

6309 Pershing Ave
St. Louis 30

10-9-66

Dear Pa --

We had already returned from Maine when your last letter arrived. It was a hectic trip. Jane and the boys were there about a month, mostly at her ~~xxxxxx~~ parents' place near Machiasport. About the middle of August I drove East, spent a week at the Molloy's and then took the three eldest for a week at GSHI. We stayed with Nancy and the boys were quite well-behaved I thought though I'm sure the Commissioner finds small children somewhat wearing. We all do.

At least once a week someone asks me when the Island book will appear. I usually murmur something about complications involving printing which is what I understood from Brower in June. Your pictures have an ~~ext~~ordinary number of devotees in this region and some of them are a little impatient with the fact that the Sierra Club put out a flyer in the spring stating the book would be published in June.

I sure nothing in Summer Island will make my generations impatient, however. Perhaps I inferred more from your observations in your article in Natural History than was intended. It is is curious, nonetheless, that a large proportion of the other Island summer inhabitants placed identical constructions upon it, were annoyed and felt, as I did, that what you term is a simple statement of fact was, indeed a somewhat insensitive representation of the attitudes of others, and not wholly accurate. No two persons regard anything through the same pair of eyes: that is of course true and essentially tautological. But to say (or suggest) that our view of the Island has been influenced by advancing technology deserves some critical qualification. It seems to me, for example, that most of the technological changes wrought at the Island, as well as some of those being promoted, are the brain children of your generation, not mine. Landing strips, radio telephones and ferry service are cases in point.

Forgive me for seeming, somewhat artificially perhaps, to be dragging this discussion out. It's for exercise. The view human beings have of their surroundings as they are, as they imagine them to be and as they would prefer them to be seems among the most interesting questions of our time.

The life of a petty bureaucrat is not without its frustrations. I spend an inordinate amount of time with details like budgets and hiring personnel all of which is bound tightly in red tape. The office is in Jefferson City, 130 miles to the west and I spend an average of three days a week there. The other two days are consumed with usually pointless appointments in other parts of the state trying to breathe some life into local air pollution control programs. We haven't moved to Jefferson City partly because the schools are better here and partly because we like the house and the neighborhood but mostly because of plain old fashioned ~~ixixix~~ inertia which, I've concluded, is the single most important factor in all human behavior.

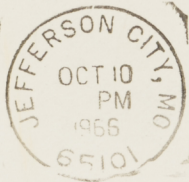
The boys and Anne are all well and those who are in school are enjoying it more or less. E. F., always was rather saturnine by nature, has reached an especially melancholy age. His morale suffered an especially unfortunate reverse a couple of weeks ago when, while pouring alcohol onto an open flame in the course of showing off with his chemistry set, he set fire to the clothing of a small ~~nixxx~~ neighbor who is now in the hospital with third degree burns of parts of his chest and arm. It has been a strain on all of us, of course. Jane has been acting in loco parentis while the victims parents stand watch at the hospital and has been doing their laundry and preparing some of the meals and is quite tired as a consequence. It was entirely our fault, of course, since we failed adequately to impress the dangers of flammable fluids but E.F. naturally feels circumstances have ganged up on him. The patient, by the way, is said to be responding well and the prognosis is good. I understand there is little chance of disfiguring scars on the face or permanent impairment. Barnes Hospital (Washington Univ. Med. Sch.) apparently has an international reputation ⁱⁿ the treatment of burns.

Jack, after a year or so of some uncertainty, seems much happier and more sure of himself than he ever has before. Boxie, for who uncertainty was never a problem, is bigger but otherwise unchanged. Anne is gregarious and self-confident. She wears glasses to remedy a wandering eye. They give her an absurd, professorial look. Alex has learned to capitalize on his situation as the youngest and most dependent and is a little spoiled. His elder siblings tend to indulge him.

I hope you and Steve and Kathy and Jonathan and Zoe will visit us when you come east. Let us know.

Love

B.



Dr. Eliot F. Porter

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