Lorna Livesley Chambreau

letters from Lorna in California to family in Washington 1949

Loosie –

I was going to try to finish Ida's letters & send 'em back with the Tide, but can't do it. Do you want them in a hurry? Shall I send them later or keep them till you come down? Hmm!

Enjoy them so much – more than a good novel! Think you are wonderful to type them off. Hope I inherit them someday. I weep over them like an old fool ——

How come you didn't walk till 21 months? What did she mean "Doc says your poor little legs are all right now?"

What were you doing in a barroom at the tender age of 4 abouts?

Poor Ida had a heck of a time, didn't she? I don't think she was "putting on" for anyone in her letters. I think, like

me, that she merely unburdened herself to her own family & then was such a good sport to her husband that he never suspected she was so ill that last year or so.

She obvoiusley had a bad kidney ailment or some serious infection long before her death. Those Sherwoods don't impress me as a very healthy bunch — all seemed to have kidney trouble —

Well — I must hop off —

March 3
1949

Friday

Dear Ruth,

Happy birthday. Will br glad when I getto your age and am as wise and nice and good looking as you.

I had my mind all made up to write you a nice birthday letter and tell you all those unspoken things that are too embarrassing to tell to your face. But do you think I have a moment free of screams and yells and fights and heckling so that I can get it done and get it off in time for your birthday? You're right. No. My daily hours are too filled with petty necessitties to think about the mails and when they arrive in San Francisco and whether you will be there or in Monterey etc.

Anyway I'll say it in the haste I didn't intend and get it off anyway...

You're the nicest mama I ever had and I hope you will continue to be my mama for quite some time just as I have to be a mama for these two things hanging over the typewriter right now. And if it weren't for you and all the troubles you went through I wouldn't have them here now --little pests !--but I wouldn't be without them !

Even though we're all grown up and it makes you feel sort of lonely and sad when you visit us and realize how wrapped up in our own lives we are, we still need you, Ruthie--all your unusual understanding and insight; your humor and tolerance; your help and your non-meddling, AND your packages ! AND your letters ! And because we're adult now and see you as a person doesn't mean that, in spite of the criticisms, we think you're any less of a fine person. In fact, in most ways we can appreciate you more. I'm speaking for the other kids, too, cause I've talked to them and I know how they feel and I seem to be the sentimental spokesman for the family.

Also I speak for Clyde--if I may?--because he isn't very apt at saying things he feels. I'm sure he thinks you're about the best wife he could have found even though he never tells you. And if he snorts and says, "Where in the hell do you get the idea I don't like you?"--that proves it!

So slip--slop--slurp---icky gooshy ! I'm still not enough of a Harkenss to go onin this vein much longer even though I feel it--so Happy birthday again even though I haven't any package to send !

Here comes the kids again---I fly !

MUCH love,

eldest

Glad you missed us in Los Robles. Miss you more + more as I sober up.

Please return

April 1949

Wednesday

Dear maw'n'sofortn,

Well, first I will report I got the girdle. Didn't feel I'd use one ten dollars worth, so fudged and got a $6 one and will use the rest on some shoes I want...Ok. Now when I can't get into it I'll KNOW I'm too fat even if the scales break. Itwill be nice to know that my stockings and stomach will stay up....My stomach has gone down already since I started dieting I think You'll be glad to know....

Then I want to report next on how very, very much I like Julie's dress outfit. W hat an excellent idea--both for themto make them that way and for you to buy us one ! You old honey--youknow I like things that don'thave to be ironed, don'tyou? Thank gawd it wasn't yellow. That's all she has and Henry sent her another one. As I told Tiny, who made her the cee-yootest dress, Ed and I are getting a little fed up with the sleazy, frumpy styles Max and Henry pick out. They're always so impractical.

I have been wondering if "Sally Mandy" is something out of your past? She looks quite old-fashioned (not that YOU do, of course !) but the stories are cute. Did you perchance love Sally Mandy once?

The towel I have been expecting as I have "heard" you and Bis talking about them in her letters to you when you were here. (Were you EVER?) That'sreally something, isn't it? As you say--what will the think if ne next? Ed says it's too cute to use, but we do. The pantswere much ap reciated as she was getting pretty low and shabby. Seeing that her doll was the only toy the poor child got I tried to steer Max into buying her a toy, but it was too plain thatMax enjoys buying only fancy little girl clothes so I had to succumb and talk her into a cute bathing suit.

We had a family party Monday. Then Tuesday we went up to see Max's trousseau, which must have set Henry back a pretty penny. And this afternoon I let her have a tea party for the kids.

Easter was a mess of eggs, eggs, eggs. I was so g---d---sick of eggs by Sunday night that I actually felt ill looking at them. Candy eggs, egg eggs, chocolate eggs etc. Your cards with their own ice cream money were mostrefreshing.

That "thing" you sent away for sounds wonderful. Thanks to you I should be able to get through the summer in decent, not ragged nudeness.

I TOLD you we painted the kids room (the big bedroom) yellow and the floor orangish, so It looks very gay and sunny. Made minor improvements too you know how.--tie backs, pictures, etc.

Funny that Fiscus thing reverberated way up there. They've found countless wells now and boarded up every open hole but the ones in people's faces now.....I'm TRYING to keep up the feud with the young Harkies because it'sso lovely and peaceful, but it'shard as nobody really feels mad any more....Edward has decided not to like John, which makes things a little difficult.....

It just makes me SICK that Edward's the way he is (what would you say--an "artistic snob"and uncooperative) because that Art Center set up of yours is the ideal place for him. But I know he'd only rebel in Yakima--just for the sake of showing off if nothing more....

As I told Sis I'm going to heckle you till you contribute--at least one lone theater seat for $5 marked "in memoriam to L.A.L.'s art career".

And speaking of which I enclose the en closed, which I think contains ~~/0/~~ tooo much truth to be funny. It has taken me all these years to really give up that art career I and everybody else whipped up for me and it is only now thatI'm beginning to be "happy". Girls should never be taught to harbor dreamsof a career--it's agin' human nature--I think now. Think we're raising a race of neurotic mothers AND children. Well, well I don't suppos you know what I'm talking about and I can hea hear Clyde spluttering.....

Well again...my mind is drooping....I am sticking to the diet...laid off for Julies's birthday tno. ThoughtMike would feel hurt if I didn't eat any of the cake he made for her.I (Good excuse !) I took and awful spill Saturdaynight with a loaded tray containing also an 83 cent can of salmon (in a bowl) Scared the kids to death and broke half of my new dishes. Edward thought it was very funny. I was just saying --in my sweet way,,,"I don'tknow who wants to eat so I'll just set this onthe table---" and WHOOPS ! I slid in some stuff Denny spilled. Fell down the back stairs the day before. Anyway, I always think a diet is too much of a good thing when I start getting a little dizzy and pull things like that so I lay off for a while. I have too many necessary jobs to dahs around on to seriously diet...More good excuses !

Well, I AM droopy after that lil speech ,so I'll bid you adieu for now...

much love, How's pop?

norn

Send back

May 11--Wednesday

DeaR Ruth, et al....

You'll love this new ribbon, betcha. Mrs. Thomas bought it for me for doing some typing for her. Will you do my dishes for me while I write you a letter? Thank you--I'm sure the intentions were good anyway.

Your nice, fat letter today to let me use the new plastic letter opener that Mike made me for Mothers' Day. Speaking of which, please excuse. I did think about it, but didn't get organized in time as usual. It always irks me a little--I don't want to be part of the great insincere gush they make over it. We did think of calling you, but seems Ed had to play a show Sunday and Mike had one of his worser spells and it just slipped by----but (I do love you !)(secret)

No one did anything for me either for which I was secretly thankful. Mike gave me my present yesterday. I remember last year they made so much fuss about it I got to expecting too much and was disappointed--I thought perhaps they were all going to do my work for me and they didn't at all. With Ed gone, though, I had quite a peaceful day. Oh, how it irks fathers to have you say that !

That night, though I didn't get a wink of sleep Mike carried on so. Yes, he's at it again, and We're all so frustrated and baffled that I don't even like to mention it. I was most miserable about him that night and the next day. However it was Ed's day off and he took the littla ones to the park and let me rest--wann't that nice--and after what I just said about him, too !

Yesterday I worked all day finishing up odds and ends of my "redecorating". Made a muslin slip cover for the red chair and it looks good ! First one Iever did. As usual when one gets startd on something like that my ideas and plans are more than I can carry out, but think we've made a lot of improvement.

I really havn't time to do so much as you and Sis wonder--will be glad when it's over now. However I have no social life, y'know. I betcha if you and Sis spent all but nine hours a week (for shopping) at home like I do------

Havn't seen much of Max since her leap. She is really GONE. I always knew marriage was her forte. She is just about the happiest little bride I ever saw and John is getting fat already. I think it's a CRIME she can't have a place of her own to fix--she would love it more than anyone I've ever known. Those GD Harkness kids will never budge from there. Max and John, the gardeners and domestics, will be the one forced into a dingy apartment.

Yes, we thoughtit queer of Henry not to come. But you can always count on her to do the queer thing. Max was hurt about it, too. I can't figure out her attitude about Max--something funny. ~~could be that~~ They say these over-possessive mothers (which H. certainly is) can't stand to see their kids leave them. Would that be why she fled when Robert got married, didn't come to Max's wedding, and was so "sweet" abouthaving her oldest son and all his family live with her so much?

One more cat before I turn to other matters--Bebe and her husband are in town. She called Max and told us all to assemble Monday and feed them dinner. So guess we'll have to.

Well, what else do I know about us? Julie is such a big, helpful, independent FOUR year old as she never lets you forget. She went to Sunday school with the littel neighbor girl last Sunday and loved it. She said they were all supposed to wear their buttons next week, "so would I please sew a button on her dress?" She is VERY fond of her doll and shows cinsistent domestic tendencies (isn't that a lot for a litle girl to show?) I didn't know she had. She needs more playmates and places to go, but don't know what I can do about that.

Dennis is still ornery (third child?) Poor guy--everyone fusses over Julie and Mike and takes them on expeditions etc. but no one wants him. He doesn't seem to have the aptitude with his hands that Julie and Dennis have always shown, but he sure can build towers and jump and throw--as you know. Turned around the other day at the store and he had built a tower of the toilet paper. His artistic parents don't quite understand his energetic approach to life !

Mike has stopped his music lessons after a month of threatening, cajoling etc and no results. He seemed to want to and I always remember that I used to think I'd never force achild of mine to practice till all pleasure in music was gone. He plays more now than when he was taking. He is getting very independent of us--that's good isn't it? Took a bicycle trip to Griffith park with the kids Saturday and came home exhausted, sunburned and happy and totaling unaware of the mental agonies his mother suffered while he was gone.

