

Thurs. June]2, 1980
Tracy Jr.

Dear Family;

Well, Western Widget Co. finally bit the dust about the end of January. My mail sales results were good enough to provide an adequate return, provided I could scale up my operation about ten-fold (in terms of mailing-- my process could easily have handled that), but when I worked out the detailed plan, it meant going about \$20,000 farther out on a limb that was already swaying precariously, and I chickened out. Fortunately, Duane Horton wanted my skills at Mega, so I have a job. Even with David purchasing my Mega stock at a rate sufficient to meet the interest on my largest note, things have been extremely tight for us since I joined Mega February 6, but I hope that within a year we will be able to begin to climb back out of debt and be out within three to five years. At least we've been able to keep our house.

My assignment at Mega has been to help out with characterizing (analyzing) our sintered product and trying to improve it--it's the area where the potential profits are highest, but one that just seems to defy our efforts to really control. I've learned some surprising things already about it, which may help us to improve it, and I have some ideas I hope to try in the next few months which I hope will make our sintered diamond more competitive with GE's (theirs is, unfortunately, harder or more wear-resistant than ours).

We recently enjoyed the first reunion of Betsy's Father's brothers and sister in more than a decade up in Midway, at the home of David Huntington. The next day, Betsy's mother suffered a recurrence of a heart ailment which sent her to the hospital, where she suffered two more bouts until they were able to bring it under control with a new drug. She was released this last Sunday to go home to Tacoma and is scheduled for heart surgery next Tuesday. Geoffrey, Betsy's brother who has been staying with us since his return from his mission to Guatemala, returned with them to help Dad Huntington drive straight through. On their trip down, they drove through Yakima, a town 80 miles from Mt. St. Helens which was showered with ashes after its first massive eruption. They brought us a sample of the ash which was piled everywhere around the city, and I examined it under the microscope. It was fairly coarse, like coarse sand, and fairly uniform in size, with white, green, black, and a few red crystals. It was mostly crystalline, although without very well-formed facets, but not rounded or glassy in appearance, indicating that it was probably fragments of a material that had been previously crystallized, rather than a molten material than had been blasted into droplets. But can you imagine the kind of force that must have been necessary to throw a ^{very} coarse sand eighty miles? I can only conclude that it must have been blasted high into or even above the atmosphere and followed a ballistic trajectory for part of its journey.

This spring has been so wet and cold that many of my seeds rotted in the ground, and I'm having to replant the garden. The last two days have been hot again. Why can't we ever just have a cool, temperate, sunny spring around here?

It was good to read all your letters and learn about the many home and self-improvement projects underway in the family. Keep them all up. Looking forward to seeing you all again soon.

Tracy Jr.