined. I don't know how long my wrists will hold up but at least I can still walk around behind the golf cart. My Sjogren's syndrome is staying fairly stable and I still have lots of energy. How is the rheumatoid arthritis Barb, I understand the secondary Sjogren's syndrome goes with about 30% of rheumatoid arthritis. I hope you aren't afflicted with that as well.

I officially retired at the end of this last year. That didn't last long and I'm back at work now working 3/4 time on a contract basis. I didn't see much point in really retiring till

Charlie does in a couple of years. Even then he'll probably continue to work at jobs he finds particularly interesting.

Thanks again for your newsy letter. Keep in touch. Love to everybody.

Love  
Betty