Edward is buidling up his daytime job more and more since they moved into their new studio. Mr. Da Pron asked to see his scrapbook of clipping and then gave him a dramatics class--and I think he's flattered and interested. How do you like that--Edward teaching acting to the Hollywoodites?

We had a three day hot spell tho. Seemed good at first, especi lly as I wore my new green dress and got many, many compliments. Buut by the t ird day we were all pretty crabby.

Taht was nice of yo to send Max something. Sounds cute.

You meanies ! Won't anybody tell me where Millbrae is? I suspect it's down the penisula--on the inside , but Ed says across the Golden Gate. I think Tiny's house looks wonderful. Am glad she'S going to have a house she likes to fix up, tho I8m mad I'm not the one with the biggest house anymore. Hope their deals work out all right and she wasn't too hasty buying a house before the other two were sold !

My, Bud sure got and INTERESTING wife, not? Couldn'the hire her out as an atom splitter?

I'd like your hall to match the rug ! That sounds good.

Well, must sign off and get my sleep so Iwon't yell at the kids, as sis says-----Did I tell you I've lost 7 pounds and my eye's well? over

Pictures later - when Max + I get them straightened out. Seems to be something wrong with the camera — 4 rolls mostly bad —

Send back

Sunday June 1949

Dear Ruthie,

I am sorry I don't write more often. But I'm like you--I need privacy and quiet and somehow I don't seem to get much of those. Have stacks of letters from you again--has it really been that long or are you just writing more often?

Don't remember where I left off before. Have had a mess of company last week (two guests are a mess to me !) Charles Val Clear, an old crony of Ed's WPA days blew in from Ohio. He was so indefinite about if or when he would see us that it kept me in an indefinite state of preparation for a few days. He ended up by only appear for a frantic twenty minutes and refusing the dinner I'd prepared for him. And then he disappeared into the void without a word. Hate guests like that.

Then Bebe and her husband blew in and informed Maxine they would be out for dinner Monday and to have all the Chambreaus appear. By the strange workings of pride, predjudice and circumstances the whole party was foisted off on me as I knew it would be. It started out as a lovely, gay party, but Max and Bob hate Bebe and came with a chip on their shoulders, which Bebe proceeded to knock off with her sharp and tactless tongue so everybody went home in a huff. And Edward and I were left with the mess, the brunt of the expenses and the responsibility of a family row.

Max and Barbara each made a cake and Max a salad; Max brought down a tablecloth so I could use the "new" dishesfor the first time and our redecorated living room and the table really looked very nice. It sure is a pleasure to be able to set a "nice table" afterall these years.

We liked Bebe's husband -he seems like a nice, pleasant little guy. I won't go into the cause of the friction--just a blow-up of family frictions that have been smoldering for years. Still say you and Clyde deserve a feather in your caps. These divorced and remarried and nomadic families certainly don'tmake for anything but ill-feeling and unhappiness.

Well, well what else do I know? Haven't been anyplace. While you were having your heat wave we had nine days of rain. Didn't see the sun all that time--most depressing. Looks like we're in for a hot spell now.

Edward is very tired--finally reaching the cracking point on that two job deal, but I can't get him to quit the bar. Did I ever tell you that Mr. DaPron, the guy he works for (daytime) got him an audition at Universal Studios for one of his kids' acts because he thought it was so good. They seemed to like it and said it might make a good short, but that's the last we eve heard of course. He is slowly buidding himself a reputation and if he doesn't spoil it all by driving himself into one of his "fits" he'll do all right I think.

Dennis upset a hot cup of tea on himself and got a bad burn on his chest--our little Wednesday child that's full of woe. Mike has been pretty good--have decided to ignore his nightly coughs and seems to work better. He's down today, tho. Suspect that staying up till ten two nights watching the neighbor's television didn't help him any.

Max was terribly, terribly thrilled and falttered by your gifts. I knew she would be. My, you were certainly generous ! She "cleaves" unto John in a most overwhelming way and I think it's good for her to have somebody. Sort of lost me my playmate as I suspected, but that's as well, too. Her honeymoon about did her in, poor innocent. She ended up with cramps and doctor's bills and pills. But she and John sort of enjoy that sort of thing, I fear. The illnesses, I mean. Guess one can't spend a couple years in a sanatarium without coming out without an invalid complex.

Oh, yes, I did go to a show all by myself last Sunday. Saw old corn "Down to the Sea in Ships" and really enjoyed it. Seems a shame my show-goings always have to be guilty sort of desparation feeling of getting away from it all for a few hours. My family acts as if I were deserting them--or do I just imagine it?

I really don't feel like writing--Notice I feel very catty lately. Am going through some turmoils--Ed worries me; Mike worries me; Max is deserting me; Henry makes me mad---etc.

Let me tell you some little things I keep forgetting to. They have widened Vineland and put in traffic lights. Thank heaven. Because Mike insists on riding his bike to school now. Oh, how I realize parent feelings I wotted not of once ! We are getting a handsome noew brick telephone building on one of our Magnolia vacant lots. Rumor has it that Pepper Tree Lodge has installed television in all their rooms !

Did you know we raise our own food? We havehad a nice harvest of radishes and turnips, and still have carrots, lettuce and corn growing merrily (not to mention rabbit !) We planted the vegetables (which were left over from a selling thing Mike sent for) right in fromt of the rabbit cage so he could fertilize them and drool over what he couldn't get--aren't we mean? This wet, cool spring has been swell to grow things.

I am sick about your losing the pear orchard. How queer it looks. That is a WONDERFUL picture of Mrs. Mead and family ! Think it even beats ours ! Not so wonderful of ant--the nut.

Wasn't that a wild letter of hers? All that sleeping pill business sounds like LA.

Tiny's house looks swell, I think. Won't she be a happy little bug? Speaking of whom--wonder if she'll be moving and has given up their rumored plans to come down memorial day? I mean to write her but you might pass on the question pending my slowness. Aslo the fast we'd love to have them.

My permanent is swell. Saw the lady from the beauty parlor and she asked about you. Fraid you made mor of an impression than I did. Even the grocery man remarked about "how thin I was "--bless him !

So you do your best thinking in the am, too. So do I.....Think Marily IS advanced--really. The babe across the street who is her age doesn't do those things...No, Max hasn't a silver pattern. Thanks for the sheets--I can use them.....Henry DIDN'T like Max's marriage.....
Well, Mike wants the typewriter--he always does when I use it--and the rabbit wants food (Mike's in bed)--etc----much love-----ME

— We had TURKEY this week-end! Safeway had a sale 39 cents a pound.
Turkey in May seems silly!
— Still haven't picked-up the pictures —
will get them next week.

June 29, 1949 Tuesday

Dear All,

If Mike and his friend insist on playing inthe living room I shall play in HIS romm, so ha ha ! They are being allowed to play with Dennis' birthday present--a set of blocks like roads and cars to go on them--very successful. (Dennis hasn't seen them yet, however.)

It seems eons since I've had a chance to write, but I won't go into that again. I'm beginning to see what Sis meant about her neighborhood. Did I ever say I wanted more social life? I remember I did. Well, I'm beginning to see now that one never gets anything done. I told you, didn't I that there are 39 kids (maybe I said 49, but that's a slight error)in this dead end street? Well, about sixteen of them are regualrs around here and, as I don't have to point out to Sis, or granny--if she can remember--during vacation--- !!!

And, speaking of Mike--he's had his calamity for the summer--I hope. His baseball enthusiasm was slightly dampened by an accidental tap on the forehead with a bat Sunday. We took him to the emergency hospital (via Mrs. Thomas'car) sreaming and bleeding and watched them sew him up w th eight stitches. The scare seemed to be the worst of it as he is quite normal since and tootin around being the neighborhood hero.

The saddest part of the whole business was that he bled all over my new dress I laboriously made--the checked one--hadn't even washed it yet. And, trying to get the blood out in my usual hurried-what-are those-kids-up-to-now manner I bleached it in great spots and it's ruined ! Damn !

Max went a month and a half without you-know-whatting right after getting married, but everything cleared up--thank heavens. Not quite ready for another baby yet. They've had a row up there--inevitable, of course--and rumor has it that Bob and Barb are actually looking for apartments. John and Max spend all their time fixing up the yard. They have even invested about thirty dollars in plants and stuff. Such a difference in tenants.

We are goingup there for a picnic the fourth and then come back here for the kids' fireworks. We had one picnic upthere a few weeks a o which was a very dull affair with nobody really liking any ody else.

Henry is expected for a couple of weeks the Saturday after the fourth. She gets a vacation, I guess. That should cause some interesting events in that household !

Edward has forfeited his day off to go to San Bernadino to see about opening a branch of DaPron's school there (they drive hime down). So far it doesn't sound too promising, which, is of course what we want. No intentions of moving there ar anything like that--just a one day "field Trip". He is not doing so well, if you know what I mean--slipping a little, though heavens knows nothing like what he used to be !

He brought the W heelers home with him the other night and made me feed them at 3 a.m. There are the elderly ex-vaudevillians from Meglin's School--very dull, I find the.--never having trouped a vaudeville circuit myself. The main thing that concernec me was that I didn't get to bed till 4 am because Ed kept making them stay the 3 times they tried to leave. Nothing like hospitaliity !

Dad, I was very pleased to get a letter from you while Ruthie was gone. You're no mean correspondent yourself ! But Ed, especially will never get over that line about him you crossed off ! What DID t say? Don't you know that's just too provoking?

I beg to disagree with you about the refrig not saving moeny. You are blessed(?) with a wife who never kept accounts or budgeted, nor made any consistent effort to economize (pardon, Ruth !)-I don't think I ever saw you peruse the food special ads in order to save money !) But when I have a certain amount for groceries and since having the refrig t seems to go quite a bit farther in spite f other factors. I am able to buy specials I couldn't keep before and plan ahead and stuff. I don't expect you to understand this nor do I intend to keep and itemized chart to prove it (because it maight be a shock !) but anyway----I like it. Sure saves me marketing trips !

Ed spent one semester at the U of W (You'll note they didn't say he was a graduate) and he was out for crew practice or whatever you call it ! Imagine ! W hat do you mean by that crack about his plays ? "It was well they c nfined themselves to the children's plays he put on in SF and LA" unquote (as Ruth says) We don't get it.

Ruthie--Must admit--to conteract above --that I did do some Tiny-Ruth shopping just to see what it felt like one week end. Bought four dollars worth of crap--ice cream and cones and sauces and pop and w ip ream etc. But found, like you, that the kids would not leave it alone until all gone, so wewon't have any more of that. We make our own popsicles and don' even care about the ice cream man any more ! (That helps on the payments, Clyde)

HOW did Donald break his arm?.....Am glad no one's going to the beach house so I won'thave to be jealous about that all summer..... am glad for the reporton the Doolittle menage.....must say it sounds interesting, to say the least.....Howard a manic depressive? how juicy !that a form of what used to be called "insanity" but now is known as an emotional disturbance. Doesn't ANYbody read that stuff but me?.....good for Bonnie ! maybe it was love thatmade her so queer that day we saw her//.....Junior Higgins-hmmmm.....

how's old Liz doing? Does she like having three chilluns? ha ! Now that I have three I am be inning to be intrigued why al how women POSSIBLY manage more, but not THAT intrigued----don't worry.

