

2241 Hanover St.
Palo Alto, California 94306
October 14, 1973

Dear Laura Gilpin:

It is not likely that you will recall anything about me, but you did me two great favors. My gratitude, though continuing, lay dormant until last year, when I saw a notice in Publisher's Weekly, of your new book, "The Enduring Navaho," alongside a notice of my "Seashells of Tropical West America." I tried to find out your address so that I could write you but did not succeed until I was recently in Colorado Springs and got it from Agnes Donaldson.

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Your first kindness to me was when you were a judge of a photographic exhibit of the Colorado Mountain Club in which I had entered some of my bird and animal pictures. In making the awards (though I rated only, as I remember it, a couple of "Honorable Mention"s), you praised the pictures enough so that the club secretary wrote me a letter quoting you. I was reading it again lately and felt anew the warm glow it gave me, for it came at a time when I needed encouragement. Your second kind deed was to invite me to your studio for a whole afternoon of showing me what salon prints should look like. It was a revelation to me. Although I realized that I had not the physical stamina nor the time to spare then to continue photography seriously, I never forgot the fine lessons I learned that afternoon, and I have watched your subsequent career with admiring interest.

My subsequent life work turned out to be something I would never have guessed during my growing-up years in Colorado -- specialization on marine life, especially mollusks. I came to Stanford in the 1930's and finally retired three years ago as professor of paleontology. I still have charge of the seashell collection, for the department has not yet gotten around to appointing a successor. About 15 years ago I began to have opportunities for travel abroad and decided it was time to return to my earlier interest in photography (my Graflex had by then long passed its usefulness), so I bought a Pentax, with all the needed gadgets to do close-up work. My early experience gave me confidence, and I have found it great fun to take color slides, not only of the things I saw on field trips but also of the unique museum specimens I was studying in the places I visited.

I want you to know that although I may not have been articulate enough at the time to express my appreciation to you, that encouragement you gave me did wonders for my morale. I had been trying to write and to publish my work, yet I got little but rejection slips. To know from you that my work was not all that bad and to see what I would need to do to succeed gave me a perspective I needed, and I do thank you, even if it is 45 years later.

Please do not feel that you must reply to this. I know that you have other projects that are absorbing your time, but I did want to say "Thanks!"

Sincerely,

A. Myra Keen

Angeline Myra Keen