

Sept 11, 1971

Darling Mum:- I hadn't thought I'd be writing to you again from here, but I imagine you'd like to hear the latest on the BSC's. I spoke with Anne this morning. She tells me that Shirley and Betty have already gone back to Bedford Hills. When Uncle spoke with her just before he left the River, there had been mild speculation of Betty going to a hospital and Shirley taking a house nearby on the Cape. Much hope was placed on Faith Perera who was due back from Nova Scotia. In the end it turned out that Shirley was packing up and making his plans even before Labor Day. Contrary to what I had thought, Shirley will be teaching at the Bedford Art Center this coming academic year. One point that worries Anne is that he is having still another show -- and A. doesn't even know where. I said to her it was not a good idea to have shows every few months; it exhausts the artist and exhausts his audience. She begged me to tell this to Shirley and when I expressed doubt that he'd listen she said "he'll hear that part about exhausting one's audience". So I'll go see them as soon as I get back to Creten. On Betty, I repeated to Anne Phil's suggestion that Mergie Pruyn's help be enlisted. Anne said she'd telephone Mergie next week. After I'd hung up, I called Uncle Jimmy. He himself ~~XXXXXX~~ answered. He said the idea of M. Pruyn was excellent and that he himself would write to Mergie. I telephoned the Bossis again and gave this message to Arnold for Anne. Phil thinks, and I rather agree, that the Cape is a highly emotional place for the Shirleys and it's probably just as well that they're going back to Bedford. I gave Anne the telephone number of Alcoholics Anonymous in New York. I know from the experience of friends that AA now runs a number of places (or anyway one place) in Westchester County where you can go and spend a week or so "drying out" -- all the words involved in this illness are so d--- unattractive! During various conversations this summer Anne spoke warmly of psychiatric help for her mother. The truth is that the serinks haven't yet been able to do anything for alcoholics. I know: I think I drank more when I was going to that doctor in NYC than at any time in my life. AA is so far the only answer. I told Anne it was important that Betty go to a meeting in another town than Bedford -- North Salem or New Canaan or somewhere. I myself, being a resident of Creten, went to AA meetings in Chappaqua. I was pretty lucky in that Phil had an art director friend with the same ailment and he did a lot for my morale, went to meetings with me and also got me the name of a lovely lady in Creten who also is an AA and with whom I could chat at length whenever I felt like it. Anne said "I do wish Mama had a friend like that". I assured Anne that Betty would no doubt be surprised at how many friends she'll run into -- some of the nicest people in the world seem to be AA's. This thing does take courage, even if I say so myself, but there are times in one's life when you face an either-or situation and I knew Betty has the guts to go through with it. What is hard for me to believe is my own dumb blindness to Betty's condition. But then most women are traditionally gifted at covering up such problems. Betty will need a lot of support and sympathy from all of us -- implied, not actually stated. That "Anonymous" is very important: I remember wanting no one to know or comment upon what I did or did not do 20 years ago, when I took my big step. For the past few days Phil and I have been tryint to negotitate for a punt. We saw what was a dream come true at Mercier's: a seven-foot wooden punt that had a \$5 \$45 price tag. But by the time we located the salesman someone else had bought it. Harry Bazinet has been helping us, along with about

20 other residents of Clayton whom I got on the phone yesterday morning. You must wonder if we've lost our minds. We haven't. We've merely discovered that a punt would be an ideal thing for Phil's photography of birds. Didn't we have one here many years ago? There's one at Aunt Polly's and don't think I haven't felt the urge to steal it! Besides Phil's photography, there is the problem of the visiting child. I remember Shirley and Patricia and we whiling away happy hours in the punt at Rum Point. It's just perfect for kids. We have the old aluminum bicycle functioning again but that can hold only something like 1 and KKKK a half children at a time. Yesterday afternoon we followed what we thought was a hot lead to a second-hand punt and wound up (thanks to your brilliant daughter's stupidity) at the wrong marina in Clayton. But this turned out to be the same place where Unkie's Buck Four is wintering and so we had occasion to chat pleasantly with the man in charge. Phil asked "how's business?" He need not have: when you have 6 or 7 people squabbling for possession of a \$45 punt (the one at Mercier's) you can tell business is not very good. Phil has said several times "why not wait until spring?" My opinion is that right now is the time to buy a boat, when the boatyards are so over-crowded they're not so fussy about the price. Phil saw a punt this morning at the Calmet Marina in Clayton. Harry Bazinet had described this place as being "in down-town Clayton", hence the confusion of yesterday -- I never know what they mean by "downtown Clayton". This one is new and made of some kind of plastic and weighs only 38 pounds. It costs something like \$88 \$87 and I told Phil I'd give it to him for Christmas.

The weather so far has been muggy and quiet. There was one beautiful north wind day last week. Phil went out with camera to photograph birds on the Pig Island shoal but didn't get very far. Within 15 minutes he was back with a red speed boat in tow. This was filled with young chinese boys all chattering at each other in that high voice which seems peculiar to the orientals. They'd rented the boat from Charlie's Marina in Alexandria Bay and had run it all the way around Grinstone, then hit that gravel point off Papeese. Their trouble was obviously a sheered pin, but since Phil and I never learned to cope with these things, we telephoned Charlie and he said he'd be along as soon as he'd rescued another customer. Phil went back to Pig Island and I stayed on the porch engaged in at first rather uphill conversation with two of the boys -- the other two had borrowed rods and spent an hour happily fishing off the dock. I'm sure you couldn't care less about these characters. What I'm leading up to the long-way-around is that when Charlie finally showed up and replaced the pin (with many unuttered curses; it's quite a rough job, really), we found out from him that a boat called a Star-Craft, or so I think, can be had now for something like \$2600/. This is better than the depressing figure I mentioned for the whaler job.

Now if the Singer Sewing Machine people in Watertown would kindly send me a new belt for my antique model, then I'll really feel I'm in business. It's as bad as Guatemala: here I've been telephoning and imploring and explaining to Singer for well over a month and still nothing has happened.

It's very grey and muggy today. I'm amazed at the number of fishermen I see venturing out, but then I recall the annual muskie thing.

Much love,

What do you know about the Carter plates on Whiskey? They've been here ever since I can remember, but obviously they weren't always here. Do you think I should tell our next batch of kitchen help to avoid putting them in the dish-washer? We have some plates that belonged to Granny Beyer and now, after years in the dish-washer, you can hardly make out the decoration they've faded so.