Well, I'm keeping Mike from going to bed, so will discontinue this. Feel much better that I've written something--sure been weighing on my mind.
Hi to everyone. Tell Sis I think often of the smart and wise things she said (don't pin me down) about kids last summer when I get into difficulties--or rather I think that she's going through the same thing and I fell better. And I think about the GE's and their unseen one whenever I see that dumb, retarded child across the street. I KNOW their's is smarter-(Bud's I mean !)
Sure wish some ofthese kids horsing around her e were JO Ann, barb, Judy, etc. instead of their dumb sleves.....

love and good night....

Mrs. Biz C

Thursday July 22 1949

Dear Ruth and appendages,

Guess what? When I went to get my last roll of film today they had a whole messof reprints from YOUR visit that had been about someplace since then. I THOUGHT I didn't have as many pictures as I should ! Forget to take pictures any more (the camera is working agina) so havn't much but will get some organized and send some one of these days. Max claims she wants some of them and will have to see her first.

Yes, we're all thr ough birtdays and Henry's visit. Guess that's our excitement for the summer. Don't see any trips looming for us. I'm the one who sits home andgets post cards from other people thisyear !

Indeed yes we got the packages. They have been tantalizing me for a week or two. (I always know there'something for me, too--spoiled brat) I'm getting smarter now--I find it works better for mama to open them the night before and then I really get to see everything and enjoy it before the hullabaloo..

Michael and I were very thrilled with his check. Certainly didn't expect you to send that much. I want to thank Tiny and Sis for their dollars, too if I get around to it. With all that money he had quite a spending spree for his train. Got some things we'd never have thought of but guess that's what he wanted. HE hasn't gotten into any fights over his shirt--he's very proud of it.

I had fun fixing Dennis' stuff the night before--blowing up the ball and all and arranging the things on the foot of his bed inhopes I'd get to sleep in the morning. The "Harkness" tribe had taken Michael down to see Spade Cooley's television show and I thought I'd have a vacation, but they met Ed on the train coming home andMike came home with them !

The boats are alwfully cute--never seen any here and whatthey need now with all their summer water play. And Mike got a ball and bat so Dennis didn't feel slighted when he got one, too. They're much better about their toys now and everything is still intact. However the ball sat in a chair and simply exploded all by itself--so you can't blame us for that ! I have all their towels hung in the bathroom and have recieved lots of compliments on them. Sure hav enough towels now--all from you I do believe ! The lollipops I saved for Monday

because we wrote into Julie's radio program and they featured our letter and us ! The kids were thrilled ! Read my letter over the air--ha ha. Then they tell the birthday kid (as per letter) to go and look for their present--so that was the lollipops.

Julie's dress was a couple of sizes too big so I put it away for next yearthough she didn't like that very well. The materials I sure hope to use sometime if I ever get time to sew. Henry brought me some yummy green to cover my chair, too. Dennis' pants and shirt s are so cute and doeshe need clothes ! Strange--Henry got him exactly the same pants....

We all think Ed's shirt is but handsome and he loves it....Julie is a size four, not six--so Icant use thatpattern yet either. And mama thanks you for the dishtowels and the tablecloth. Didn't mean to make you consience stricken about that cloth !

Well, I just wanted you to know I did think they were wonderful boxes as they always, always are....

We had an awfully nice week's visit with Henry. Her job has certainly broadened her or something. She is much more like her old self. She and I can talk pretty good about life and stuff now--though we have our subjects we don't exactly discuss. She looks good,nice clothes and stuff. She hopes to get back down here for good maybe around the first of the year--depends on Harry, who really isn't very good, I guess.

It was an awfully busy week for me though as she and Max and Mike's friend, Harold, and the so-numerous neighbor kids all spent most of their time here. And it was hot and seemed like an endless session of food and dishes--what with two birthday "parties" and all. But fun. Really a let down when everyone goes.

Henry MADE Micael some glamorous paid drapes for his room--all lined and traverse tracks and all--really beautiful . We figured the curtain shop would have charged $25 for them made up !

As you see by my typing my brain just doesn't click this time of night which as I've seen umpteen thousand times is the only time I have to write---and I have to MUch I want to say !
Edward is going through one of his whing dings. Gad, I sometimes wish I'd married a man who knew what his line of work was and did it ! But he manages to keep the money coming in even though he nearly frets himself to death.

Well, your trip sounds real nice....too bad about Mrs. Oppenheim--what was the trouble? I'd simply love some jelly--we use so much and I certainly don't have any--but how to send it?...Who in helly are Wally and Nancy that Tiny talks about?

Please scuse me if I sign off with just this dull letter --really can't go on--I'mtoo sleepy

just can'tthink ofall t ose things I had to say.

but lots and lotsof love anyway--I often sit sand imagine about all you guys up there...

norder

Wednesday July 27 1949

Dear Ruhtie--

How would you like to have a nice fresh letter right smack in an answer to yours fresh from the mailbox while you're baby sitting? Think I can do it? Betcha I can't. Dennis is having a major peve he needs a rest, and having had two attempts I'm getting weary of resting him.

How come you know so many tragedies lately? Because you know so many people? The news about Patsy Livesley is most shocking to me being very "in" on that TB thing in this family. How horrible with two little kids ! Max and I agreed, if they knew what we know--or feel--about that Salem sanatarium, with their money (or have they?) they'd certainly put her someplace else. Itis generally agreed that Max could have been cured a year or two sooner than she was if they'd never sent her there. Those state places are so poorly staffed and so involved in red tape that they move too slowly to get any effective cures. And, of course there isn't the opportunity for individual attention those cases need. Also the insitutional atmosphere is so depressing to most people and TB is a disease where a cheerful outlook is so important. HOWEER who can save the other guy what they'vebeen through?

Didn't Mrs. Oppenheim KNOW she had heart trouble. Or did shehae any.

Well, enough of such depressing things. Howcome the Powells rate two vacations? A split up? Vacation, I mean?

Why don't you ask Clyde what's the matter with your typewriter? Don't you know I hand all that stuff over to Edward now--who finds himself quite a mechanic...ha ha. His latest is fixing the lawnmower I bought for three dollars. Is he proud. Course one thing about his fixing he's so unsure of it that no one but him can use that gadget aft rward, so I get out of the washing and the lawn mowing that way.

Did I tell you about my lawn mower? Never get around to those little details in my letters. Got to talking to a clerk while shopping who had just bought a new one so I bought their old one. Was just about going to be one of "lorna's bargains" when Ed get it fixed. But I thought three bucks was enough to pay for the yard we havn't got !

Yes, it is the responsibility of kids that is so wearing I find. As you always ALWAYS said, "It isn't the work, it's the worry". I found myself so spiritually worn down, if you know what I mean, that I requested Max to take Julie someplace like she useta. She as quite willing and took Dennis, too. It was Ed's day in San Berdue (as it's called) so I spent the day reading "Kinfolk", going to pieces and searching my old tired soul that hasn't been searched in many a day. I found many amazing things, chief of which was that I was terribly, terribly tired--inside--if you know what I mean. Just what I needed and feel much better now, thank you. At least Iam ge ting wise enough in my older age to know what I need when I need it and do something about it.

I LIKE to write you about the packages. Would always like to tell you in person in more detail. Surely you realize that such lavish boxes as yours are a thrill when one is so plodding finacially.

No, Henry wouldn't tackle drapes for the living room. She had an H of a time with those of Mike's and only did it to see if she could--and I think unconsciously vindicate herself for the years she's been razzed about no curtains in her house. She said there is such good money in that work as she's found out in the curtain shop that she wanted to see if she could do it as a back-log "for her old age". However she definitely decided that such work is not for her, which is true. She is very clumsy with her hands and hates detail work.

Poor Henry, I do feel sorry for her. This sickness of Harry's has drained all their resources, I imagine, and, since it is dubious if he'll be able to work much from now on, she is rather frantic about what she will live on in the years to come. That probably accounts for her consuming obbsession about selling a song of Edwards. She talks about making $50 a month until she's 65 so she will be eligible for old age insurance. She's too proud--like most of us--to want to move in with her kids.....Well, when you think about it, don't you feel lucky?

She certainly hates John--as I feared. Maxine felt the tension, and she and John had their first big row while Henry was here. But Max isn't old enough to quite fathom it so she is happily oblivious to the implicati ns as yet. We all hate Barbara--she is the wolrd's dumbest and most selfish--but, since she is young and Henry figures, therefore impressionable, Henry has "adopted" her and intends to make her over into the Harkness pattern (as she did me?) Henry can't see that hse is merely antagonizing Barbara.

John is exactly the type of person Henry can't understand or care for-being her opposite and I really think there is no more to it than that. Except for the TB angle which upsets her terribly. Assuming , as she does, that all people think and feel like she does, Henry can't see what Max sees in John, tho I can--they are much alike in a lot of ways----

Well, heavens, who up there cares about all that anyway?

Edward has himself a little better in hand this week and things look brighter. Michael is obsessessed(?) with earning money these days--signed himself up for a paper route. We811 see about that. Doubt if they'll call him for quite a while.

Julie is getting independent in her own small way. If she could shen spend all her time playing with the neighbor kids, but we are rather isolated from the ones with families so that she can't go on her own as much as she'd like. A nd Dennis cramps her style, of course. The new neighbors are proving difficult. They are the forceful, bossy, belligerent type that lay down strange impossible laws for their kids and then thrash around trying to make everybody comform. Not my type.

My best pal, Mrs. Thomas is buying a house in Burbank and moving out on me leaving me with all these morons. Who's a snob?

Well, done pretty well this time--guess I8d better get busy on some more righteous task.

Lots of love to all you vacationers,
you luckies.

Norder

Return

Friday Aug 5-49

Dear Long-awaited,

At last ! That Barbara certainly interfered with my mail! Came home from a very pleasant afternoon at the park with Max and the kids to find that letter I've been looking for all week. And the kids all whipped over to the neighbors to play on their new swings so I sat me right down on my porch and enjoyed every word of it as I seldom get a chance to do.

Sure looked good to see Sissy's handsome Duchess of Windsor face tucked away in it--Where's old Fliss's? Can that huge thing with all the hair be Barbara? Jo Ann looks much the same only bigger--kinda like Sis's young pictures, doesn't she? I thought she gave those shoes to Julie last year? ! My, the grill does improve your door, doesn't it? The kids have finally broken one prong off ours so it matches the rest of the house now.

