

JAPAN 3 March 1986

Dear family,

I started this letter on the 18th of February 1984 and have now found it, so here is the latest. Well, the day after tomorrow is President's Day in the United States. It so happens that this is also Mom's birthday (February 20th).

She often jokes that all the important people are born in February. But it's no joke. At least in the case of George, Abe, Ida-Rose, and David whose birthday is on the 15th. We are seeing a lot of the Japan Olympics now. I've been wondering if George still holds the record for the Potomac Coin Toss? I bet he does, and I will also wager that Abe has not been surpassed in the Rail Split. I know for a fact that Ida-Rose now holds the record in the Child Call, although, Donna Hill, who is often standing out on the sidewalk in her bare feet, is a very close second in the above category.

Take for example that great lady, Ida-Rose. She long ago won the Gold in making a happy life for me. Only yesterday I was thinking happy thoughts all day long as I kind of reminisced on our adventures together.

We are grateful to our children for letting us escape once in a while to go on a genealogical trip or some other function.

Falling leaves now blanketed the way, softening our steps and making it slippery at times. Soaring effortlessly and seemingly uninfluenced by the high winds aloft were large, black Japanese birds. Along the trail were strewn black moss covered volcanic rocks. The smaller flora contained a kind of large-leaved holly and a similar variety with bright red berries. We went without raincoats and constantly wondered if we would be soaked with a sudden downpour. Also we often wondered if we should turn back but something moved us onward.

Suddenly, the Fujiya View Stand appeared and checking the time showed that we had reached our destination in 35 minutes. The marker at the bottom of the trail indicated that it would take 40. At Fujiya the altitude above sea level was 1300 feet. At the bottom of the trail it was 2000 feet. We did not see Mt. Fuji. It was hidden by the clouds.

Ida-Rose and I knelt in this idyllic setting and had our morning prayer. With the shifting pattern of the fast moving clouds, we thought that Fuji might come to view so we waited at this spot for 30 minutes. Fuji continued to be hidden. Now that we were not hiking, we began to chill so we tied a handkerchief around our heads and tightened up our clothing around our necks. At the end of our wait we started down the mountain. About halfway down the mountain that was ours was ours no more for we met three young men coming up the trail.

Muscles not used in everyday activity began to ache. The descent required the same time as the ascent—35 minutes.

As we crossed the electric railway tracks near our hotel and returned to civilization, we realized that this had been one of the most delightful experiences of our lives.

Well, we have had some other beautiful times like the first time that we saw the incomparable blue, clean, beauty of the Indian Ocean and its miles of virgin white sand beaches near Port Elizabeth. We had parked our car there on the beach. Not another person was to be seen so we got out of the car and put our shoes and stockings on the back seat. Then we hiked up our clothes as best we could to prevent them from getting wet. I rolled up

my pant legs and Ida-Rose tied up her dress. Then we ran through the surf and splashed and played for an hour like a couple of kids.

As an aside, I need to tell you something about our automobile. It was a two door yellow Toyota sedan that had a four-cylinder engine. When we were on our mission in Africa we had to buy our own vehicle and also had to wait three months to obtain this automobile. It cost something over ten thousand dollars. As an additional aside, the steering wheel is on the right side of the car. In this situation, you drive on the left side of the road. The same is true in some other such countries including England and Japan. Now, we had to learn to drive this way but we both mastered the art of “driving on the wrong side of the road.” God’s earth is wonderful and we are certainly privileged to be here!