

16 June 1977

Dear Harold:

This will be a poor attempt to bring you up to date, as briefly as possible.

After six weeks of radiation treatment, Jenifer came home from the hospital on May 18. I had been spending from 8 to 12 hours daily at the hospital with her, and after she came home my preoccupation naturally became even heavier.

She no doubt responded considerably to radiation, but the gist of it seems to be that her metastases had too many head starts to be headed off so easily. She was scarcely able to walk at all by this time, but still could make her way from bed to commode or wheelchair and back at that time.

Since coming home her condition has improved in some ways, but not enough, and in general she is less able to move about and subject to more pain than before. This despite the heroic efforts of the Hospice people (see enclosed brochure) who come nearly every day to monitor her condition and make helpful suggestions and supply needed gadgets for her comfort. They also are working very hard to control her pain level, but thus far haven't caught up with it.

She now needs help in moving from one vital spot to another, and today for the first time wasn't able to use her arms to put up her hair.


What with keeping the house going, cooking and taking care of her needs around the clock, you will understand how I simply could not write and could not even open your own mail to sort out its contents and note anything addressed to us.

I didn't get around to that until last Saturday, when it became apparent that you were planning on coming to see us. I'll have to be blunt: this is out of the question, as I'm sure you'll understand. She has seen no one since returning home (didn't even see anyone in the hospital) largely because her chest is affected and she talks only with difficulty and in a very low voice. Consequently she cannot face the prospect of even brief conversations with anyone else besides myself and the nurses who attend her.

I called Lil as soon as I realized you might be headed this way. She understands the situation and I hope can make it clear to you without hurting your feelings. We would love to see you, but Jenifer feels she can face no one who is not absolutely necessary for her to see, and I feel her wishes are paramount.

I also called Art Kevin at KMPC, who said you had turned back from Dallas in order to appear on the Good Morning America show (we saw it; you look fine, we were happy to note, and acquitted yourself flawlessly). Art said your trip to the coast has been postponed, so I hope this will make it clear that you should not come to see us. I can't get away even to meet you at the airport or anywhere else. We have a woman who comes in two or three times a week to do small things for Jenifer while I do the necessary shopping and errand-running, but otherwise I cannot leave her alone because she is, basically, helpless.

All this sounds very grim. It isn't. Jenifer knows her situation and deals with it as you would expect. We have used these four weeks here to resolve many questions, sort out many things, and get even closer to each other. Whatever happens, we are together. This is what is important.

Best,  jdw