I was surprised about the Jakes. Have been wondering what they were up to. Didn't know they were clear up to Yakima ! Almost got a letter written I wondered so much. Mike is getting bored with vacation now as we all are a little--we wandering Chambreaus aren't used to staying in one place so long--and we were toying with the idea of sending Mike up or mayhap going up ourselves. Good thing we didn't.

It was nice for all of you but I was rather hoping that San Diego trip of theirs would materialize. Have really been meaning to write Tiny--oh, good intentions !--but life has been a wee hectic of late.

It seems to be a time of turmoil. The neighbors are moving around and in and out. Edward has been sick and there seems to be a tonsily fever going around here, too. Edward has been VERY upset and RATHER difficult. And I don't need to tell you again that there seem to be many, many children unde foot these days...and everybody always wants to eat all the time and nobody ever does dishes for me,,,,etc.

But things have smoothed off now. Ed was getting fed up with both his jobs and not having nerve enough to quit either was in a state, when in one week he got three offers for new jobs--one only a few days of accompnaying. But it sure boosted his morale, and after a week of appointments and seeing people he realizes the other side of the fence is not quite so green as it looked and seems more content with what he's doing.

A big, prosperous Jew who's been stealing all his pupils because he has a television show--this town simply reeks with television !--tried to steal him away fromDa Pron, whom Ed likes but doesn't feel is getting any place. However after seeing the guy Ed decided he was just too obnoxious to work for so is stayingon with Da Pron. He and Curley haven't been getting along too well, but the owner of the swank Shish-Kebab r staurant next to the Brown Derby heard him and wants him to work for him. He is seeing him tonight so I don't know yet what gives there. But he's also a jewy Jew and he'd have to join the union again so I don't think it'll materialize. So that's what little Eddy's been doing.

I took Mike and Julie to the dentistlast week. Mike had ~~the~~ four teeth pulled because his big ones come in so crooked they don't push the others out. Julie has some cavities and a blackish tooth in front we were worrying about. I have to take her back next week for some fillings and another check--which I dread. She was certainly

a good little monkey, but don't know how she'll be after a good drillig. It seems mean to do to little kids.

Yesterday I took Julie and various neighbor kids to see the "Wizard of Oz". It was Julie's first show and she loved it--sat through the whole two pictures. I only intended to let them see the one--having no idea it was workedover into one of those durned Hollywood scary witch things but she wanted to stay and see the other. We all enjoyed it more. It was "Sand", a horse picture filmed in color in the Colorado mountains--really beautiful ! I certainly approve of such "cowboy" pictures for kids. The hero--Mark Stevens, I believe--certainly looks like Jake !

Which bringsus back tothem. So they did sell their house. Mill Valley hmmm. Now I do know where that is. Not much sun there, is there? But pretty. They should get up on the hill where hey can keep on eye on Papa Jake on his boats ! What ever happened about Ellas house?

Which bringsus to in-laws. Henry wrote as if she didn't particularly enjoy getting back to work., and as if they will really be down for good maybe the first of the year. Harry would quit Vinton's and sell his stock and all. Max thinks it would be heavenly, but I don't know. She and John are very, very happy and engorssed in each other up their all alone.

Robert and Barb are very happy in their apartment, I guess. We never seethem , which is all right with both of us, I'm sure. They are very engrossed accumulating money and possessions and such things dear to their childish little hearts.

Our feuding neighbors have calmed down. Don't know whether my amateur diplomacy had anything to do with it or not, but I8m getting along fine with everyone. Never knew I could make friends so nicely till I tried. The Abbots took Ed to work when he was sick and took me and the kids for a ride and the grim little Luekes next door are building a teeter for mykids ! Mrs. Thomas is really going to move, I guess. I'll miss her as she is my most "intellectual" friend.

It has been hot here, too. But I don't mind it like I used to. The kids are so much easier this summer and we have a cool yard to retreat to. We really have some nice flowers this year for the firsttime, and the "devil grass" is creeping around until we'll really have a lawn yet. Please explain to the Powells that our "devil Grass is not the kind they're familiar with. AND as you say, the refrigerator is SUCH a help. It's glorious not to have to go to the store every day. I NEVER had left overs before. I couldn't.

I made Julie a nightgown out of that pink crepe--remember? And me a new dress out of some "curtain" material Henry sent.

Henry would never allow my kids to play with the poker chips, tho I begged. She said they weren't sanitary.

Well, I see the end of another sheet approaching and havn't enough left to fill another age so will sign off. How's my friend, clyde these days? Another boat trip? Well, you be a good girl.

much love to all my family --they all seems to be there, but me--boo hoo.

lorna

Aug. 17 1949

Tuesday

Dear Ruth, retunned,

Your nice letter this afternoon. And I really had time to relish it andthe cute Powell picture. Edward, in typical fashion--being exhausted from working two jobs--has solved everything by taking on a third ! However it's only a two day deal, but it means he's been leaving at nine a.m. I knew I envied othe women whose husbands are gone during the day instead of the night !

Anyway, I get scads of work done and time to sit and enjoy myself and the kids, who are beautifully calm most of the time under my sweet thumb. Which they aren't when papa's here. Is it Ed, me or the combination?

I think the Powell kids are by far the cutest on the page--not? They are so handsome and healthy looking....just made me YEARN to see them. Barb looks a lot like Jo Ann in this picture. Mike was amazed that that big thing was baby Barbara. Tiny sure got in on the picture, too, didn't she--with her dog and those two dresses? Still think they're about the best looking girls' dresses I've seen.

Bonnie FRESHWATER, hmm. How does she like it? Does anyone ever call Willard Hatch "Booby?"

Have three letters fomr you unanswered. Durn--thought I was doing better--or you are. Your life sounds so nice--tripping here and there, entertaining in your nice home-getting to see people I never see and would like to--can it be that you really have problems, too? I notice a different tone in your letters, too, so ha ha. I am glad to see that you seem to enjoy your guests lately and don't fuss and fume when some ones coming like you used to.

The Shish-kebab Restaurant is practically next door to the Brown Derby I toldja. You certainly ought to remember where that is ! Ed would have to be reinstated back into the union, which would cost him about a hundred bucks and then the guy didn't guanantee him union salary scale--he said "oh, they just don't bother aboutsuch things here." So it didn't seem worth it, really. However, in Ed's way, he has never le let the guy know--just let it drift.....

Heck ! I started this because one of the neighbors guranteed to take the kids on this afternoon, but here they are back !

I think it is wonderful about Tiny's good fortune or whatever you call it. As you say, so rightly, those are the things that would make her happy anyway. I personally don't worry about her lack of "domestic bliss" because I don't think such, asyou and Sis and I picture it, would every satisfy Toe completely anyway. Oh, nuss, can't talk about such thing with the whole family looking down my neck....

Anyway herhouse andcar and dog and stuff sound awfully nice, and I'm glad for her. Wish to heck I could go andsee them all. I8d like to have them visit thisfall. You, too, only I wouldn't blame pop for being mad at not getting to see us nice people too. I'm awfully homesick for my own kind (more of which later if I don't poop out). I get SO weary of trying to live according to Harkness standards. Would love to just be ME for awhile--good or bad.

Your boat trip sounds like a more congenial crowd and arrangement this year. You make me thirsty for old Puget Sound !

We would just love and love and love to come up to a beach place next summer. Even Ed. But I know we couldn't finance such a thing. Guess I'm spoiled after last summer.—Though this summer has been much better with the kids more independent and the house more comfortable and neighbors I am getting to the end of my rope. I haven't been dressed up and gone anyplace without the kids since you left. Have worn the girdle I bought for my birthday once--that's the kind of places I go to.

Envy you your fruit. Ours is better here this year than last, but not really fruit as I've known them. We NEVE R see raspberries here.

I don't blame Bud for being mad about that snotty letter of Harrison Miller's, but there's a grain of truth in it. Bud's talents lie along broader lines than just sports, methinks.

About Patsy Livesley. Max says one can get better accomodations with money there in Salem, but she doesn't know about medical attention. She recommends Dr. King-- n Portland, I believe. He used to be with the sanatarium, but got disgusted and left them. The only way ~~can~~ one can get out of the "San", she says is to get up and walk out, which most of them do, I guess--that is, to get private care.

Ed goes to San Berdue a la bus--three hours. And does it burn him up. He keeps saying he's going just one more time, but it seems to be always one more time. Anybody else would have forseen that he couldn't manage such a thing without a car, but now he's in it he can't get out. You may sense that I am agin our lil Edward at this point. I certainly am ! He bothers me so terribly lately that it sort of scares me.

I am beginning to see why there are so many divorces in this town. When everyone is in the entertainment business, everyone is selling his best side to ze pooblic all the time and has nothing left but grumps for his family. Also I sense we are going through one of the danger points in marriage when papa goes one road and mama goes another, both mentally and physically. The only times we meet are to settle family controversies and business, which is not conducive to the "companionship" they yap so much about. So granted, we are much too tied down to our particualr routines and don't get out alone together enough, what in H can you do about it? Especially when one partner doesn't recognize the problem and is utterly incapable of sconstructive action to boot.

Sorry to bore you all, family, with this. It is meant for Ruthie's ears. I am so choked up about that guy I HAVE to tell somebody. We are reaping the harvest of his almost -a-year at the deadly work at Curley's, I suppose. But, now he's used to the money he's afraid to quit. And he can't get energy enough to build up anything else so he can quit unless he does. Ah me. He is gone from home exactly 2 and a half afternoons a week--ask any mama how she'd like that? And when he's home, he doesn't work around like he used to, but sits around on the back of his neck, ill half the time and stupified from nightly ~~daily~~ drinking the rest and compains and frets and FRETS about everything. GGGRRrrrrrr ! I suppose the magazines would say it's up to me--but I find myself exhuasted with kid and neighborhood squabbles and no one to bolster ME up.....

Let's to lesser things----Did I tell you I insisted on buying Mike a new bike? He is obviously going to ride to school this fall as all his friends do. And after I rode that old crate of Robert's he's been

riding with absolutely no brakes on balance I decided it was too dangerous for him to whip around in traffic. Ed, not being a cyclist, doesn't understand and begrudges me the $50 it took. He says I'm trying to keep up with the Jacobsens !

Did I tell you Julie went to the dentist and was good as pie? She has to have about six fillings to the tune of $25--a little steep, methinks/ But in this town of quacks I feel that this guy is really good and is the first one I've found who can handle kids. (Maybe I'm too demanding for my family?) I can't quite see this filling baby teeth--suspect it's a dental racket, but she had a black tooth in fron t I wanted to see about. It has been injured but will be all right. At such times I feel that all my "child psychology " study does pay off.

