

Sept 5, 1957

Darlings:- It seems strange that a month ago I hadn't even left Croton yet for my second visit to Whiskey: so much seems to have got itself stuffed into the past few weeks. When did I write you from the River? It must have been the morning of the Dodges' charade party, when we were all moaning and groaning about having to go and make fools of ourselves. David was particularly repulsive and stubborn and we practically had to chain him to us so he'd go. He kept saying over and over that Aunt Polly didn't like him and would be glad if he stayed away. We discovered later that this may have been a smoke screen for the real reason: the famous Ann Philippi was spending the night at Rum Point. DEB cozed away as soon as he'd performed our charade ("Dave Beck"), but then surprised us by being on hand at the Goose boat-house for our own return trip home to Whiskey. On the way he said tersely that he'd seen the last of Ann, and I do believe this is true. So ends an episode that caused us much thought and emotion, gel? Old David lost 12 pounds over this and is now quite disgusted because it makes his chance at the football squad rather shaky: "if you weigh under 130, you got to be awful good" is the way he puts it. So now he's concentrating on gaining back weight and is going tomorrow for a check-up at the doctor. I'm considering calling Vic (the doc) and asking him to slip David some words of advice on smoking and weight - apparently all those children smoked a great deal! I can assure you, though, that the drinking episodes were not repeated with any noticeable effects.

How does all this sound now that it's so far behind you? It must seem like another world. What I'm sorry about is that Ann and David must have proven quite exhausting. I now realize it wasn't right for us to leave David with you to cope with the whole blooming summer, but this can't be undone now, and all we can do is hope to goodness that our son won't be 16 for too much longer. Who knows? Perhaps at 18 - or even 17 - he'll be charming! When Artie Malsin arrived, the two boys holed up in the cave, making noises like half-grown lions and padding around in pursuit of unnamed amusements. One of these turned out to be grappling for a bent propellor they spotted on the Blanket Shoals. They spent hours at it and finally brought the thing home and it's now resting on David's bed upstairs.

Did I tell you I finally had a conference with Aunt Polly? I can't have, since that letter went off the day of their party. I knew it wouldn't do much good, except to satisfy my curiosity, and this it did and also proved you right, Mummy: in Aunt Polly's eyes, God is her co-pilot and has charged her with passing on the Word. Wendy tells me she overheard David and Bobby Pfeiffer in conversation on Goosethe night of the party. Apparently it had to do with those pamphlets Aunt P. gave me. "Little books about Billy Graham?" said Bobby, "yes, I know about those. She gives them to my mother too and the trouble is my mother reads them!" I went into one of those bedrooms halfway between cocktails and supper to powder my nose, and could barely move for the litter of empty beer bottles, old whiskey bottles, etc. This was apparently young Clee's room and Phil told me later that he made quite a fuss about serving cocktails: "We must wait for Daddy, No, I don't know how to make a martini". Isn't this a lot of hypocrisy? A charade acted out by the Dodges was rather revealing of something that must have happened all summer long. Clee Jr. and wife (Phyllis?) and two guests were seen playing bridge and looking at their watches: "where are those kids? it's nearly midnight", etc., etc. Finally Gail and Alice come in and a long story is told, out of which all I can remember is "Boyer's watch stopped. Boyer's outboard wouldn't start. Boyer ran us on the "hiskey shoal". I think that, being the only male cousin to stay around for any length of time, he became a convenient catch-all for excuses.

I had my talk with Aunt Polly the next morning and it took 3 hours. Neither Phil nor David could start the outboard and the Pan was in Clayton, so I finally got hoist by my own advice ("why don't you row, for goodness sake?") and embarked Goose-wards in the skiff. Needless to say I didn't get through the morning without a few extra pamphlets, also a book called "The Power Of Prayer" and a reprint of a Reader's Digest article called "The Case For Chastity". Aunt P. has all these things in neat piles, and probably arranged in al-

phabetical order, according to subject matter. She rather liked the fact that I'm a member of Alcoholics Anonymous, since this type of thing has God involved in it and circumvents psychiatrists, of which Aunt P. disapproves - "they make you so introspective", which happens to be the reverse of the truth but we'll let that one be. She said she really liked David but he got off to a bad start with her on one of their first evenings with a quite idiotic remark. They were discussing plays, and someone happened to mention "My Fair Lady". "Oh that," says Dave, in a bored drawl, "it must have been all right, although I can't remember the first act - I was so drunk". I held back a guffaw with great difficulty. Aunt Polly's extreme distrust of anything pertaining to Demon Rum has had this ridiculous effect on the conversation of most young people and I can't understand why she doesn't see through it. David saw "My Fair Lady" with Kathy Cochran; Phil paid their restaurant bill the following day and I remember our amusement over what they ate: hamburgers, vanilla ice cream and one glass of chianti apiece. Aunt P. went on to talk about Aunt Bea and old Mrs. Dodge, and the wonderful religious and moral heritage they had left behind for the benefit of her children and grand-children, adding "and I wish all the other children up here could have had this too". Here I felt my hackles rise in indignation. I thought of my saintly mother-in-law, with her own collection of tracts and pamphlets, felt a momentary giggle, and decided the subject was hopeless and had best be dropped. By way of relieving irritation, I asked Aunt P. why Mackie MacClean called his father a "shit-head". Aunt P. got slightly pale at this, but jumped in bravely with "oh, they're a very close-knit family, very outspoken, you know". And here is when I got up and said I'd better get back to Whiskey. Incidentally, before I leave this little interview: it was Gail and Alice who took the key from the Orchard.

