

7 May 1978

Dear Lil and Harold:

You haven't heard from me before this because I can't read my own handwriting, much less expect anyone else to, and was too stupid to take a typewriter along. Anyway, I have been itching all the way to tell you how wonderful it was to meet Lil and get to know you both better, quite apart from the unstinting hospitality with which you made my stay with you so memorable. The landmarks you mention in your letters now mean something concrete rather than what I've imagined them to be.

By the time I reached you I had misplaced (I thought I had somehow lost them) a little album of photographs of Jenifer which I'd intended to show Lil. I found them only after I got back on the 3rd, and now will have a few color prints made up to give some idea to Lil of her appearance. Although I'm sure you'll agree with me that no photograph ever did her justice. As our old friend Mac Fisher put it, "Jenifer's beauty came from within, just Jenifer shining through." I'm still deeply moved by Lil's perception that she's still with me.

This was a most wonderful trip, all along the line. The Rabbit accumulated nearly 8,500 miles on the odometer, and every one was enjoyed. Special displays of snow and greenery in the northern deserts of Wyoming, Utah and Nevada, unbelievable shows of flowers and green mountains in Arizona. Much of the country I had passed through before, sometimes more than once. All is new and different. The country is much changed, with perhaps the most spectacular improvement being the liberation of rural people by good roads, electrification, and machine farming. The women are well groomed and sophisticated now. The men have lost the worried, haggard look they wore in my growing up days.

Your mailing of May 1 got here a couple of days ago, telling of the Wrones' reaction to my visit. It was mutual, I can assure you. Never have I experienced such instant and continuous rapport with two such delightful adults, nor have I ever been so taken with two such remarkable children, both so full of grace and beauty. If I seemed tired to Elaine it was simply that my voice gave out from the bubbling conversation that crackled among us from the minute we introduced ourselves. Not just the taping sessions -- it went on ALL the time, with both of them firing penetrating questions that brought out whatever perspective I might be able to contribute. One way to sum it up is to say that this is the first time I've ever entered a home as a complete stranger and been made to feel as I left that I'd been a lifelong friend who merely had been away a bit longer than usual.

I did meet DeLloyd Guth and his wife and was much impressed. He sat in on the taping sessions and asked some of the questions -- good ones -- himself. He is cultured, thorough, and I was impressed with the little I saw he is doing in assembling a bibliography as a beginning. He also is honest and candid. Dave probably has told you that he seems to have a good chance of getting a teaching job at the University of Tennessee -- he'd just returned from an interview session at Knoxville when I was there -- but I have no doubt that the beginning he is making at Stevens Point will set patterns and standards if indeed he does move on. His wife is a charmer, lovely and bright. I don't need to tell either of you what a smasher Elaine is, as keen as she is lovely.

There are many letters like this to be written, so I must move on. Thanks again for all you've done, not the least of which is providing Jenifer and me with the Stevens Point connection.