Do the MaxJohns have a car yet? Hell no. They have an eight year old daughter ! The people who had Sharon, safter protesting their great love for her so loudly, have suddenly decided they don't want her and are shipping her out to Max in a couple of weeks. First down for Max's marriage, I say. And I'm sure you will know what I mean--being a step-daughter yourself. If you do, it will be a relief--tho Ed agrees with me (one thing, anyway !) Henry and Max are very enthusiastic about it- suffer little children to come into the Harkness fold or they are lost" is their motto. I think they are somewhat naive. Max thinks it's goin g to be so much FUN ! I will admit I cound't think of a better stepmother than Max--for kindness anyway.

And herewith the pictures I've been threatening so long. The kids have been pretty good all this time I've been tearing into their father on paper, but I can see the breaking down coming--Dennis just leaped off the bench in his usual QUIET way.

Henry sent the kids a package--just for nothing. Copycat isn't she? She certainly doesn't have your knack, though, The things she sends are unneeded, wrong size, impractical, ugly and unappropriate. Aren't I nasty? And I DON't say that about your things to anybody ! However, she means well and it's really very nice of her. She's certainly given us a lot of lavish, nice things and would do more if she could, I know.

Well, I must go and bring my wash in. Its been out all night as is. We have to repair our Apex about onee a month. It's always falling to pieces. But notthe refrig, the lovely unpaid for love !

As you note I could go on and on. I really am overwhelmed with a horrible homesick and nostalgic memories of my trip. I get more homesick the ~~oller~~ older i get (what typing !) I go.....

love---and I want to hear something about Clyde please, if he has to write it himself....

Lorna

I almost put this in an envelope addressed to Henry! —

Wouldn't that have been something?

Aug. 25 1949 Wednesday, 'tis told to me

Dear family, since you all do read !

And How much closer I feel to you with those excellent, excellent pictures ! They couldn't be any better, except maybe for that bloodhoundish one of Clyde. That guy must be good--surely he couldn't have such a good average of accidents ! Gee, I think they're good! Such a handsome bunch of people.

And your so-nice box that came at such a good time because I was feeling very, very low and it helped a lot...Al.Ruth. Also your well-thought out letter today--or was it? Think it helped anyway. Smart girl, arent you?

The Jacobsen's house sounds just too-too. Isn't that swell for Tiny? We really just burned with envy when we read it. Couldn't help it. No one says how much they're paying, I notice--must be a lot for a place like that. Do hope it goes through--just occurred to me it hasn't yet, hasit? Judy is getting cute as a bug, isn't she? And Roddy, too, altho he looks different--more like Jake? or what.

How's Sis coming with her house plans. Haven't heard any more. Is she wintering again there? They're a good looking bunch, too. JoAnn looks so darn familiar--what is it? Barb has a different look, but cute. And Gram and Gramps are still pretty cute themselves, huh?

Well, what do I know. It's hot again. 102 Sunday. And I had an outing Monday night. And Dennis is so scared of fire engines that I haven't had a good rest in a couple of weeks. And Mike has had a two week bout of asthma that cleared up when it thundered and rained for two minutes. And Julie reminds me of how Tiny used to be--she's always at a neighbor's and I cringe for fear of what she'stelling.

Max hasbeen coming down to sew skirts and flounces for the room she's fixing for Sharon. More fun, she says. So I started sewing on that gray material. I disagree with you--I can and am making a simple dress of it. I am so taken with that T-shirt and sox set you sent Denny that I'm adding some of those colors (red and white) to the gray.

We're all just nuts about that dress you sent Julie. VERY cute.A very nice box--things have gotten scattered, so I'll take you at your word and won'tgo into detail this time, but THANKS !

Max and John came and stayed with the kids Monday night and Mrs. Thomas and I went down to the Harvey. It was so hot and I got so excited about going out that I got a headache--trust me. Didn'tthink I enjoyed it at the time, but afterwards decided I did. I got pulenty tight--as I intednded to----to get even with papa who'd been having some very fine turns of his own? We came home in a cab and Ed very sweetly took the kids up to Max's next day and I spent the day in bed--ooh, it was wonderful ! Staying in bed, I mean. Was fun to be made over and fussed over as "eddy's wife", I'll have to admit. And Eddy at the bar is an Eddy Ihavn't seen around home in a long, long time. Reminded me of whatit was I used to like about him.....

The Sunday itwas 102 I had a huge oven dinner to cook. Had bought it the first of the week and couldn't get out of it--ick. One time the refrig fooled me.

I sure got a laugh out of your pasted clipp ngs, Ruthie. Need a good laugh, too

Wadda ya mean my kids are all good at the dentist? That's the reason Mike had mor than a hundred dollars worth of work done last year because he was so awful that no dentist could work on him before ! And that's the resson I stick to this guy tho he seems expensive--he can handle the kids.

Yes, Ed needs a rest and THEN a good, solid steady job he LIKED with people he liked. Security, don't they call it? The rest he knows he needs, and constantly frets about it without doing anything about it. As for the other, the only thing I can see is that he was not prepared to be a father of three. But all that goes for all of us, doesn't it? I dunno...I dunno....one gets pretty muddled sometimes---no matter waht kind of a life you have, I guess.....

I hear rumors we're going on a big picnic with some people Ed knows at work overlabor day. Twould be fun, tho Max is trying to instigate a picnic with us for Sharon. She has more plans for Sharing Sharon--sometimes I quail at the thoughtof taking on another, but...

Our enighborhood is having the Moves--or did I tell you. Ruth Abbott --motherof the "crippled girl", remember?--is moving into Mrs. Thomas' house when she moves to Burbank. And since she and the new mother of three live over there side by side in those two houses and find it a bit thick and I'm right in the middle of it--what with all the kids palying together--we all think it will be better. Or aan you figure thatout? And other people are moving--that won't consern us....

Well, should write to Henry as you andshe seem to keep together on your letters--same day---so enough of this.....

much love to you all--have to quit I get so homesick thinking of you all--What's the MATTER with me lately?

Lorna

Have been going over to Ruth Abbott's mother's with her lately. She has a lovely home — much like yours — maybe that's what makes me homesick?

Sept. 9 1949

Tuesday

Dear Ruth,

I was certainly disappointed in that call. I thought it was canceled. They're always pulling that ! Not that I regret talking to you, but it was a most unopportune time and I was unprepared and I could barely hear you by straining and straining. Also Ed sat in the living room and let the kids heckle and heckle me. Worst of all we had some strange people sitting in the living room listening to every word and I couldn't say any of the things that were my reason for making the call in the first place.Why don't you come down andtalk?

We were just back from a strange picnic.Some of Ed's clients asked s to go and I was quite thrilled at the idea of getting out on a Sunday--been ages since we've b en on a real picnic like that. I found out at the elevnth hour that Ed was putting on a kid show for them--the Los Angeles exiles of Pittsburgh, Kansas ! Anyway I fried three dollars worth of chicken and got a kick out of being the Mama at a picnic--a new sensation for me. I also enjoyed being out away from home and these horrid Sundays and s eing something new....andthe kids were good and it wasn't too hot and I was very fussed over as "that wonderful Ed's"wife

BUT..... ! The kids were bored--there were no swings or anything like that..Dennis was "afraid" of the show--Michael was cross as a bear with asthma...the family we were to go with didn't show up...and Ed was the way he's been all summer around us--(and Ed you've never seen)--grumpy and anti-social so that we sat in a corner by ourselves all the time. Also no one ate any of my good food and I had to bring most of it home and dirty up dishes feeding it to them later. Oh welll.....

I'm in a horrible doldrums lately--so don't expect much but a crabby letter

It's been a hard summer it seems--full of people and friction among same. Our two solid weeks of 95-100 weather hasn't helped either. Can you imagine being cooped up L.A. without a car and five people home all the time? I am spoiled.

Our hottest week was the most hectic. Max was expecting Sharon and came down every day to stitch yardage to fix up a room for her. On top of that Ed was in the tempermental throes of writing a play in the midst of this chaos...Michael's had asthma for weeks...the kids kept wanting to play in the plastic swimming pool we bought them which always meant a neighborhood fight....Ed was cracking up in his own peculiar way and stewing about job changes and difficulties--which means a great deal of a brownish liquid and mysterious lingerings downtown until daylight--and I, of course having to keep meals, washing, ironing, grocery lugging etc. going through it all.....(Please don't pass this letter around)

Ed and I were just sick when we first met Sharon. She certainly had all the earmarks of a brat, which is something thathadn't occurred to me. Max has had quite a time adjusting and is sadly beginning to realize what she got herself into. Sharon seems better to me now--but she is definitely a handful. A live wire if there ever was one--not Max's type of child, sad to say.... Max has true Harkness optimism about it all though and seems to be making out.

We have a kitten. I got railroaded into it. All the neighbors have been acquiring them like mad and Julie did want one so. It's a long story I won't go into, but now it's gotten over its neurosis we actually enjoy it.

We enjoyed Margaret's short call. She sure is a good looking and very charming. They seem (Gil didn't come) to be job-hunting....

We just drooled ov r that picture of the Jacobsen's house and view--luckies ! Am awfully anxious to see it all--Have to arrange it somehow. Bet Toe is sure excited.

We sent ant the money for the stove and at lon, last got a nice long letter from her. She sounds very busy and not too happy--seems to regret leaving Cal.

I was simply overwhelmed at that picture of Angela and the boys. I just couldn't believe it. Is that KING? And fat Jimmy? Angela still looks pretty. You're wrong about not wanting the picture. I have a family section in my kodak book and would love a print if you can get one.

Liz's kids looks like strangers to me. She and I sure bit off about as much as we could chew, didn't we?

My washings are always so interrupted that something gets stained every time. The last time it was Julie's dress Tiny made her. I was just sick. I worked and worked over it but can't get it out. OH, I'm MAD !

Mrs. Thomass house is terrible I find. I'd never really gotten a good look at it before. Please remember we lesser people are in such a position that even a house ~~looks good~~ like that looks good just because of the room in it. Ruth, who is taking it, has lived for two years with two kids in a divided room and kitchen !

Yes, Sharon has a brother, too which the mother has had for years. Seeing that she has remarried I don't think that Max has to worry about him

WHAT lett r-excerpts? Sure it was ME that got'em?

Since Mike got his new bike and Sharon acquired Barbara Hoss Harknesses old one the Chambreaus are beginning to travel a la bicycle--riding the kids (not too much, though). Aren't you glad you're upper crust and don't get that desparate?

I am writing this under GREAT difficulties, but since they never lessen thought I might as well fight it out.....

well, much love---- Lorna

Sept. 14 1949 Tuesday

Dear Ruthie & Clydie —

Well, thank you, Clydie, for writing me a personal letter! You sure got Ruth worried about what's in it! I assure you, Ruthie, wasn't anything in it but what you could read yourself. He said you were waiting for him & should he go or let you wait — that's why he kept looking at you —!

Thought I'd better write you a funkie note to nullify my sad one you'll get when you get home. Things are much better already as y'all gets papa & Michall and all the neighbor kids busier.

