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About the Institute

The Hunt Institute for Botanical Documentation, a research division of Carnegie Mellon University, specializes in the history of botany and all aspects of plant science and serves the international scientific community through research and documentation. To this end, the Institute acquires and maintains authoritative collections of books, plant images, manuscripts, portraits and data files, and provides publications and other modes of information service. The Institute meets the reference needs of botanists, biologists, historians, conservationists, librarians, bibliographers and the public at large, especially those concerned with any aspect of the North American flora.

Hunt Institute was dedicated in 1961 as the Rachel McMasters Miller Hunt Botanical Library, an international center for bibliographical research and service in the interests of botany and horticulture, as well as a center for the study of all aspects of the history of the plant sciences. By 1971 the Library's activities had so diversified that the name was changed to Hunt Institute for Botanical Documentation. Growth in collections and research projects led to the establishment of four programmatic departments: Archives, Art, Bibliography and the Library.

5780 Chandler ct, SAN JOSÉ, CA 95123

Jan. 17, 1991

Dear Bill, -

It was nice to talk to you yesterday and thank you very much for helping out with the sale of our library.

I have discussed the matter with Åskell and we have agreed that \$10,000 for the reprints seems reasonable. They do after all contain a large number of book-length paperbound articles. And you have, yourself, used them so you know there are a lot of very valuable papers, available nowhere else. The two steel cabinets with the index cards (author names, titles, and acquisition nos.) will follow as well. The cards are in Swedish alphabetical order, so may take a slight reorganization, but that does not mean anything since the numbers on them and the reprints still match wherever the cards are placed in the file.

It is a bit harder to evaluate the series. We wonder if 2,-3,000 is too high

Now, there is another matter. The dealer who is buying the books has got a complete list of them and is now in progress crossing out what he does not want in order to reduce his shipping costs. He also claims that Russian books sell badly. If there will be such (or books in other languages as well) he does not want but you could use, you are welcome ^{to them} _{at which}. It will take the dealer a long time to decide (judging from the pace the negotiations so far have proceeded), so do not expect a fast action. Sometimes in the spring, when the weather is good, is better.

As I said before, one way to keep the shipping cost down is to take the bus out here and rent a truck to drive back. I and Lóa can help with the packing and loading, e.g., over a weekend when she does not work and then we can perhaps get the young people to help out too. If you yourself come out, you know that you are always welcome!

I will be more than happy when everything with the book deal is settled.

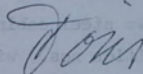
The Christmas frost has played havoc with our garden. All plants are more or less dead and the citrus look very poorly, the little one may be killed. It is heart-breaking to have to discard hundreds of kilos of frozen fruits. It is not only our garden that looks miserable, you see traces of the killer frost all over and for the agriculture this is a disaster.

I am not going to comment on the Gulf situation. Let us just hope it will be over soon without further consequences. The protest actions out here are beginning to be violent.

Best regards to Sammie and yourself,

always yours

Askell and



5780 Chandler ct, SAN JOSE, CA 95123

March 17, 1991

Dear Bill, -

The other day Askell received the enclosed report from the G.B. Pant Institute in Himalaya, but since he is unable to do anything with it now, we thought that you would be able to comment on it for Dr. Purchit. You know, besides, much more about the area than we who have never set foot in India, although we would have loved to. But now it is too late. If you feel like taking over this task, please, tell them Askell would have liked to give his commentaries but is now due to illness unable to any longer be of service. And give them our best regards as well.

I am now packing books and have so far filled some 35 boxes, each about 35 lbs and it seems just like a drop in the sea. There is so much left to pack and I do it carefully, having too much respect for books to just throw them down. Besides, I have to check what I am packing against a list we have, so they get what they have ordered, but nothing more. I found a volume about mosses from central Siberia, which was not included in the list and for which we have no use ourselves, so we feel you can have some pleasure of it, since you understand a good deal of Russian also, if ^{etc} (not) you understand it perfectly. Perhaps you have even met Bardunov in Siberia or you may know him via letters or other works.

Askell is, as you may understand, not very well. He has much difficulties moving, especially in the mornings, when it is like his muscles "lock" and he is stuck. Walking from the bedroom to the bathroom seems to take an eternity even when he uses his walking attraction. He spends most of the days resting on the sofa and watching a little TV now and then, and then he goes to bed soon after 7 p.m. It is not much of a life, a tremendous tragedy for us all. How horrible old age is when it can destroy minds that once were so active and productive and reduce the being almost to that of a help-less baby.

