

Villa Serena
Washington, Connecticut

January 31, 1962

Dear family and friends,

The sixth of January turned out to be the meanest weather of the winter, with snow that turned into ice on the roads and a fog so thick you could cut it. Radio Stations were warning everyone "to stay indoors, unless absolutely necessary to travel". The thought of John up there waiting for us made it seem necessary and somehow carried us up that last long hill to the Sanatorium.

There were about fourteen of us who came and we brought with us the ice bucket with bottles of champagne - and the Birthday Cake made by Betty Greaves, with ninety candles. Goldthwaite and Kay Swift got lost somewhere between New York and Wallingford and wandered for hours in the fog, but they arrived eventually and what a Merry Party it was! We sang "Happy Birthday to You", and all the patients in Lyman Wing could hear us - for there seemed to be nothing in the world except "Happy Birthday to You".

John raised his glass and in a strong, clear voice offered his toast "To Life and all that makes it worth living". It was hard to keep back the tears.

Antoinette and I looked at each other and we both had the same wish in our hearts - that all who had sent their pages could be there to share John's party. For it was those pages of Happy Remembrances, with their priceless pictures and memories, which had lifted him from his bed to sit at the head of the table. His toast was to you - to the timelessness of life and of friendship.

Kay put on a new recording she had made of all her old and new music, and there was even dancing to the polka - and in our hearts we knew that in "Happy Remembrances" all of us are united and will forever belong to that great "Fraternity of J. V. N. D."

Sincerely,

Sheila Don.