Poor Mike couldn't make it back to school tho he wanted to. What a kid! He's been home these first two days with the usual. Hope he makes it tomorrow —

Dennis was sick Sunday — threw up all day, but seems all right now. The neighbors are moving like mad & the weather has cooled off — Was 108.5° one day. L.A. temperatures are always lower than the Valley.

Max is getting along fine with Sharon, but has some female trouble the Dr. is looking into. Bob & Barbara have bought a new Ford they can't afford. Harry had pneumonia but is all right now.

Guess that's all I know.

(over)

We didn't think Margaret's hair a bit red — think she's going on reputation.

Loved that last picture of Marilyn. Best look at her yet. She looks like Paula, I think.

Here's a couple pictures — one of the swimming pool Ed bought the kids. Looks peaceful, but oh boy! The other are the kids' new play mates across the street — just right, huh? Cute, dark haired kids.

Well — gotta do the dishes & get to bed — had a hard night last night.

Much love to all —

Lorna

Sept. 1949

Friday

Dear folks,

Well, this hot night has taken a few paragraphs off your letter--it took me two hours longer to get the kids down ! 106 yesterday--in September--geez !what a country ! Everything looks scorched as you can imagine--we have seen about one drop of rain all summer--and they write it up in headlines !

However I have news, and I owe you lett rs anyway so I must write something. The Harknesses are showing their talent for minor tragedy again. Harry has to go into a TB sanitarium ! Seems thatspell of pneumonia let loose a spot that might otherwise have been nothing. Ordo you understand the inticacies of that disease? I'm not clear about it yet.

So in their rash Harkness way, the day after they received the news from the doctors they sold their stock in the Vinton Company, quit their jobs packed their goods and phoned us they were drivin down for good. Henry has always maintained that she'd get Harry down here. So I guessshe is. They're going to put him in a sanitarium down here; Henry will live upstairs at Max's; and they will stay in a motel until Harry is hospitalized. Robert is going up to help them drive down.

So it'svery much too bad and everyone is very broken up about it. Henry will probably have to go to work; if John and Max stay on there to help her out with the house there will, of course, be trouble, because Henry can't stand John and we know she won't like Sharon. Ah me.

I just got my little situation cleared up and got Ed more or less back on the track and then this. Also I can't make in school. So far he has gone four days out of ten. asthma, of course. (I had him checked for TB with Rew last summer.) I finally went up to the school and explained to everyone inhopes they might be able to help me. But the seemed very surprised that such an excellent pupil as Mike should have any problems and rzther gave me to think they considered it "a home psychological problem". Well, yipes !don't I suspect it myself , butwhat can ANYONE DO ?

hat else do I know that isn't cheerful? I know these two weeks that I have been dreaming about all zummer--ah, when school starts'.....have been just about as hectic as any other. Mrs. thomas has moved, Ruth Abbott is in her house, and the neighbors thatare left are very thick with each other and not exactly my "type" so I haven't had much neighboring.

Dennis is still afraid of sirens- tho he's getting better--so my nights are still trot, trot, trot which wears me down. Julie's the only one in this family that sleeps at night--and that makes her get up at 6;30 a.m. lately.

Well, I'm hot and tired and sleepy so I won't bore you with any more of this--just wanted to get something off..... I enjoy all the pictures and Tiny's letters you send on, mom. Aren't they plutocrats? Yes, wish I did have some of that food you have there. W ho'll get Harry's car, I wonder. Hope not Bob with his new Ford as he is completely selfish with a car. Hope John so I won't have to taxi to the grocery store....No, I never got a letter with excerpts--look in your desk again.....Yea I remember Jean Turner--pretty girl. Five kids? How did she get to a musical?

Well, here I go--wish I had more time--would like to chat more--by the time I get time to write you rotabl y won't be interested.....

much, much love.....Lorna

(over)

Broke my neck to write you this and then didn't have a stamp to mail it.

Weather's cooler; Mike went to school this morning, the wheezing slightly; the Hartnesses are zipping down the coast and, sad to report, neither Ed nor I are very enthused about being "familified" again — at least not ~~of~~ with them. It's so nice not to bother with Bob + Barbara and stuff + now we'll be forced to see them a lot + pretend that we like them —

Love —

Lorna

Dear Folks, Thursday First of Oct. -1949

Pardon the pause in letters; it just meansthere hasn't been any inmy life !

No, it hasn't been because we saw a great deal of the Harknesses. They kept to themselves with their "germs". They took us up there once for hamburgers out in the back yard, as being a sanitary . That was on Robert's birthday--same day as Bud's. I hadn't meant to give him anything, but had to come through with a dollar under the circumstances ! Hope Bud doesn't feel slighted. Got to thinking maybe they'd just as soon not feel obligated--good way out, huh?

It's pretty pathetic being arounda person that knows they have TB. Must say they were certainly careful and I appreciate it. Henry, of course is quite frantic about the whole thing. You won't be too pleased to know they had your room at Pepper Tree while Harry was waiting to get in the hospital. They say it's terribly run down and crumby. After two or three days the doctor put Harry in General Hospital which is way down by the alligator farm, until he can get into the sanatarium out here. Poor Henry wept after she went down to see him; he is in a huge TB ward full of negroes and mexicans, many of them in the last stages. The building is old and windowless and very depressing, I guess. What a place to be when you're 76 years old !

Henry says to tell Ruthie she's having "a hell of a time". I think she was refering to being a mother-in-law. She is horribly disappointed in Max's marriage and, sorry to say, makes no bones about how she dislikes John and Sharon. Since they all find it more or less neccessary to live in that house together it's been very bad, but is better now, I think. Max has been secretly unburdening herself to me and finally got to the point they decided to move out. But guess they're going to stick it out a month and see.

Henry is certainly not the Henry I used to live with. Guess when people get older they can't assume emotional burdens like they useter. And, as you say, the fact that Henry is almost old enough to be Max and Robert's grandmother makes for great misunderstandings. Ed and I get along better when she'sout of town, but then, I guess that's life

That beautiful car of Harry's is going to be a bone of contention. Henry passed for an Oregon driver's licsence (!) but has decided not to bother getting one--would rather be a back seat driver--imagine ! John is the only one to drive it, but he's seldom home. Robert has his own you know, now--and is he mad that he could have had Harry's ! So Max and Edward are alking of getting licenses (how do you spell that thing?). Henry wants to sell it--so I dunno--whether I'll get groceries and rides or not.....

As for us Chambreaus---Ed wrote a play amid great turmoil, which he is supposed to put on this fall. The red-headed girl in the enclosed is one of his "pupils" inthe play. I managed to design costumes and make sketches through it. I've been trying to get my so-dirty from kids all summer house clean but am getting nowhere. My house is always so full of PEOPLE I never can get anything done !

Our weather is trying to act like winter making me send in a big order of clothes to Montgomery Ward. As usual, damn ! I ended up by eliminating all the things I wanted to bring in down within reason. Would

you like me to point out all the things in the catalog I want for xmas !

I always know it's October when Ruthie starts asking us what we want o for xmas !

Mike's finally decided to go to school--more or less. Was right proud of him that he stayed home from school Monday with a plain cold--no wheezles ! Usually no matter what he gets so resembles asthma that I never knew whether it was a cold or what..

I don't think I'd call it doing things the "hard way" for Sissy not to run off to California and leave her kids. I think it's rather decent of her.

Oh, heaffens, Ruthie I forgot I left you dangling! Yes, papa finally came around, so to speak. I guess I told you I got him back on the ta track--was getting pretty nawsty about those wild, wondering nights. In fact, for all my shrewing, he really capitulated and told me things I've been waiting ten years to hear ---yum,yum !....Among other things not meant for your ears he said,that I'm "his rudder" and he would have been no-good without me. Ha ha. Wives are usually referred to as "anchors", I believe, but then I suppose when a man still has a hankering to roam that a rudder is better than nothing !

The long-discussed "excerpts" (from whose letters to whom?) were quite a shock. I was feeling particularly neurotic (trying to figure out my position in the Harkness mess) when I read them so to have my neurotic beginnings shown to me was trying. However, I waspleased to see mama's viewpoint on many unpleasant situationsI remember; and also pleased tat you gave so much thought and concern to funny little me !

I don'tremember the same things about them as you do, of course. Make one wonder, thinking about one'sown kids, how far off the beam we are in what makes them act the way they do !

The IQ test:I remember the test itself and the circumstances and a lot of fuss made about it but I don'tremember the rest. Trying to think b back I remember being very confused about the whole thing; they seemed to be selecting me all by myself and making me seem queer and different from the other kids. I don't remember it as an honor.

At the class party I suffered agonies, though I was horribly proud to think you'd let me have it and that Miss Shoulderer came. Wasn't it s she?

As to going up to Roosevelt for sewing--and cooking--it seemed awfully exciting to go to a different school, but I don't remember it lasting long. I seem to remember all my school life as definitely uncomfortable. The idea now, of course, in too much skipping, is that youmay be forcing a child beyond their emotinnal maturity, which, it seems, alws stays at their age level no matter what their "mental" ability. Get it? F'instance, an eight yearold may still cry in situations that a 9 or 10 year old wouldn't and that makes misunderstandings with their class-mates. Got to thinking maybe that'sparly Mike's trouble after one of his friends told about his awful temper tantrums on the school grounds Maybe he gets asthma during school from trying to "keep up" with the older kids all the time. (This is not up Clyde'salley !)

Doing my room was fun and I appreciate your letting me. I wasn't very satisfied with it when it was done, I know--wasn't what I intended.

well, enough of this fol-de-rol. Must return to my 35 year old problm problems (34, really-don't getworried.)

Are you guys planning a trip this way again? Winter reminds me of you I'm always scared every year for fear you might pass us up !

Well, must get to bed, tho it doesn't mean much good sleep. Remember how Dennis always fought sleep? Still does. I sometimes despair that he'll ever"learn to sleep". T hird child?

Well, MUST to bed.....my love to all--wish you all were around the corner instead of those twerpy in-laws of mine....I've served my time ith them.....

well, MUST to bed----

Lorna

Return

Tuesday middle Oct. 1949

Dear Maw,

And I've been thinking every night I would write you, too. Seems evey hour I set aside the last week to write you got swiped, some of it, I'll admit by books.

S8wonderful to have time to read. Remember when I used to rant and rave because I didn't? Can't manage rental books with my poor trasprtation facilities so don't ask me if I've read anything new. Have been reading The Robe, out of curiosity. It's good, and holds your interest, but I wasn't overwhelmed as I expected to be.

We're expecting our first freeze tonight--a month early. Think we'll have snow again? Have put in a seventy dollar order to Montgomery-Ward (since we managed last year'sall right). Just dull, dull things. Have finally faced the truth that it gets damn cold in California for three months and oredered us all winter-ish underwear. Am wearing a union suit and loving it. Was like Christmas when practically the whole order arrived the other day !

