

Aug. 12, 1970

Dear Marge:

This is a kind of nothing letter because of nothing to report. It is, I suppose, just a keeping in touch letter. It is also a response to your bright one of June 23 or thereabouts. My God, Fall is here and I suppose your own plans will be changing again soon, etc. etc. Anyway, I hope you are well and happy. Your sparkle is very nice to behold.

and time passing

Ruth and I were down to see Harold Loeb again - for two reasons basically. First, he'd just come back from this serious operation in which the bells were ringing rather fast in the intensive care room. His heart failed and there was a clot on his lung on top of his anginal condition, but he survived his leg surgery and is now much more flexible, strangely enough, minus his big toe. He hipers about very ~~amely~~, going upstairs and down to listen to his Mets on the TV and to enter into meals. He has lost a lot of weight, naturally, being down to about 140, his college wrestling weight, but there is nothing ominous about this and in fact it helps his heart condition. As usual he is elated to see me and then gradually gets used to me and usually winds up despairing at my tendency to generalize. He is a little bit literal minded about this, and I tell him that conversation tends to be bombastic and unsubstantiated hogwash at times, but is interesting, and if you were to write it, it would be different, but he can be difficult on this point and I have to skate around a little gingerly at times. I think I am the only one, at least, who talks about subjects that interest him in his own house, you know the old expatriate days and literature and, yes, Hemingway. I swear he talks more about Hem than I do. If I praise Hem, he attacks, and if I criticize Hem he defends him as not always having been that much of a louse. All of this, I suppose is par for the human course. He realizes, finally, that the only ones who really care about him in any serious way are Hemingway people. So he has to cater a bit to this very small group. To the rest of the world and his family he is just a very old man (he will be 79 this winter) who has to be pampered a bit more than he should....Well, anyway, we had a generally good visit; I swam in that Saugatuk River and lifted tall ones each evening and muttered alone with Harold while the women were occupied on the terrace. Bert Sarason, my editor, if you please, came over one night but instead of talking Hemingway or Harold I had to be his confidante and handholder in re a hard time that his prospective fifth wife is giving him. I read an unpublished book of Harold's on Israel and gave him some advice on it. (He got sore at first because I drifted away from reading the manuscript to enter into the conversation at hand. He can pout that man). The book could be reorganized, I told him, taking out all the free Tolstoi-type advice and philosophizing and cutting into Israel at once rather than coming upon it casually after 80 pages.

I said this and half believed it but don't really know if it's true; but there is no point in breaking an old man's heart. He'd written and had published three novels by the time this Israel one was written, but strangely enough no one would print it. Actually those novels were not great. The first one was printed the same year as Hem's first collection of short stories, *In Our Time*, in 1925. At that time he was Hem's senior as a commercial writer. He devised the idea of leaving out the "thes" and the "ands" (you see he thought this was *avante gard* I guess) but the publisher made him put most of them back in. Still it sounded funny. Like most books of that period, or any period, it is barely readable now, which is what distinguishes it from *THE SUN ALSO RISES*. My God how THAT book reads today. I keep finding new patches in it myself. After the first book, "*DooDab*," Harold wrote two more about his experiences in Europe. I am collecting these writings of his. What he wrote that is really impressive are several important tomes on economics. They are very profound and hard going and I think old Harold plowed some new ground in them. The odd thing is that he and most of the others who went to Pamplona under the banner of the lost generation .. all wrote books and contributed in a very non-lost way. Well, I did get off of the track here.

The other reason for going to Weston was to visit with an English girl (Norma Paulsen, aged 47) whom we'd met in England. Norma was an old friend of Harold's wife, Barbara, and when they left England last year she tooted us around the island in her minnie so we were happy to see her and to bring her back here for a week of return visiting in our north country, auctions, mountain trails, all of it. Then we put her on a pipsqueak plane nearby and sent her back to Harold's. She is to have some dental and orthopedic work before returning to Europe. Norma was lots of fun but I must say that resonant West End high English accent of hers can become a bit piercing at constant close hand. Oddly, she is 100 per cent Danish ethnically but was born in England and has chosen to become crashingly, 110 per cent English.

Here it has been hellishly hot for going on three weeks, just one 90 degree-er after another, but we keep the house cool with the furnace fan, about 70 actually. Still, the weather does not induce anything creative and of course I jump at excuses being a paid up life member of the human race.... Ruth is very active in our zoning work and in the college. Next week we entertain our new college president, Leon Botstein, 23, advertized as the nation's youngest prexy. Oddly, though his hair is a bit longish he is not a bad sort and is far from being a bomb thrower. His wife is a shiksa (gentile).

I may go out to Michigan again in October for a week and it is almost certain we will seek other climes this winter, but just where has not been decided. Meanwhile, keep healthy and

lots of love,