

John Howard Griffin

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July 24, 1967

Dear Nell,

Your letter came today, to confirm what Barbara had told us about the Robot Doctor, as you so charitably called the brute.

Not much new news here. I am hardly preparing at all for the trip, though the tickets came this morning and I have really only two more days here before taking off. I did send a pair of pants to the cleaners, but that is about all.

Father George was just over and I read him that portion of your letter about his photograph. He was so pleased you received it and that it gave you some pleasure.

We were also pleased to have the news about your guests and to know that things are going well as can be expected with the little child.

Dear Penn Jones stepped in over the week-end and sent about half of the mob that was expected here on back home. He told them that they stayed too long when they came and that I was sick for a couple of days afterward each time. He apparently handled it so that they were not offended and then called and told me they were on their way back home and would return to see me when I returned from France.

So, all in all, we had only seven or eight instead of the 15 or more that were expected...mostly they were young men just getting out of University (or seniors) who wanted to learn dark-room techniques. I did not have to do much, since they had already had one sessions previously and I just told them to go in, mess up as many sheets as were necessary and print to their heart's content. They managed to do everything wrong, but got some lovely prints. They put the developer in the hypo tray and vice-versa, neutralizing both trays and very rapidly getting stained and streaked prints... that kind of mistake.... but they are mistakes they will not soon make again.

Now I had better chose this and go help Piedy get the supper ready. She is extremely exhausted from the guests and the constant serving of food and baking. (I cannot get her to do these things simply - she bakes, bakes and puts on a lavish table no matter who is here. The ones we really wanted to say for supper, the Tenerys, would not, though we literally begged them.)

Dear Nell, I am not talking about the thing that most preoccupies me because I don't know what to say about it. It is hell, pure and simple, to go through what you are having to have - and without even the consolation of a doctor with feelings. When I had that kind of bandage cutting (the same as yours) my doctor coated the bandage with a wax-like material (but not wax) that compacted buffered the inside of the jaws. I understand your own "home" dentist

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has worked out a little cotton padding for that. I talked to my own doctor and he is doubly-sad now that you did not come here and let him do this. He would not do it one whit better, I am sure, but he is such a gentle and concerned man; so admires you; and certainly he could have done it as well. I think my brother, who is coming in the latter part of this month from Venezuela will have to have the same kind of surgery you are having (which is different from what I had, but required the same kind of bandaging, etc.)

Well, let me stop gabbing now for a while. All of us here - my family, your friends (whom you hardly know, or do not know at all - like Father George, the university students, etc.) all send you our best, best love,

John