I have at last finished the long (over 700 pages) translation of Vavilov's book and shipped it off to England. It was a tremendous job but very interesting. Just as it was ready to send off, I got a visit from the PR-man for the Vavilov institute in Leningrad. He was here at Davis and made a special trip down to see me. Sergey Alexanyan proved to be a very nice man, my daughters though he was cute.

He was pleased with what I had done and was able to add a few things to the "biography" of Vavilov I had dug up from various sources. I even knew a bit more than he did; I had found out about an American secretary of his who followed him to Russia and worked for him and eventually starved to death (after he was gone) but due to the siege of Leningrad. Today when packing I came across a translation of E.V. Wulff's work that was done by her. Wulff was Vavilov's predecessor, as you perhaps know. Sergey even presented me with a pin and a medal issued at the 100 year anniversary of V's birth in 1987. So I feel honored. (He also thought the fee they pay me was lousy!).

We have had some absolutely lovely rains this month and more is promised. We still have rationing, but we may avoid the 50 percent ~~one~~ that was expected and stay at the 40 percent level we now have. It is not so bad, some areas get only 50 gallons per day and household, that is really hard. So you can understand that we enjoy the sound of raindrops in the patio-roof.

How are you and Sammie doing? Hope you are both well. Have you been able to do something to our reprint collection and the journals yet? I know it takes time and I have a lot of patience, but Askell wants to have a decision, so he can stop worrying about that. He worries about a lot of things, most of them needlessly, but that seems to be part of the illness. He has no concept of time either; no wonder, because everyday is just like that before and that to follow for him, so he loses track of it.

Now I will go in and listen to a Domingo-Pavarotti concert followed by a tour through Napoli with Pavarotti. I think I have seen it before, but it is so much fun to re-visit places you have been yourself again. And I do not come anywhere these days so have learnt to live vicariously a good deal.

So with the very best regards, and let us hear from you soon again,

Always yours

Askell Jones

5780 chandler ct, SAN JOSE, CA 95123

April 6, 1991

Dear Bill, -

Here is your little ms in return with a kind of short review which I hope will help to get it published.

I have indicated with a couple of pencilled in remarks some changes that may improve the text and make it a bit easier to understand or read. I leave it up to you to accept it or not; it is of no major importance.

If you believe that my work load has eased off since I finished the ms of the Vavilov translation, you are mistaken. I am now busy packing up and shipping out our library and have so far packed, lifted, handled etc.etc. not less than 2400 plus lbs of books and that leaves about one third more to go. It is heavy work and I cannot deny I feel it on my back but I am probably also a bit stronger in the arms and legs by now. My heart certainly gets the exercise my doctor wants it to have.

It is hard in more than one sense: Vavilov says in his book when talking of his work in Charles Darwin's library (he was associated with son Francis Darwin during his year in England): "The libraries of the learned frequently reflect the historical paths of their personal creative work." Nothing could be more true and it hurts Askell and me to see a lifetime disappear down into the boxes, but if the books are going to be of any use again, this had to be done. We simply did not want to give it all away. Now we get at least something for the kids for it and the receiver pays for the astronomical transporting costs.

I just had a letter from Tom Ranker, expressing a good chance that COLO can buy the reprints and journals. I would be very happy to have this come true. He says it may still take some time to arrange, but I am happy if I can get the books out of the way first. Knowing what their transport costs only half way to his representative in Illinois, I still maintain that renting a small truck here is the cheapest way to get them to COLO if all goes according to plans.

Askell's condition continues to worsen. He has great difficulties moving in the mornings and needs to use his walking stick even indoors now. The times when we take a short walk get more and more infrequent, because he has no energy at all. We will go to see one of his doctors next week, another a couple of weeks after that. The HMO we belong to (Kaiser) really is very careful to check up on him, but there is little they can do. The effect of his medicine is wearing off, it seems, but there is no other alternative yet, except the one that made him so ill. And we do not want a repetition of that. It is really tragic to see him in this condition. He hardly even wants to see visitors here, so our life is getting more and more dull and monotonous. I am glad I have enough to do.

I hope you and all your family is (are) as well as possible. Say hello to Sammie from us, we think of her often.

Did I mention that we finally got some rain in March? Not only some, but it literally poured down almost every other day, and everybody was delighted. But it did not end our water-rationing, so we enjoy seeing the gardens green up a bit now, knowing that come summer, they will probably die out again. The trees are all mixed up. Some flowered earlier than usually, others later. But if the summer does not get too, too hot, we may be able to tide them over and even get some fruit in the fall. One can always hope. Today the sun shines again and the rain promised seems to have vanished. Our part of San José seems to have an umbrella over it most of the time.

