

4504 WEST SECOND AVENUE

VANCOUVER 8, BRITISH COLUMBIA

May 6, 1970

Dear Carolyn:

I'm glad your copy of the book arrived. I had only six copies for the book party, which just went round, and, when Mother and Dad left on Monday, the last of those was gone; so I'm back to a proof of the front of the jacket and that's all. I suppose eventually others will arrive. I thought I might feeld bit bereaved, but instead it's a relief, rather like getting rid of Mother and Father, beloved guests who just the same take up a great deal of time.

Mother says it's not so much that she doesn't like the book as that she can't read it without being distracted by details whose source she recognizes. She hasn't the same trouble with the new one and so likes it better. Father hasn't read THIS IS NOT FOR YOU. I suppose he will, sooner or later. Novels are not his thing. People aren't, really. He's very kind to them, generous and sociable, but he would rather understand the workings of computers, the habits of fish, peculiar political histories. His contact with people is sharing either his or their knowledge of one thing or other. We went to see the Gordon Smiths (he's the painter who designed the fabulous revolving umbrellas in the Canadian pavillion in Japan) on Sunday, and Dad was fascinated with Gordon's latest prints in which he is experimenting with straining the limits of perspective so that shapes flatten, come out at you and recede as your eye chooses one orientation of another. Father was drawing figures for Gordon on backs of envelops. Then he got involved with Marien's loom, wanting to know just how it was set up. Because he can so easily enter into other people's interests, people love him, but, if they want to feel understood, that's Mother's department. They are together very private people, very happy people, and their joint view of human relationships is that they are good or bad in terms of whether the people involved are loving and generous and easy together. They are both devoted to Helen because she is who she is and because it's perfectly obvious to them that I am happy. The social awkwardness they must encounter occasionally they simply don't acknowledge.

The party was a very good one, ages ranging from 20 (young Diane Korner) to 64 (Father) and spread fairly evenly inbetween. It didn't break up until about three in the morning and then very reluctantly. This private giving of the book is for me what is important. Now it becomes a public fact, and I turn my back on it as much as possible. I have reluctantly agreed to one CBC interview because David Watmough, who is a friend, a is to be the interviewer and can deal with my edginess. But that's all.

Helen and I went to the travel agent together on Monday to look at alternate routes east. If she goes to Newark rather than

to New York, a friend from Princeton can easily meet her and drive her to pr Princeton. Her sister will pick her up there and drive her to Rochester. The best route each way for times is through Chicago; so she won't be going through Toronto at all. She'll leave on the 17th and be back on the 30th. She still has to be at UBC every other day, but in between we garden and goof off. I won't settle to a working schedule until she's left.

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Yes, Margaret's divorce was really amiable, but they've been separated for years, and they both understood, however reluctantly, that their lives really didn't fit together in any sensible way. They divorced because he wanted to remarry. They've got two kids who normally live with Margaret though she left them in England this year under the care of a young couple. The girl is ready for college this next year, and the boy is about fourteen, I think. I imagine Margaret would like to remarry, but she's aware of how much of her life is involved in writing, how little a wife she is willing to be.

I don't really like the telephone either. For one thing, I have so deep a voice that I can never convince any but good friends friends that I'm not Mr. Rule. And though that has ceased to irritated me, it still causes all im kinds of confusion, only occasionally useful. A speech teacher wonce suggested that I have my voice box operated on since it was too long, but I thought that extravegant to pass a 3 unit course. In any case, everything about me is too long according to standard sizes, and I might as well match myself.

I weep at movies and over books, too. More as I get older. Monday night I finally couldn't see the t.v. screen after the film clips of the National Guard shooting students. It was anger and dispair as much as grief.

Well, so write me a letter to let me know how you like the book when you've finished with it. The only think I ever want to say to friends is remember, a book is a gift, not a test either of us has to pass or fail. No matter who has written it. Not a critic's view, obviously, or one often taught in schools, but true just the same.

Affectionately,