

5 January 1972

Dear Lil and Harold:

Jenifer is not yet through rummaging for some stuff she is looking up for HW, so I'll get to tell you how magnificently the blanket went over. It is something she wanted to do, but the job she undertook has taken more time than she expected, and she has deputized me to perform this plesaan task.

It arrived at a time when both we and the Mas were locked into holiday season schedules, complicated by such momentous events as Gilbert's mother getting married (his father died several years ago, and she is now happily married to a cousin of the father,) Gil himself about to take off to Seattle, and Lilly on the dizzy edge of making a trip to Southern California with her sister and both their kids, or rather the kids of both of them, I should say.

We were determined to have some first-hand part in the handing over of the blanket, for reporting purposes if nothing else. Somehow, we managed to arrange to meet Gil and Lilly in Berkeley one evening, the occasion being Chinese dinner at a good Northern restaurant, with Gil's principal teacher also on hand. He is a Father Serruys, a Belgian monk of a small order called Scheut which used to send missionaries to China. Father Serruys turned out to have been in North China during much of the same time I was there, and we had many mutual acquaintances, including one man, Pere Oscar Conard, with whom Jenifer and I stayed in 1934 on our honeymoon in Jehol province (we chartered a junk and floated down the Luan river 150 miles to the sea; it was manned by naked boatmen who were a delightful crew and who learned to play Old Maid without being able to read; we almost got held up by bandits and did get held up 10 days by floods near where the river flows through the Great Wall). Anyway, Father Serruys turned out to be a gay and delightful character, the kind who, when we had all eaten far too much, said, "Now we have reached the stage where we all just pick idly at our food." But no one really stopped eating, and no one really wanted to leave. I should have said that Lilly had been unable to come, having to stay with young Jimmy who had come down with a cold. We were much disappointed at this, of course, because for one thing she is such a delightful person, so typically Chinese and yet so delightfully American with her San Francisco upbringing, and also because we wanted a real womanly reaction to the blanket, not ~~the~~ just the reception of a mere male like Gil.

Anyway, it was in this crowded restaurant, with waiters flitting past with enormous trays of food, sort of threading their way by us, that we broke out the blanket literally in the midst of a mob of people very busy feeding themselves. Gil's response was as anticipated: he was enormously impressed with the Ma. Kept feeling the blanket and remarking how well-formed the character was. He stuffed it back into the bag with some reluctance as we left.

As I recall it, Lilly by that time was already on the dizzy edge of leaving for AA with her sister, but called up as soon as she was able. She loves the colors because they are muted and subtle. She too noticed the Ma first, but Gil told her, "Keep looking, there's more." She then discovered the Jenifer at the top, admired that and how it didn't leap out at the viewer, and again Gil had to tell her to keep on looking.

At this point she found the date at the bottom, and a feeling that this was the only blanket in the world of its kind and that it was made for their little girl had its effect. She loves it, and wouldn't change anything about it. It's so warm and cozy, and the little girl is warm and happy under it.

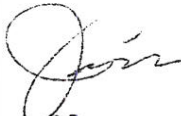
HOWEVER, young Jimmy learned about it, and despite being only 2 1/2, developed a vested interest in it and must have it whenever Jenifer isn't using it. He now has a routine of getting up in the morning, going to the play room and throwing himself on a couch and ordering "Cocoa." When Cocoa is brought, he consumes it, then lies down and issues the next order: "Cover." And it had better be Jenifer's new blanket, or a situation develops. By this time Jenifer has been awakened by the shouted orders, so she doesn't mind, and between them the blanket is in use in one way or another for almost 24 hours a day.

It is clear that nothing could have pleased the whole family more, and we were so delighted with its success that we just had to do something to show how much we appreciated everything about it. So we resorted to those mysterious caches of things that Big Jenifer keeps against just such emergencies, and made up the little package that we sent Lil. We hope the pants fit this time or can be altered, but if they don't they can be exchanged for the next smaller size. Lili has none larger. So we have reached one end of the line. That was the only thing we didn't already have, and as a matter of fact had gone into town the day or so before to pick up the pants, so even they were here when we were moved to DO something. While we were about it, we ~~included~~ included a couple of sensor-equipped tapes for Him who inspired this whole affair so He wouldn't be left out entirely. They will make his TC-40 squeal when they run out at the end.

Anyway, we thought you'd like to know just what happened at this end of the line in spite of great and seemingly insurmountable difficulties, how everything turned out wonderfully, raising the general level of West Coast consciousness of the enormous import of cottage industry on the East Coast, particularly in Maryland.

If we possibly can, we shall see the Mas at least once more before they move back to Seattle, and shall take color pictures of Miss Ma in her blanket. In the meantime, everyone concerned is scratching about for words to tell you both how very much it is appreciated.

Sincerely,



jdw