With the best regards from us all, your old
friends

Tom & Ansell

5780 Chandler ct., SAN JOSE, CA 95123

May 23, 1991

Dear Bill, -

Finally I can sit down and write to tell you that all our books are now shipped out and have safely arrived in Germany. Now we just wait for the final payment for them.

So now I hope that we will also hear some good news from the herbarium about the journals and reprints. I have had only one letter from the curator, telling me that he was hopeful the deal could go through. Now, almost any time is good to come and get them.

However, not before the end of this month. Askell's condition is getting steadily worse. He moves with great difficulties, especially mornings and evenings. We can rarely take a short walk outside either. I have to help undress him at night and put him to bed. It is so tragic.

Now he must have his colon inspected, a messy affair with days on liquid diet and laxatives. He will have to sit in the bathroom, because he cannot move fast, if necessary. I pity him, it is not pleasant. But his bowel movements are so painful and difficult that the doctor has to find out if anything can be done. It may just be that the muscles affected are damaged by the Parkinsons, like his other muscles. It is a terrible affliction for both body and mind.

The weather here is peculiar. Of course the drought persists but we had some precipitation in March, which helped a good deal. Now is the normal dry season. But we still have not had any warm weather although the last couple of days it has been a little more summerlike, foggy mornings, warm and sunny the rest of the day but far from hot. We had the heat on until middle of May, which is most unusual.

Hope all is well with you and Sammie. Please, let us know as soon as possible about any action in the book-deal. Especially in good time so we can start collecting packing material. Lóa got boxes from her firm, NT, for the previous shipment. That came to some 120 pieces, all together over 2000lbs.

All the best to both of you,

always

William G. Askell

5780 Chandler ct, SAN JOSE, CA 95123

July 27, 1991

Dear Bill, -

Thank you so much for your letter of July 23. I am happy to tell you that Áskell suffered no ill effects of his recent minor operation but less happy to tell that his condition continues to deteriorate. We are beginning to seriously contemplate getting a wheel-chair for him. Some days he is almost unable to take a step and even getting into the bathroom is hard for him. We will see one of his doctor's (the family one) on Wednesday and then I will discuss matters with him and, hopefully, get some advice. Our house is, of course, not very well suited for wheelchairs, what with all the stairs and the stupid shaggy rugs. And I wonder if the doors are really wide enough... but that we will find out by time.

I really hope that the deal about the reprints and journals has not petered out. I hoped so much that it would go through. Really, I do not know where to find a buyer, so if all fails, I do appreciate any advice you have. Between us, I would hate to have to ship it to Iceland because that would be the same as throwing it on the garbage heap. It would hardly even be unpacked there, much less used.

I have not heard anything from Tom. Is he really as good a curator as you had hoped for? It seems to me from your letters that he is not as cooperative as he could be. And the treatment you get does not really surprise me, Nothing at U. of C. makes sense. Least of all (although there it is not alone) in its concern for athletics more than education. I do not think that Socrates really meant football and other spectator "sports" when he recommended: "Mens sana in corpore sana". And the best European U:s do not consider sports an academic matter, just a sideline, and I do not think they pay their coaches astronomical salaries while their professor's get niggardly ones and can hardly live on it after retirement. It is a shame.

I am really beginning to enjoy my computer. I translate directly onto it and can correct and edit on it and that makes such a difference. Now, as you, I only need a better printer which can do all the computer commands it to do. Some money from reprints would come handy in for that.

Could you send us some of that moisture that greens your plains this year? Here everything is scorched but the summer is not hot as usually, rather chilly California style. Best regards to Sammie and yourself, always

Wm. Adell

5780 Chandler ct., SAN JOSE, CA 95123

Aug. 15, 1991

Dear Bill, -

What wonderful news you brought us by telephone Tuesday morning! How can we ever thank you for looking after our interests with such fine results? I hope the rest of the money can be located within a not too distant future. We are quite willing to have the money paid in installments according to a written agreement. We have a similar arrangement with the one who bought the books. In his case, however, I had a hard time to get a signed agreement and the pay comes only after repeated prompting, so all is not yet paid up but should be within a not too distant future. He prefers, however, to let his representative here be a middle link, seems to hate to write letters himself and has the worst book-keeper in the world according to his agent, who really does what she can to speed up the matters. But I do not expect any such difficulties from your (Colorado U:s) side. I am only too happy when I know that the reprints and journals have come to where they can be of good use.

