

Hochomock Island
20 March '98

Dear Eliot —

I'm sitting here at my desk looking at a bit of snow fall over the bay this first day of Spring — and feeling chagrined at myself for having taken three years to respond to your letter.

When I last wrote I was just commencing what turned out to be a lengthy divorce and bitterly contested settlement which caused me real concern about retaining the island. The court decision was favorable, however, and in the past year I've cleaned up the financial debris and embarked on a new and very promising relationship with a woman in California. So I've been commuting coast-to-coast monthly since Christmas. In fact, I'm leaving in 3 days to join her (Celia) for a snow-pice climb with a mountaineering group of the Sierra Club in the High Sierras,

My purpose in writing at this time, in addition to a desire to know how you're faring, is to see if you might have any gems of wisdom for independent Travellers in China. About Labor Day Celia and I are going to shoulder our backpacks and head for Berlin, Warsaw, northward through Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia (where I have friends), Leningrad (also friends), Moscow (Antarctic friend), and ^{Ukraine} Odessa (same), then northward to catch the Trans-Siberian RR with one or two day stops en route, where possible, to Beijing - then a month or so of wandering southward to Canton & Hong Kong as December's chill closes in. Neither of us will speak Chinese except for a few phrases we hope to master from a tape recorder. This is sort of an un-sponsored peace mission. I am able to handle the Russian language fairly well, though no longer fluent.

Where possible, we'll be staying in youth hostels or with local folk to keep the cost low. And we expect to travel by all means of transportation. I'm purposely keeping the itinerary as loose as possible, within the confines of visa requirements, etc, in order to allow us great flexibility and spontaneity. I expect a memorable trip.

May I ask for your views on such a venture? Any comments at all that you might have from your travels there would be greatly appreciated. I'm hoping "glasnost" will make things easier for us in the USSR and things are changing so fast in China that I'm afraid it will become too westernized if we wait.

I've heard you have an exhibit coming to Brunswick this year (I presume Bowdoin College). You can be sure I'll be watching for it. If you should

be in this part of the world before September. I'd still very much like to make contact, either to bring you (and your wife) here or to meet you somewhere. I've been here ten years now and love it more than ever.

It's where I belong. My hope is that Celia will feel the same. Just before I wrote you last time I had installed a solar panel for generating a small amount of 12 volt DC. It has performed flawlessly, so I'm very comfortable in spite of (because of?) having no utility bills.

I hope you're in good health and as productive as ever, Eliot. I'm doing fine, probably because I feel so at home here (Strange for a Californian to say that, I guess). Incredibly, it must have been about 15 years since we were cruising around the Peninsula aboard Hero, which is out of service

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now, as I'm sure you're
aware.

The enclosed snapshots
may give you some idea
of where I've ended up —
and where you're welcome
any time.

I send you my very
best wishes and hope
you'll forgive my lapse.

Sincerely,
Bob

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