

19 Maggio, 1967

Dear Marge:

The crisis has come and past with Danny and he is still among the living. About ten days ago, no about two weeks, after he had become increasingly decrepit about getting about, a circumstance which we had until then attributed to the curse of the Shepherds, subluxation, namely the neurological collapse of the rear quarters, we found a large tumor on the right side of his head, that is the left according to his own view of things. I don't know how we failed to see it, it was that big; of course his neck fur conceals much of the topography around the head. The vet said it was too precariously located to remove since it was near the eye, ear and throat but that it might be slow in developing. I guess now I told you this part. Well anyway, the tumor grew with amazing rapidity and in three more days it was the size of a baseball; there was no alternative but to operate; at least we had the consolation of not having to make an ambiguous decision. Of course we thought it was malignant, growing that fast, but Dr. Bowler said this wasn't necessarily so. At any rate he operated successfully, removing the entire growth; he was very happy about it; then Danny took too long, much too long, to shake off the anesthetic, and this meant the liver was not up to snuff, and the doc started to hedge, but finally Danny came around; all this over the phone, we stayed away a week, which was difficult, then picked him up yesterday. He looked great, albeit a little like a small horse where the hair had been cut from his neck and head. When we got him home, after seeming great, he began to shake and we covered him with a blanket and called the vet but could not locate him. I was sure it was pneumonia or oncoming convulsions, etc. but he finally settled down and now is all right; he even walks much better since he has the necessary strength to support himself muscularly now; before the tumor had made him too weak and thus hastened the signs of debility. So now the danger is over and we can cut our feets back to simply old age.

While Danny was in the ospedale, Ruth and I drove down to Salerno and around the Amalphi coastline to Amalphi, Positano and Sorrento. It was truly a great experience and an exciting one. We stayed in an old Cappuchin monastery in Amalphi, leaving our car in the narrow road and ascending some 176 feet in two elevators, the first an outside one. Everything was too splendid. Amalphi has a warm humid climate and the flowers and vines cover everything in a way never dreamed of in California or Florida. From our window at the top of the 1200 year old building we would look out at the most shatteringly beautiful sight you can imagine, the rows of tiny blue fishing boats directly below, the snaky analphi drive disappearing into tunnels, the sweeping contour of the huge, Naples like bay, the churches and cars and people, in fact every bit of the canvas was covered. Really great, great show, just like in Life Magazine. We had supper then, elegantly and silently served and finished our day walking among the tourist trap shops which were really quite pretty, looking at the marvelous duomo (3 stars in Michellin) and finally sitting at a table in the square like a couple of tourisca Americans sipping at our cappuccinis and savoring our dolcis and just enjoying. The next day we rode on through Pesitano, which is quite similar to Amalphi, and Sorrento, which despite all the lyrics is a little like Detroit and very pushy: no scarfs, perhaps some fine woodwork, maybe a music box; certainly a fine ceramic. They knicked me for two scarfs for Ruth's May 22 birthday but I refused even to look at the wood. But it was great fun and the next day we began being loyal to Danny again.