

15 April 1976

Dear Harold:

Thanks for your notes of April 8 et seq, all mailed on the 12th.

I'm happy to report that Jenifer continues to make a very rapid recovery, is feeling fine, and in better spirits than ever. Yesterday, only a week after this long and complicated operation, she went on a full normal diet, had her stitches removed, and took her first walk down the hall. When her surgeon visited her this morning, she asked him if he was sure she was making a normal recovery. No, he said. She was making a far better than normal recovery. He's a conservative, however, and says he'll probably keep her in the hospital another week to make sure everything is all right and to help her get back on her feet and train herself in the finer points of managing a colostomy. Hers, by the way, is a sigmoid, on the commonest and most easily cared-for type. She lost about a foot of the aft section of her alimentary canal. The surgeon says he's as sure as he can be about anything that the cancer had not spread beyond that small dollar-sized spot in her rectum.

She should be fully on her feet by the time she comes home, so there should be no need for your thoughtful suggestion of the hospital bed table. There is every indication that she will be able to live an entirely normal life. The hospital is already training her how to use the rather large variety of equipment available to take care of a colostomy, and aside from avoiding lifting heavy weights no restrictions whatever are in prospect once everything heals up well and the proper irrigation procedures established. Diet changes are not necessary or likely..

After the surgeon saw her this morning, our GP, Rod Hartman, also showed up as he has been doing almost daily. Jenifer told him he could see she was doing all right and that there was no need for him to drag himself up to San Rafael from Mill Valley for her sake, or to take time to see her even if he had other patients in the hospital.

"Damn it," he said. "Look, I come to see you first every morning just to get myself cheered up so I can go on and see some of these other characters I'm looking after."

In her quiet way, Jenifer is something of a sensation in the hospital because of her positive attitude and cheerful cooperation. Nurses drop in from other wards just to view this uncomplaining and willing person who usually manages to hit them with a delayed-action joke of some kind. Her favorite of all is Ella, a very jolly ~~black~~ black from Richmond who does the nurse's aide bit, changing dressings, bathing her and generally doing all the little things that make such a difference. Today Ella was squatting by the bed, preparing to empty the plastic bag which collects the product of the bladder catheter that is still operating. Jenifer remarked that Ella was in exactly the right position to go into production on her own. Ella got it right away, went into a gale of laughter, and ended by saying, "You know, Honey, I think you're right. I guess I'd better."

The San Francisco strike has had no effect on us, by the way. About all I do is keep the house running, feed myself when I'm not eating at the hospital with Jenifer, and try to keep up with the clipping and filing chores. Jenifer is even giving the NY Times a severe once over before I do the clipping.

Thanks, but we won't need copies of the Schorr piece in Rolling Stone nor the Gary Arnold or Galbraith reviews of The Final Days. We've been trying all along to reduce our load, particularly the load Jenifer has been carrying, and now are determined to continue reducing it in all ways possible.

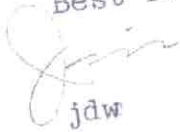
The Post has continued coming through March 30, and they may finally have decided to cut it off as of two weeks after it was supposed to stop on March 14. We hope so. There is very little in it these days that seems worth clipping.

Black Perspective is shown here on KQED (or at least it was) usually on Sunday. I'll try to catch the one this week with Kelley and your friend Payne. Thanks for letting me know.

In this last mailing you sprang two new names on us, Rod and Mike. Don't place them. If we need to know, do fill us in.

Knocking this off, aware that tonight ends Lil's trials for a spell. Hope you both can take it easy for a change.

Best from us both,



jdw