

March 19, 1996

Dear Harold and Lil:

I was feeling a little sorry for myself in my last letter. It is hard to adjust from managing over 1,000 people to working for myself. I don't see how you have done it for all these years. For someone with as little self discipline as I have, it is probably best to work in a more structured environment. But you are right as usual. I do have more independence working for myself. It is just that when your family works for a company for over 55 years, and dad was on the franchise agreement, and I worked there for 16 years, and the employees are closer to you than your own family-not to mention the fact that we have something like \$7million worth of stock in the company- it just pisses me off that I have to screw around in district court for peanuts!

Sometimes I feel like one of these big rock stars who is over the hill and used to play in big arenas, and now plays in small clubs. Although I guess you can always make a comeback. One of my friends used to play with Jimmy Buffett, guitar. Buffett was one of the highest grossing acts a couple years ago, \$20 million plus concert tours. He quit Buffett, started his own concert and record career, but it fizzled. Then he got into songwriting, and cowrote a song that just hit #1 on the country charts for Patty Loveless. So you just never know. I went to a Grateful Dead concert with him a couple years ago, and asked him if it was hard to adjust from playing before 15,000 people to 50. Now Jerry Garcia, the Grateful Dead's guitar player, is dead- heroin and heart attack- and Tim's got a #1 song. So you never know how things are going to work out!

Sorry to see that Lil is going to have a hip replacement. At her age- don't tell her I used that phrase!- it is serious business. However, I know a guy who has had two or three, and they worked out great. I also know another guy, who survived one of the war crimes during I think the Battle of the Bulge-Mamoud massacre or similar, where Nazis shot all the American soldiers but he was on the bottom and lived- anyway, he has had some very successful hip replacements. So they are common, but no fun. She will feel better when she has one. Talk to the hospital about Caretenders or similar such companies that help with elderly outpatients. Not that I would ever call either of you elderly!

It is snowing like crazy here. Dick was going to drive home, but decided not to today. He comes down here every year for the big dog show- we have the biggest in the country- and a refill of frozen food. We cook most of his meals, then freeze them. He reheats them. We were afraid that he would not eat properly, he is an insulin diabetic. Working for ourselves, We have had the flexibility to take care of him. Betsy has more or less saved his life three times. The first, he was very depressed when Betsy's mother died, so Betsy went to Chicago and stayed with him. Taught him to cook, etc. Then he had a slipped disc, and Betsy went up, he and her brother had not been taking his insulin properly, not eaten right, so Betsy got him straightened up. He was in bad shape, older diabetics can get in bad shape quick. And last year, Betsy got him to the hospital which resulted in him getting a bypass. He was ignoring the warning signs. So, no exaggeration, she has saved him 3 times.

So I guess that is pretty good compensation! As for me, I have pretty much eaten lunch with my dad either in the summer or almost every day for 26 years, since I started work in the warehouse at 16. So we still eat lunch every day. I know someday I will look back on days like today, and be happy I spent so much time with him. I tell you, Harold, we sold the hell out of tractors and parts! I mean like several Billion dollars worth! I know how much a Billion is, I have put several million dollars worth of tractor parts in boxes personally! The company sold, depending on how you count it, between 5% and 10% of Caterpillar's North American sales. But our proudest moment was surviving the 1982 Reagan recession. I am amazed at how many auto dealers and tractor dealers forget that one. It was a ball buster. Our volume dropped \$100 million.

You know, John Sherman Cooper was one of our customers! His brother Dick and John owned Somerset Stone. Sold them a lot of rock crushers. And loaders.

It is snowing like hell! Maybe I can go home early, if the boss wasn't such a SOB!

Larry is getting better, but slowly. I'm going to try to get up there sometime this spring, but I don't know when. We are going to Chicago last weekend in March, Betsy's cousin is going to get married and it will be one of those social events of the year. One of the few times Betsy gets to see much of her family. I may go to Talladega- the racetrack, not the prison!- last weekend in April, since dad has tickets and I don't think Larry can go. I have to achieve a delicate balance between all my family obligations, and what I really want to do, which is come to Frederick. I never thought I would see the day when I would rather hang out with a 82 year old historian than go to a stock car race! Guess I have achieved middle age.

Plus, we have to see how Lil comes through surgery. I do not want in any way to disturb you two. Like the Pittsburgh article, you have written 10 books so far! So I'll just play it by ear. Southwest has cheap air fare to Baltimore, and that worked out great last year. Betsy thinks I am an idiot after some of our 50¢ tours of DC. The Baltimore airport is one of the most convenient I have ever been to. I only got lost once! Sheer terror seems to be the dominant emotion when I am let loose in the ocean with a 15 foot boat, 15 gallons of gas and a case of beer. Oh yea, of little faith!

I enclose some articles about the "black" projects, SR71, B1 and B2, F117. I saw a CBS bit on the U2, they have refitted it with modern engines and still fly it. It is so hard to fly, 10 knots too slow and it stalls. 10 knots too fast, and the wings tear off.

Area 51 is the Nevada dry lake bed where they fly the Aurora, and the other black projects. They have violated every EPA reg in the books, open burning of exotic materials, dioxin, etc. A lawyer is suing the Feds, FOIA, etc. Two dead clients, poison from all this. The Fed court dismissed his suits, "National Security". Our across the river Rep. Lee Hamilton, says the National Security argument is BS. On appeal.

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Ate lunch at Hooter's. Larry better, but still can't walk. Dick drove back to Chicago in blizzard. Tried to get him to stay another day.

Wonder if Pitt paper will print review? Who knows? I think it is a shame that it is so damn difficult to get your books reviewed. First it takes me 10 years to get one. Then, I get them for free!

I know it sounds egotistical, but I am going to rewrite my article about you and try to get it into Rolling Stone. They are pretty good about freelance articles. Plus, it is one of the few mags where I can use the word Bullshit, which seems appropriate to the subject. Think I'll try to hook it around the Nixon and JFK movies, plus the documentaries. At the speed I write, it should be ready for November 22.

Rolling Stone does a good job with conservation articles, plus ones exposing the intellectual bankruptcy of the right wing. William Greider has done a number of articles in there. Time to get to the typewriter!

Well, I better get this in the mail. Hope Lil is feeling OK, and tax season is not driving her crazy.

Bill

PS B2 article next time when I find it. But we did make the Harvard Business Review. Cat CEO Don Fites cites our efforts to fix D9L. One of the first computer designed tractors, it had too small water pump, and too small tracks. Dad told them how to redesign it. So our company got a kudo. Dad was pretty happy about it! Recognition 15 years later!