However I couldn't afford anything for myself--yet. So expect a slight xmas list yet. Guess I could whip up a few ideas for you now, since I've been at my family, telling them that it's almost Hallowe'en and Ruth HAS to get her xmas shopping done ! Mike wants Popular Science magazine (will trade Better Homes and Gardens for it)--little shade of Clyde that he is ! Edward wants more matches with "Chambreau" written on them--people cry for them !

Max and Hohn and I did our second Saturday shopping with the car and my larder is beginning to look more lardy. I then organized a trip to the zoo with the kids, which was fun--oh, so much easier with a car ! The lion wee-wee'ed on us, too !

Sundays the car doesn't do any of us much good because they have to traipse clear in to L.A. to see Harry. He is still in that horrible place and it doesn't look too promising that he'll get to a sanatarium any too soon. Some people have been in there two yearswaiting to get somewhere else !

You were right when you said I'd forget my own troubles thinking about the Harkies'. Everything is a horrible mess, as usual. There is cleavage in the family: it amounts, vaguely, to Max, John, Sharon, Harry and I against Ed and Henry. One really can'tsum it up in a few sentences, butthe issues are--1. John 2. Sharon 3. TB. 4.Henry's "rental units" she wants to build 5.Henry's attitude, etc. Which side are you on?

Henry is a mess--that we all agree upon. Harry told Max that he'd been "worried about her mother's mental state for some time". I don't know how to explain it, but she worries me.

She is perfectly nasty to John and Shapon and has Max so upset she feels it neccessary to move out....Well, Isuppose it will smooth out more of less, things seem to.....

They are definitely going to sell the car- none of us can afford it. So we re trying to not get used to it.

I'm glad to hear you are planning to come down again, that I am. How

is Clyde's ailment--will we be going to see Richie again?

Please don't go hog wild on us for xmas--we don't need things like we useta. Staying put in one place for a couple of years makes one able to make a little progress.

Dennis is getting much better about his sleeping and fears, thank goodness. Altho he still refuses to go to the birthday pparty he and Jule are invited to Saturday unless I go. I hate to bring us Gesell again, but I8m glad I stuck to his theories about the fears and stuff--tho there were times I d have preferred to "beat it out of him". Guess they DO outgrow things.

Good for Bud. I'm real proud of him. Hope he can keep his "integrity". He'll doubtless find, like the rest of us do, that that is the hardest thing to do in this world.

Imagine the Archduke of Austria in YAKIMA !

Speaking of xmas again--we'd all like plaid shirts--isn'tthat a silly thing to want?

Julie has written you a letter, as you see. She is following in her big brother's footsteps. can write her name, count to thirty, draw trains AND people and memorize parts of her books. She sure likes to draw, color and cut, poor thing ! And doesn'tseem to give a hoot about dolls--who doesthat sound like?

Well, I have nothing more tooffer, I guess. This isthe next night now I didn't get this finished last night as I got too sleepy....

We have a new heater in the kids' room and it seems wonderful to be warm enough....our kitty hasbecome quite a member of the family...and we stillhave that g.d. rabbit.....

so guessI8ll say goodnight forthis time....

lots of love,

Lorna

Last of October 1949

Friday

Dear Pop,

Sixty years old? !! That's what Ruth says. She ain't kidding is she? Well, how does it feel? Geez aren't you getting tired of birthdays?

Gosh, I remember when grandpa was sixty. What in the world can a person give you? If I shopped around andfoundsome silly thing, no doubt you'd have it. I'm too far away from you all to know the little thingsyou mightlike. And, as usual, it's later than I think. Should have asked mom for some suggestions a couple of weeks ago. Well, you're probably all wise to me by now. When you come down I'll give you something special--and I don't mean a night at Earl Carroll's!

I liked the picture of you and Marilyn--look very aristocratic, both of you. I don't hink you look like a minister--look more like a very handsome gentleman, if you ask me. If I look like you will I get better looking every year like you do?

Fall and holidays approaching and everything make me think of you guys. It doesn't seem so long until you'll be down again, then. That is the high-light of the year to me. I'm going to try to keep our xmas list for Ruthie very minor so I'll be sure you'll make it. Maybe we could send you the money in the pig bank--would that help?

How's your health, anyway? Havn't heard about it for some time. Hope you're as good asyou look. Did you read in Better Homes and Gardens about the anti-~~////~~histamine pills--like yours and Mike's--seemingly being good to ward off colds? Have swiped a couple of Mike's and havn't gotten a cold. Course maybe I wasn't getting one anyway.

Dennis bery busy helping me write this--you can imagine how much help he is ! Mike ishome from school again today in spite of his determination to go every day until xmas. Wish somebody would find out why that binkety-blank asthma comes on so suddenly ! Don't you?

Ruth says the Jacobsens want to come down for Thanksgiving. I was wondering aboutthat--andhoping. I would like to have some of my own around for a change. Edward is a little worried for fear he'll feel like a "poor relation" now. Should think it would make everything pleasanter, myself. The Harknesses, all being here, will have quite a tribe of their own, and I certainly couldn'thave them ALL, so I'll be glad if the Jakes do come. Besides the Harkies are think with inter-family feuds and all right now and I'd just as soon avoid the responsibility of having them all together.

Well, I just wanted to wish you a happy, happy birthday and tell you I'm glad you're my papa and I'm sorry I moved so far away. Morning is not a good time for me to sit down and try to write a letter, but neither is any other time of day during these years, I've found. So just be assured I'mthinking about you--get the thought wave?--

and lots andlots of love,

your eldest,

Tootie

Oct. 27 1949 Wednesday

Dear Ruthie,

Mustget this off my mind--want to be sure to give you our xmas list ! Seems I have millions of things that should be done and I NEFER get around to them, so please excuse if this is brief anduninteresting.

I've stalled so long already I suppose it'stoo late for your subscription deals. Always hate to start telling you what we want--I feel like a beggar or a spoiled chee-ild. BUT..

for magazines we'd like--Time
maybe Life
the Journal (tho I do believe it runs for two years as you say
Popular Science and Donald Duck for Mike.

Edward would "like", besides his name matches I mentioned, sox, ties and handkerchieves. He doesn't know he wants them but he does. He really needs such, tho he doesn really like to get them as gifts--prefers glamor things asyou know.

Lorna wouldlike besides whatever I mentioned before, I forget what it was, a plain yellow (no flowers, please !) bath mat set--maybe slacks (NOT green or black) if you feel extravagant.

Julie and Dennis would like any new Golden Books they have out for xmas,(says their mother). Julie COULD use a dress (NOT yellow and mama loves dark colored ones !) Dennis likes cars and airplanes and fire engines and dull things like that that boys do.

Now thisis all I'm going to suggest this year, so you'll be sure to have enough left to come down on (All? you say, huh ?) And of course i hope for Ruthie's own inimitable touch to her packages....

Am going to write to Tiny right after I finish this and tell them to come down for Thanksgiving. I think itwould be fun and do us good. Don't know how I'm going to sleep them ,but we always seem to manage.

Clyde's letter i wrote him stuck around and stuck around for lack of a stamp like letter s always do aroundhere, so It was late--as usual I betcha.

Well, like isvery much aof a tizzy now with our family problems, won't go into them now.....

much love from
me, Lorna

Nov 4 1949 Thursday

Dear Ruth,

W hy isit so damnedhot in November? Our humidity is 19, wet, aren't wwe, pop?

Well, the first holiday isover..Hallowe'e n. And, boy, they sure make something of it down here. It ain't what it used to be when i was a kid--(now it'smy turn to say that !) Do theyhav parties in the schools and parks up there to keep the kidsout of mischirf? Here each scool has a big elaborate carnival--why,they're like regular county fairs !--and almost every kid appears in fancy dress. Most of them look good enough to be movie make-up--the mostelaborate, expensive, fancy things. Seems like for thatone day the whole town is invaded by all these queer little epople. When each school has a big parade with all the Hollywood fixin's ...loudspeakers and clprofessional clowns andmusic. Even the teachers are alldressed up. Everyone in this place is a frustrated actor anyway and it sure comes out on Hallowe'en !

We went to Michael's school Friday and to Sharon's Monday with the kids and it's some ordeal, tho Max having the car sure helped. Then all this mad "trick-or-treating" Monday night. We three mamas and another "gal" took our five little kids--all the same size--up and down the street and they sure got the loot. This was Dennis' first year and, sltho he was shy at first when he found out they were giving out free candy he didn't lag after that !

Then I asked the "gals" in for a wild beer afterwards., which I enjoyed but Edward didn't. He sure is rude and unchummy to my neighbor friends.

So now we are spending this week recuperating.

Max got her driver's license about a week ago and she and I and the kids have had a glorious time puttin around and buying groceries. First time she or I ever had a car at our disposal. But Tuesday Henry handed it over to a dealer, so that's that. I did my groceries a la grocery cart today--and it sure seemed like work. The morning befroe they gave it up Max took me out and I stocked up on $20 worth of canned food--wonderful feeling ! Was glad I had the money to do it.

So now I can stay home and make inroads on this filthy house-- tho I can think if things I d rather do.

I told you we were having "family troubles". Got to thinking you might misinterpret that. It all revolves around Henry's astounding attitude toward Max and her little family. Everyone necessaryily takes sides one way or the other and it seems to make hard feelings around. We are all agreed tho, even Edward to whom Henry can do no wrong--that she is certainly being as nasty as she can be. We all realize, too, that she is going through a very difficult time, but it sure makes one wonder about life and people to see a person who always maintained such a reputation for sweetness and light acting like a perfect hellion about one situation. Max is perfectly miserable--(and so is Henry)--she wants to move out, but circumstances don't quite permit. And Henry would like to visit her family back east, but doesn't feel free to go. Max's marriage isn't so hot--as we all know--but she'shappy. And the trouble is Henry acted the same way about Max's other two romances.

Henry is slowly going nuts in that awful hospital. His moving to the Sanitarium seems to be still mostly talk. Sorry I misquoted his age..

67 isright.

What else do you want to know?

I don't want BH&G again, so relax. Just makes me dissatisfied I can't do all those yummy things to MY house.....The Monkey Ward arder goes on a monthly account--dumbies, or I couldn'thave done it. Ed is making good enough money these days--but, I say--is it worth it?

That clipping you sent Ruth, was downright disgusting, wasn't it? Gave me two boosts in one day, tho. The neighbors are having their house painted--damn 'em..sure shows ours up !--by a cute lil old guy named ,or rather called, Cookie. He asked me today where I learned to bring up kids--said he's never seen such nice kids and he's been listening to the way I handles them and thought it was certainly nice, etc. Boy, am I puffed up. Something I've been wanting to hear for years...and all I get is razz ing about my "child psychology" ! And I had been worrying for fear he could hear me shrewing around over here !

