

20 June 1978

Dear Harold and Lil:

Your mailing of the 17th just came in, and I've been meaning for several days to send you the enclosed snap shots.

The "portrait" was taken long ago in Washington, but Jenifer's appearance never changed much -- no wrinkles, and the grey streaks in her hair merely made her look more distinguished.

The shot of her traversing a dune at White Sands National Monument in New Mexico was taken perhaps 10 years ago when she was in her fifties. She had succumbed to the magic of that place, where kids go wild and adults are not far behind. Car after car would drive up with families hot, tired, dusty, hungry, cross and quarrelling. Then screams of excitement as the kids discovered the fluffy white gypsum sand and their parents found themselves running and leaping about with the kids.

The shot with young Jimmy Mattos and his mother, Lilly, was taken in Sunnyvale six years ago when she was 59. Except for more grey in her hair, she looked exactly the same as long as she lived.

She was camera shy and hard to photograph, and these three shots come as close to bringing her to you as any I have.

The Mas were here just the other day. Gil had been to the Far East to inspect his listening posts, and Lilly and the kids joined him here to visit their families, including me. One day I took them all out to my sister's ranch between Napa and Sonoma, and the kids not only SAW real live peacocks, they collected enough tail feathers to supply all of Falls Church. They also saw a new-born calf, personally met and fed three horses, and even saw one of those silly nests the kildeer establishes on bare rock with a few pebbles around four speckled eggs. After these adventures, we all drove up through the ranch, which occupies a grassy valley between forested ridges, and as we negotiated the bumpy old bulldozer track in the Rabbit young Jenifer asked my sister candidly, "How," she wanted to know, "do we get out of this mess.?" I thought Cille would burst, trying not to laugh. She said later that night that her husband, D.E. Alexander who is the strong silent Western type and a past president of the National Cattlemen's Association, kept saying over and over, "I don't know when I've seen such a cute little girl." They both were much taken with both children, as Jimmy is now eight and handsome in the same clean-cut way his sister is.

The next dayx the whole family came here along with Pat Senter, a woman who used to know Gil when he was first coming round at 12 or 13, and who hadn't seen him since. She was just as charming as Cille and her husband had been by the whole family. We had Mongolian barbecue out on the deck for lunch and everybody was very well stuffed before it was all over.

I've been doing some work on the files, and hope to get them cleaned up and off to Stevens Point within a few weeks. Light at the end of the tunnel and all that sort of thing. In the meantime I've been doing more volunteer work for Hospice, as required, and even was used recently along with another survivor to tell the annual board of directors meetings "what Hospice meant to us." I had myself fairly well organized, stuck to understatement, and it apparently went well. "There wasn't a dry eye in the house," one Hospice friend said afterward.



She certainly was exaggerating, because there were Bank of America and other solid types there along with the nurses, doctors and friends of Hospice. On the other hand, a motherly visitor from Santa Rosa, a nurse who is forming her own Hospice group, ran me down afterward and accused me of ruining her makeup.

And last night five other family survivors and I spent the evening with a seminar Hospice of Marin is conducting this week for learners from Jacksonville to Seattle. They did the same thing for a seminar last January but we all were too new to say much. But last night we had five people opening up and telling many of the little things and ways in which Hospice helped not only the patients but their families. The two dozen visitors kept us for an hour afterward asking questions. Among them was a doctor, an oncologist who is medical director of a new Hospice being set up in San Diego. She asked me to come down and tell our story to her crew in a few weeks. I've got to the point now where this is not as traumatic as it once was, so I'm looking forward to it.

You were kind enough to ask about the cat whose illness was telephoned while I was with you. Unfortunately he turned out to have aplastic anemia, with his blood producing neither red nor white cells, and I think it was from Kennett Square that I had to tell the vet to put him to sleep as there's no known cure for this in cats. He was the one Jenifer had taught to ring a bell to get in and out of the french window to the deck from the dining area, so he's sorely missed. However, I still have Sootyfoot, who really was Jenifer's favorite and who is a very independent and self-contained cat. If one has to survive alone, he's much better equipped than Pokey was. Pokey was unusually dependent for a cat, and would have suffered loneliness. Sooty patrols the premises, brings in enough game to keep us both fed, and gets very talkative around mealtime. He's very handsome, silvery with grey stripes and probably part Siamese. We got him 10 years ago from Mrs. Weiss, the Meow Meadows lady, while he still was a kitten. She said someone had dumped him near her place and that she had wakened up one night in her sleeping bag on her lawn to find him nestled under her chin. We brought him home, and the first thing he did was to go out and come in with an enormous rat that I'll swear was bigger than he was.

I have a beautiful letter from Elaine Wrone to answer, as well as some stamps I had Gil pick up in Asia for the two Wrone children, so I shall have to knock this off for now. Good to hear from you, and I still remember with pleasure the visit with you both.

Best,

  
jdw