

Dear Jim,

3/25/80

We were glad to get your 3/20 because of the good news in it. I'd hope you'd find the copy of the annal I sent of some interest but that it found so much use is really great.

There is one phrase that caught my attention. While I am aware of the possibility that a skilled writer could subconsciously use an effective phrase for its effectiveness, I want to be certain that it is not a reflection of what is in your mind. You say that being able to help these widows "enables me to feel that I'm not altogether useless." While I can't visualize a situation in which you could be, it ~~must~~ ought not be any reflection of any kind of evaluation of what you are doing.

If it does and should hold its own rewards and thus has turned out not to be entirely selfish, what you are now doing gets to the most basic ~~concepts~~ of Judeo-Christian concepts of what we are all in this world for. It can't be praised or respected too much, it is that worthwhile.

I think you are very fortunate to have found the opportunity and that it is a blessing for these widows. It works both ways, which again is the way things should be.

You'd mentioned one in particular before but not in any way that enabled me to make any identification of her. I now take it that this woman is the former Treasurer of the U.S.

If you "sort of oscillate from one kitchen to the other" ~~xxx~~ there is also the suggestion of some companionship in this and that also should be very good for both of you.

Particularly because while JFK, like other politicians, appointed his share of dummies, I don't think he would have with a woman and I therefore believe that you may have common intellectual and other interests. Hope so.

Going back to China sounds like a real adventure. Gary Schoener has repeated how impressed he has been after several trips with peers. Bet Elizabeth will reveal in what you'll be able to report. (We are aware of her stamp interest and probably send what she doesn't want to be sure we overlook nothing. I like her standard is it pretty?)

Mike Maio's son by his first marriage is here, likes it but is lonely. Today's chores include drafting a letter Mike will translate into Chinese so the son (yet to be named in our names) can translate it into Chinese for the son to send to the girl friend he wants to marry, inviting her here for a trip. They want it in English so they can send the English version along to be shown to the American consul to get a visa if the passport is granted.

Spring is neigh here, despite nights as low as 20 and regularly below freezing. Two days of high winds wrecked the crocuses, which had been beautiful. Last night Jill told me that a narcissus is beginning to show color, so soon hundreds of them will, all over the place. Reminds me of how much work I have to do to ~~make~~ clean up before the grass grows. (It is greening up.) All the brush not piled for animal nests to be chopped into mulch, all the branches to be made into kindling and much of next winter's firewood to be stacked for drying as well as neatness. I've already made 15 stacks six feet high and have several to go before the ground is hard enough for me to haul more of it up. I've laid in close to half of next winter's heat and hope to get a bit more down and drying. Much of this winter's heat came from wood that was too green and thus ~~wast~~ wasted much of its energy in drying itself enough to burn. I can't keep at these things too long but little by little they do get done. Ed is looking forward to getting flower beds in order, with some fear of the limitations of her arthritis. I've made her several large beds near the house and we are trying to move what we can into them, where they'll be easier to tend. Our best,

March 20, 1980

Dear Harold:

Thanks for yours of the 17th. You're right -- it has been a long time, and I suppose it's a measure of how busy and preoccupied I've been.

I must thank you also for your thought in sending along the 1980 Annals of the social and political science academy with its interesting symposium on the changing American attitude toward death. I read it through, and while the brief treatment of the hospice movement was rather superficial I felt that on the whole the overall subject was dealt with very well. I turned it over to Bill Lamers, the psychiatrist who is medical director of Hospice of Marin, who was delighted to have it. Hereafter through all the abstracts right away during his lunch hour and said he would read the rest of it that night. He said he was very happy to get such a discussion of the subject from this particular perspective. Along with Elisabeth Kubler-Ross and others, Bill is one of the pioneers in the movement toward a broader recognition and understanding of death and its implications both for the dying and for their survivors.

This same area has claimed more of my own attention recently, both with dying patients and those they leave behind. Your last paragraph touches on it, and it's typical of your insight that you sense something which most people do not -- that the best help for a grieving person comes from someone of the opposite sex. Just as women were most helpful to me, so I've found that men somehow find themselves more helpful to women than to other men. I think several factors are at work: first, individual attention of any kind is best, of course. Second, attention from someone of the other sex automatically is more effective -- we are just built to respond that way. Third, the women I've had to do with seem startled and deeply pleased that a man can understand how they feel over the loss of a husband.

Underneath it all is the profound damage done to the ego by the loss of a spouse, and increasingly I find that the reconstruction of the ego is the central problem to be kept in mind.

Again, you are right on the nose: I've been helped more by helping these widows than by anything else, presumably because their response enables me to feel that I'm not altogether useless. All except one have really got themselves together and are dealing with their life as they find it. The exception is neurotic and doesn't really want to be helped, preferring to brood and feel sorry for herself. The most interesting one was Treasurer of the United States under JFK and is the one who has pulled herself from a most devastating loss. She has progressed farther than any of the others, which naturally makes me feel good about myself. It has helped that she likes to eat and is much interested in Chinese food. We sort of oscillate from one kitchen to the other.

Finally, I have decided to go back to China if I'm ever going, and have signed on for a tour next fall conducted by a former ABC radio correspondent I knew in Shanghai in 1949. He stayed on several years. This tour will of course include Peking and Shanghai, and such centers of archeological finds as Sianfu, Loyang, Chengchow and so on. Glad you reminded me of Elizabeth Wronne's interest in archeology. She's a stamp collector too, by the way. One should keep such things in mind.

Best to you both, *[Signature]* jdw