He said he's do our house for $150 , on account, if we'd furnish the paint. Sure would like to, but don't see it yet.

Got a long letter from Tiny--mostly about Roddy. I wrote her, but guess she wrote before she got mine. We'll get together yet. I DO want them here--because I want to see them, and because I want to avoid any Harkness entanglements--the air is so thick.. Henry has a strange phobia anyway about holidays and would just as soon hide out till they're all over.

Well, guess that's about all I know--unless I go into Harknesses and tha 's too much of a good thing. Max is doing a wonderful job on Sharon--everybody says that. She has calmed down amazingly and seems a very normal little girl already. Too bad Henry hatesher so--afraid she'll spoil all Max's efforts Henry simply cannot reconcile herself to Max's marriage and won't even try. Tho I think it has more to do with TB than anything else, and, then, John is certainly not Henry's type. Ah, well, I said I wouldn't go into it....

Must do the dishes and put wheezy Mike to bed and hope for some rest myself; My nights are as bad as my days, seems--what with Ed booming in in the middle of the night and horsing around for an hour eating and such and me supposed to be sleeping in the living room--and asthma--and Dennis--and the cat getting loose and waking people up--etc....

well, happy days !

lotsa love, Loran

Monday
Nov. 1969

Dear Ruth –

Will try to dash off a note so you'll have something before Thanks. Life is full of – that's why you haven't heard.

Ed got so obstreperous that Henry & I finally cracked down on him & he is quitting his Harvey Inn job Wed. night. Thank Gawd! a whole year of that stuff!

Los Angeles is having the usual Thanksgiving holiday flu epidemic. Why is everyone always sick on Thanks? Anyway the whole family's had it — vomiting & fever etc. Nice set back when I'm trying to get ready for the Jacobsens! We've all been nasty sick but everyone seems to be snapping out out it now. Thank Gawd for that!

Henry is still upset & troublesome. She has reason to be I guess. Harry's TB is practically gone after treatments of this new streptomycin drug, but other developments have set in. Whether his other troubles or emotional

shock or what no one seems to know. They treated him for a stroke because he acts like he'd had one, but he hadn't. Anyway – he's on the "very serious" list & Henry is very upset.

She got the car out of the lot again – but is going to put it back – Entertaining house guests is almost simple, I find, with a refrigerator & car at one's disposal –

The box of apples was a lovely, lovely surprise! How this family does love apples! Everyone remarks about the wonderful flavor. Poor Californians – apples shipped green down here always taste like wood. Thank you very much.

Sorry not to write more – but will try after the holiday. I'm a busy little bee right now –

Much love & I'll be thinking of you all very much on Thanksgiving – believe me!

Lorna

DECEMBER FIRST. 1949

Dear Family,

Well, yes ! I'd better get something written or you'll nefer mail our xmas package, willya? It's going to be harder than ever now with Ed coming home evenings...So here goes something--don't know how far I'll get...

Yes, we really enjoyed the Jacobsens visit--even in spite of the "bug". As we all get older we get along better or something. Ed quit his bar job Wed. night and he was in the best of moods all week end. Hen Havn't seen him like that for quite some time.

Nobody got very drunk--except ME !--I passed out-ish mashing the potatoes. Not because I had any more manhattans than anyone else--guess I was tired--always excuses ! Anyway the rest of the week end I was fine. The "bug" is a strange, but virulent, one-day nausea that mowed the jakes down one by one, but didn't last long. A little messy, I'll admit, but guess everyone's fine now.

We took the kids merry-go-rounding and Griffith parking, went to the Farmer's market for lunch and saw part of a rehearsal of Ed's play. Julie and Judy held hands most all the time and Julie wept when Judy had to go. Even Dennis was better than that summer. Mike got so excited he was down the first day, but Roddy didn't seem to mind--said he "knew you had to give Mike one day to get acquainted".

I gave Roddy an oil painting lesson at his mother's instigation. He really is talented and with that "Hollywood mother" egging him on he'll no doubt do something with it. Wehn I first saw him this trip I thought "my God !--Kingsley !" but DON'T tell Tiny. He had gotten fattish.

Judy doesn't seem any bigger to us, but I suppose she is. She's a cute little monkey--albeit nervous. Jake is much better company than he used to be and he and Ed hit it off quite well this time. Tiny's gotten to be quite a talker and seems very wrapped up in her own interests. We didn't seem to feel the necessity of "unburdening" ourselves as we have in the past.

Today's the first and xmas is being wrapped around my neck. Everyone but me seems to have their xmas shopping done. What oh what to get you people that I'm so far away from that I don't know your needs, wants or already-haves. So if things turn out to be more remembrances than anything, excuse, please.

Can I have the Jim Eaton's, Angela's, and Phyl Holt's addresses for cards, please?

Our lives are still very Harknessified. We are Henry's weeping wall and I am Maxine's. Max and John plan to move the first of the year, tho I never heard of anyone having any money left after xmas. Henry is better, but still a most difficult person. It is inherent in her to force all her family to live according to HER ideas for their happiness and she is horribly predjudiced to her own blood.

Harry was given the last rites the Tuesday before Thanksgiving, but this new drug that Time writes about seems to be perking him up somewhat. No one seems to know really. He is still out of his head making it very difficult for Henry on her long, arduous visits by trolley. This treatment lasts for six months, and is very new, so no one knows, as I said.

The car was sold the Tuesday before, too. Henry made $500 on it--still owed $600. Sure miss it, but was the only thing to do, I guess As far as anyone knows Harry has no will and is unable to make one no No one(s very clear what that means either. There is the house and about $1200 worth of Vinton stock left, I guess. We have had to think about such things.

Can't say your clipping about the weather holds very true now. We've had to dig out our summer clothes again. No snow this hear, I betcha

Yes, I do understand about the hops--Clyde explained it in his letter so ha ha. Ed and Jake and I sat down and read it and figured it out. Some crack about the Democrats, pop. The Jakes almost went home agin when they foundout Ed voted for Truman !

Have letters of yours stacked around here, but about time for school to be out and the "twins" and Mike will prabably start their usual name-calling contests, so don't know if I'll get many comments out...

We certainly enjoyed the apples--AND the fruit you sent. Won't last long, I betcha, as they're so good I always have to open another can to staify everyone. Also the jelly. We don't know what home made jelly is around here..

Hnery gave me two of her old damask cloths--so hope that's not in my xmas box, huh?

Hnery is going to baby sit for us Monday while Ed and I go xmas shopping. Imagine going out alone with him ! I'm scared ! Max is going to help her, thank goodness as the kids are just hellions around Henry. She hasn't the heart to tell them no to anything and they sure take advantage of it !

Well, I go now--tho I don't know why. Felt a let down after the Jakes went. It's so lonesome living among people you can't be completely yourself around--and that includes Edward---hmmm...

lotsa love---Mrs. C.

Thursday Dec. 9 1949

Dear Ruth, etc.

Well, we mailed YOUR package today. I sent the Powells and the GE's in with yours, not having enough queer shaped boxes to do otherwise. So, in spite of the stickers, they may be opened and distributed--or not--as you wish. They are all wrapped and not easily guessed, and I'd just as soon someone DID appreciate my wrappings for awhile ! Somebody gave me a folder showing how to wrap and it's the best job r ever did--me, who hates wrapping actually enjoyed it. Such a boon to have the kids big enough not to molest things !

You can picture papa Edward with the BIG box and two booted kids with umbrellas trundling off in the rain to mail them. That'sthe nearest we get to a xmas scene down here. We are having another rain. In this country it's almost fun to be cooped up --now that we have adequate heat and the new heater in the kids' room gives me a place to dry out my washing.

A letter from Tiny with yours with pictures she took down here--and your cute, but rather sad-looking picture--fun. They seemed to have enjoyed their visit, too and offer us an invitation. Will be surprised sometime if we take them up on it won't they?

My last letter I remember as rather gloomy--going through the first adjustment of Ed's not working nights. Since then all my theories have been proved. There is the most pleasant change around here. Papa is is old charming, easy-going, piano playing, yearning-for - glamor self (WHAT am Isaying?) He gets up andgoes to bed when we do and halps with the work in the mornings. Dennis is sleeping through the nights. Whether that has anything to do with Ed's early morning returns or not I couldn't be sure, but it's a coincidence.

(Dennis and Julie are parading the rain-filled gutter with the umbrellas and even the doll in her raincape--cute.)

However, Curley is playing Mephistopholes and calls Edward and "crosses his palm with silver" and the January bills loom large, and papa, who has never stopped drinking in the fifteen years I've known him is enamored of ideas of himself playing in a bar and "not touching a drop", so he puts him off from week to week and life with Edward continues to be like living with a time-bomb.

We have street lights on lil old dark Harmony street! It is right in front of our house -just like our private light, so Clyde won't have to put in a porch light after all ! And we can go to the new, ultra-glam Eaton's while you're here and still find out way home !

The Harkness plot thickens as it always will. Bebe has written that she is arriving New Year's Eve for an indefinite stay at the Harkness menage. She will, too--she always has. And being a regualr Aunt Myrta trouble maker person things will really pop around there. I can't very well explain these people to you as your viewpoint is so different, Ruth. No one would think of saying her "nay"--nor would she heed it, nor would Henry think of finding herself a place--that would be against her ideals of family love and solidarity (even tho there isn'tany) and the same for Max and John moving out. Queer people--they don't see things like the majority do.

Harry continues about the same, not bright enough to talk to, but not quit hopeless either.

Am pretty well through with my xmas shopping myself. These xmas saving clubs are wonderful. Max and Henry stayedwith the kids and Ed and I went downtown together and did our shopping. Neither of us were very crazy about it, but it was just what we needed. We had fun and I think it was good for him to see me dressed up again--I know it did be worlds of good to be squired around without kids.

I feel like you say about Slim. Amazing, isn't it?

Yes, Jake seems a little puzzled about Roddy'saccomplishments, but as we all make a fuss over it, he produces glimmeringsof pride. Edward, being a"Harkness" who sees no good in any but his own blood, refuses to see any talent there.

Yes, they saw Santa Claus Lane. Geez, that was up on Halloween, it seems ! Also Miracle Mile's "singing trees"--beautiful, perfect, artificial trees that play music. We had quite an argument as to whethe they were real or not and Roddy made a lovely, subtle crack about "them trying to make them so real we'd know they were artificial" but it was so subtle, I can't quite remember it.

Julie and Dennis both have recordings of their conversations with Santa Claus that they give away free down here. Do they do thatup there? My view point is already so warped from livinghere I don't know what'snoraml and what'snot.

Well,I must cease this as I'd like to dash a note to Tiny andMike is imminent with his bright ideas for upsetting our peace.

Lots Of love and fun for xmas---

Lorna