

*Note from Warren: This letter includes Betty's thoughts relating to the recent death of our father, Wilford, earlier in the year. Also, it serves as an interesting time capsule of that era in our family.*

Dear Warren and Patty,

June 19, 1985

I always enjoy your letters and your new typewriter is indeed perfect for Dad's memoirs. I read most of the memoirs when I was in Arizona in the late fall. So much is left unsaid. They certainly are a chronicle of vast achievement but not of the man. It was as though he could think of himself in no other light except professional. Over and over again I would ask about his mother or his sister. He never could tell me anything. He was so driven. I suppose I had that kind of 'monkey on my back' when I was between 30 and 40, but it has now passed by, thank God. I'm so glad I have been able to spend time with Dad and Evelyn each year, not much, but visits were always good for us. We are so fortunate to have had Dad late enough in our lives so that we could get much of that sorting out of 'who we are and why.' And how fortunate we are to have had really fine childhoods and parents. Dad's death left me in quite a depression for several weeks and even now still I cannot truly comprehend that I'll never again be able to touch that quiet shyness of his.

I wish I could have said so much more at the memorial about the man as I knew him, but out of respect for his love for Evelyn, I couldn't. I'd like to have talked about his love for all the women in his life and about his tears for his own daughter's death. Winnifred was a chubby laughing little creature who looked like her mom. It's strange how much time I have spent lately thinking about your mom. She always wanted us to call her 'Mother.' For me, she deserved a large part of the memorial service because I was or am a product of the two of them. I remember how often he'd put his arm around her and pat her bum and tell her she had beautiful legs. She'd blush. She's the one who gave us all our free spirits and our compassion for everything that lives. How incredible that a young girl of barely twenty could have loved Douglas and me as her own. When Winnifred died, she told me, tearfully, "You're the only little girl I have now." She left us a legacy of poetry, art and music, which never were part of the Park tradition. One time when we were having a discussion about death when I was very small, she said to me, "If I didn't die, then there would never be room for anyone else to live." Somehow that thought has always seemed profoundly religious to me, who loves to live. It all fits and it is all so very right with the world. And there was my own mother who Dad loved with that first passion of a boy-like man. After she died he wrote in my baby book that their marriage was like one long honeymoon, and she was the nearest thing to an angel that he had ever seen. She was petite, only 103 pounds dark-eyed and very beautiful. I always called her 'Mama.' I've been told by her sister that she was a kind of youthful elf who wore incredible hats, hid the dirty dishes in the oven when she could get away with it, and filled the house with wild flowers.

Evelyn and I get on well now that I'm mature enough to understand her better. 'What you sees is what you gets,' so to speak. Yes, I think they were very good for each other at the stage in their lives that they met, though I can hardly imagine Evelyn coping with the copper wash tub and the runny-nosed squalling kids and dogs and cats and bee hives under the pear tree which went with the growing years.

Now, what's going on around here. The grandchildren are the most marvelous that have ever graced the globe. We enjoy them so much. I get to see Jennifer's two kids three or four times a year as Toronto is a stopping-off place for most confluence travel, and we have Jason in town. Charlie and Tony, Linda's husband, get on very well, so we see a lot of them. Jennifer is very keen on the family reunion. She lives in Kitchener, an hour from Toronto and London. She has a great husband who you will all adore, and a pool in her back yard (above ground), and Kitchener is quite a nice little city. Perhaps we could use it as a sort of central area. I can always go up a day early and make pots of chili and organize the food. Evelyn thought you people might be staying with relatives, or we can line up some camp grounds. Evelyn

will stay with Clifford I expect, and Linda and Tony will stay with Jennifer. Tony is very keen to attend and meet Catherine. He has spent a lot of time in Russia. All in all, it could be quite fun.

Linda is hoping to be pregnant again by then. I hope not *too* pregnant! Your brood certainly is making a mark for themselves. I can hardly wait to meet them all again. Having extremely bright kids can be a financial stress at times, too. If ever Catherine needs a bit of financial aid, please do not hesitate to ask for some aid if you need it. We would love to have a chance to contribute to her future. I always tell my own kids that anything I can contribute is money in the bank because we're all family, and someday maybe I'll need a dollar here and there, and of course that applies to the entire Park family.

Mom is looking forward to your visit this summer. She talks often of your last visit. She is very dependent on family now and we must all reassure her that we really are her family always. I plan to try and get out to see her at least once a year. I enjoy visiting her and I love Arizona. Charlie has developed a great passion for Wyoming, so that's not too far away. I expect we'll be skiing there again next year.

We've had quite a stressful year in that we had Charlie's younger daughter Ann living with us. She is 25 and trying to finish up at art school in Nova Scotia. However, she had a schizophrenic breakdown and needed a place to collect herself while getting treatment. Her mother, who lives in style in Fredericton, refused to take her in, so she came to us. It's been a real education for me coping with an emotionally sick person, but we've all survived. Now she is well enough to go back to school and all looks well for the moment. It has all been very hard for Charlie. The book *the Brain* which you gave Dad for Christmas was helpful. We had seen the series on TV as well, which was also very helpful, and of course we had some direction from the mental health people here. I am enjoying having the house to myself however, and time marches on.

We now have two spare bedrooms, and the boat is still in the river for fishing. Do come and visit when you can. I am hoping that my work load won't be a heavy next year; as a matter of fact I'm counting on it. Right now I have research projects extending from St. John's Newfoundland to Alberta, and enumerable kids to supervise, and I'm fed up with the whole travel thing plus 18-hour days. Blessedly most of the contract money runs out this year, so I won't be back to lab work, I hope.

Love to everybody. As always, Betty

P.S. How much do I owe somebody for those pictures and tapes?