The last Saturday on the River we had dinner with the Murrays. Auntie Nanny and I sat on either side of Dr. M. We gave him a brief run-down of the situation, and he said that both Aunt Bea and Aunt Polly were "life-long adolescents" in a good many of their reactions to various things, such as children's pranks, restlessness, etc. This I had suspected and it was reassuring to hear the man of science put it into words. The evening at the Murrays' was great fun. Phil and I had groaned when we learned the Michael Whites were included and several people whispered to us beforehand that something had to be done to prevent Michael from turning the evening into one long paper and pencil game. Nobody could think of anything effective but Dr. Murray dealt with the problem very neatly. After dinner he made a little speech, to the effect that this was the last River party for most of us, and, instead of bowing to the forces of sweetness and light, we should all make an effort in seeing to it that this be "the lousiest evening of the summer: those, like Mimi here, who like conversation should play games, and the games fanciers, like Michael White, should make conversation". Not a single game was played; there was marvellous conversation and everybody had a wonderful time.

The next day at tennis, the Stickneys arrived with their catch of the evening before: a 40-ound muskellunge, 56 inches in length. This was about the 5th muskie of the season caught by the Stickney-Herrick-Coe group. I finally gave Phil some muskie equipment: the wire stuff and big reel, and Paul helped him wind it and took him and Art Malsin out for an early morning fish. Apparently whenever another boat came into sight Paul would mutter "there goes that Mr. Herrick". We've decided he must dream of that family and can't wait to catch a bigger muskia.

Tuesday morning, Phil and I woke at 3 a.m. and heard the wind howling and the waves splashing. With a flashlight I peered at the wind indicator, which said 30-35, and had nasty visions of all of us getting marooned by a 3-day blow. As soon as it was light we began getting people out of bed. By 8:15 we were all in the boat (Eva had gone on an earlier trip) and were chugging towards Clayton. I'm glad we did it then because just as we reached Gillick's dock, the wind started getting stronger, the way it does when the sun has reached a certain altitude. You who call yourself Mrs. Hitler should have seen me hustling people to and from the breakfast table and then touring their rooms after they'd withdrawn their bags and picking up loose articles from under beds and in bottom drawers. Alice was on hand, as arranged. She told Phil her opinions of Ann (C.) - unfavorable - but he stopped her before she had a chance to start on David as he didn't have the strength to listen!

I make all this sound rightfully noisy and confused, when all I really want to do is let you know what fun we had and how much it meant to us to be in charge of Whiskey for those 10 days. When we saw Art Malsin the night before last he said something about life here being a bit more complex than on the River and I found myself protesting that nothing was more complex than the ins and outs and conflicting interests of a typical River day. This would be true of any place where a large family is trying to live together in peace. I apologize for all the analyzing there seems to be in this letter. It's merely an indication that I've had the chance to view the River from a slightly different angle - more as a participant than a visiting member of the 2nd generation.

Thanks for your island to both of you.

And thanks for all the wonderful things we found here when we arrived: the sheets, blankets, and the Morgan stock, which I picked up at the post office yesterday and am taking down to the deposit box today. Don't worry about our selling them, Daddy: we're much too pleased at having them "in the background", so to speak.

And thanks, Mummy, for devoting some of your precious last moments in the U.S. to telephoning Dorothy Hammond: she was here to greet us, and Adeline had spent the day getting the house all clean and nice, food ordered, etc.

Before I forget: Jenny has asked me to tell you that she is now an official "above-water swimmer" and swam from the Whiskey dock to a certain rock which she said "Granny told me about". She even got thrown off the dock and got herself back in good order, so I think we can consider the thing as a *Fait Accompli*, which is quite some relief. She also lost two front teeth^h in the past week, so all in all she's feeling very grown-up. She lost her first tiny pearl during a ball-game at Rum Point. It dropped under the Whiskey dock as we were landing and Phil took his clothes off and went probing for it. By some miracle we were able to spot it and he brought it up for putting under the pillow. I pray that what she grows in the place of these are not huge shovels that will need straightening! Speaking of shovels, David went to the dentist yesterday and some ex-rays were taken and shown to me. He has some tremendous wisdom teeth^h that are leaning against the molars and will have to be taken out - one, anyway. They looked like those menhirs in Brittany. Otherwise the job can be finished with inside bands that won't show. Today he's gone to NYC for clothes. We're arranged that what you so very kindly offered him per month, plus what we give him, he should pay for clothes. We'll pay for an occasional suit or overcoat, but if he loses a jacket or coat, he has to finance the replacement of same. By the end of 6 months we ought to be able to see how he makes out. It took Linda that long, maybe longer, to get going on the right financial path.

I must stop now and get this off to you. Much much love and thanks for the summer.

The dis-towels are wonderful! Adeline, who loves tradition and the old things, admires them extravagantly, especially the ones with fringes.