

Dear Friends; On this mild Sunday afternoon, in the peace and quiet of my solitude in the "Push house", it is not the pen I take up, but the stencil sheet on which to write this third annual letter to you all of our Family Address book!! Already 4 hours have passed, with perusal of letters in the file folder, which Father and Mother sent me during my years overseas. It would take two days to properly read them all, but the quick glance shows all too clearly how the years flew by. The early letters showed my Mother's finely written firm school teacher's hand, and Father's precise penmanship,--both progressing to the years when the words were no longer cleanly written, but crooked with little regard for composition and spelling, 'till the last were almost indecipherable, the final heart-breaking attempt at fluency which once came so readily at their command.

So it is with deeply stirred emotions this letter is begun. The hopes, fears, encouragements, depressions, resentments, angers, assertiveness and submissions, all within the circle of Family loyalty and love, when read or remembered in such a short time, bring one trembling to the verge of tears. I read of the sorrow and loss my Parents expressed to me, and their trust in the future where no sorrow is, at the time of my Sister Catherine's death. Elsewhere I saw the futile attempts Mother made in practice to sign her name correctly; bravely at the top of the page, repeated over and over until at the bottom it was quite unrecognizable. ----and then no more.-----

Father's letters were always more mechanical, and yet spiced with more temper, more accusations and withdrawals, self-assertiveness and humility, more commanding and submissions. His letters like himself contained the fire of temper of a fiercely independent man, that caused various flare-ups between us here in his new Home, the Bush House. Like a well balanced top, the very fire of his personality kept him spinning upright for all to see and marvel.

Father always had the knack of illustrations, and the above is rather too true to his life. Last June 23rd. while descending the three broad steps to the sidewalk before the United Church in Port Rowan, amidst the crowd of people he stumbled and fell to his left knee and elbow from the top step. The fellows around helped him up and into my car, and later the Doctor tended to a skin laceration on his elbow. But the following morning, when he still couldn't use his left leg, I took him 25 miles to Simcoe Hospital, where exrays showed a clean break in the upper thigh bone. They were able to successfully operate and insert a pin the next day.

It was 59 days before the Doctor said he could leave, but only to a place where he could have regular care and be under observation, for although he would be permitted to stand, walking was impossible. From Simcoe we drove directly to Alice's Home in Islington. The following day Father had his first airplane flight of an hours trip to Ottawa. There Evelyn met him at the airport, to take him to her Home for an "indefinite" temporary stay.

Within a week a doctor had to be called in to diagnose what turned out to be a recurrence of Father's old hernia. A week's hospital observation relieved his condition, but the operation that should have been performed 40 years ago, was now decided to be impossible, even though the hernia is now seriously interfering with normal body functions.

So the "top" that remained so steadily upright till last June is toppled, and I fear with it much of that personal fire that drove it. Evelyn and I keep exchanging letters, I've had several phone calls to our Pt Rowan doctor for advice which I pass on to Evelyn in my own words. All the various business matters have been considered in respect to giving Father the nursing care he needs now. Its only a year coming on two since Evelyn herself underwent a very serious ulcer operation, and what with four children and her home to care for, she must not overtax her strength. So we plan for the eventuality of nursing home care for Father, as a physical necessity we cannot personally provide.

The doctor however is not discouraged that he's unable to walk yet, "---by the end of the year", he says will still be pretty good progress, but he cannot know how low Father's personal fires have burned. Father passed his 92nd Birthday last Wednesday, at Evelyn's Home in Ottawa, and I know she made it as notable as possible, and I've been forwarding the few cards that have come for him here. Evelyn's Ottawa address is 1392 Orillia Street (c/o Mrs E M Henderson)

So I'm alone in the house I built for Father, though unable to give him the care he would need if he were here. The garage business continues steadily, and as steadily seems to interfere with the final completion of the buildings etc. Work for customers last winter prevented the finishing of the shop furnace, & unfortunately that work still remains to be paid for in the case of two important sized jobs. But still although I've had to make up that loss of income with more work, still there's been time to get a cistern almost dug by now and a water pond excavated. This crucial dry time of year is the only time when it can be done, so its either these weeks before the fall rains or not until next Fall.

Father intended to attend the Centennial Services at Dunn United Church, his last preaching appointment, but his accident just two weeks before the date prevented him. However I attended and made a tape recording of one of the services, which he heard in part in hospital. Now however it is unlikely he'd be able to hear or appreciate the recording should he hear it again. At that service, though I renewed an acquaintance after 16 years silence, since which it has been my personal project to convince and persuade etc etc., that the 16 year wait has been for me, on that certain person's part.

Cheerio for now from Yours truly,

Wesley W Leonard

List of people to whom sent 28/10/03

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