Included you find a coarse estimate of the shelf length and weight of the collection. I was not really able to get up into the attic to get a proper count of the boxes there (need a taller ladder, can probably borrow one from a neighbor when it comes to bring things down), but by the aid of a flashlight and my "far-sight" glasses I tried to read text on the boxes and count them but some where obscured, so the number is a bit uncertain. I estimate their weight to at least 30-40 lbs each which may be an underestimate but hardly an overestimate. These boxes contain packed journals, and should not need repacking, once we know that there is nothing you do not want in them. I spotted some boxes which contain Icelandic literary journals, of which you have no interest, so they have to be repacked if they contain botanical journals as well.

In the den, where I sit typing, are stacks of recently arrived journals, and those I measured to 164" in shelf length, but cannot estimate the weight.

The reprints were easier to estimate: I measured the boxes and counted them. I indicate the height of the boxes but you should add 1 - 2 (-3)" because some reprints are oversized. The shelf length came out to ca. 2160". I weighed some 10 boxes on my bathroom scale and they average 9-10 lbs each.

Then there are the two file cabinets; with all together 32 drawers almost completely filled with indexcards. The sizes are indicated on the list included, but I cannot even guess at the weight.

I will be happy to have you and a strong helper, preferably young and agile, come to pick them up. I know we can rent a Ryder truck here but do not know the size required. Perhaps you can calculate it from the figures supplied. It is really not so much a question of bulk as of weight. And to place the boxes so in the cargo space that they do not slide around when en route. That could be dangerous. But that we can plan when you see what we have.

I have boxes to pack the "loose" journals in, the others are boxed as stated above, but the reprints need packing in boxes (their weight and bulk need also to be included in calculations). We can probably get boxes from Lóa's outfit or else from adjacent liquor stores, so that should not be a problem.

The time for a pick-up should preferably be before inclement weather sets in. After all, you have to pass two high mountain ridges. Too much rain and wind are no good either. September would probably be best. I have a club meeting on Sept. 7 (evening in Santa Cruz) and we expect some guests sometime around 23-30 Aug, coming up from Los Angeles (a former classmate of Askell's), so around the middle of Sept would be best. Then you will be back in time to prepare for your trip to Nepal. I know you will let me know all I need when you have more information and then we can settle things finally. But I will be so happy when this problem is off my chest.

Askell got some additional pills, and they have helped a little so he moves a bit easier and the question of a wheelchair is shelved for the time being. I have a "prescription" for one if it should be needed, but hope for some repite. To change the silly rugs should be very costly, so that too has to be a later decision.

The weather here is totally wacky this summer. We finally got some "summer-type" weather that permitted us to enjoy the patio a bit, but yesterday we had rain, thunder and wind! Not much rain, just showers that barely wet the ground here, more in other places but not enough to alleviate the drought. It was the remnants of Tropical storm Hilda. Today it is brightening up again. I suppose we can blame this summer on the volcanic eruptions in Asia and the Gulf War.

Say hello to Sammie from us and again, many thanks for your help always,

yours sincerely

John - Askell

5780 Chandler ct, SAN JOSE, CA 95123

Nov. 16, 1991

Dear Bill, -

Thank you for your letter of Nov. 13. We were happy to have both that and to hear your voice over the telephone. I do not know how we can ever thank you for helping out with the reprint-deal. You are really doing a wonderful thing for us with that assistance. Askill is of course thinking that I am "giving away" the reprints and journals for "nothing compared to the actual value" of them, but he is never satisfied with anything and has a very exaggerated idea of what you can get for second-hand material. I am pleased with that it all can come to a good use again. Here it just sits in the shelves and takes up space and we do not use it any more, so why not accept what we can get for it. And I do not like to ship it all to Iceland, since there it would hardly be unpacked at all. It would be like throwing it into the sea. There is nobody there who can use it; the so-called botanists there are clods and do not know what they are doing and are probably unable even to look up literature. I know that it goes to CU at least there is one person who will be able to use it and probably more.

Beakin's is, as far as I know, a reliable moving firm. But I need to know well in advance when they will come to pack it all, so I can sort out some things in boxes with mixed material and mark part of the library that must not be packed away, so all is in good order before the packers start. I can perhaps get Ingela and her Geoff down to take the things upstairs in the garage down, otherwise Lóa is also incredibly strong. So do not worry about that. Besides, if I could pack and lift all those book-boxes without harm, I should be able to handle this, too. I also need to know in advance when they come, so that I can advise my firm to be lenient on deadlines for jobs while this is going on. Sometimes they send me urgent things that need to be done almost overnight. But thanks to the computer, the work is now considerably easier, although I have still to learn a few more tricks. The paper I am now working on is full of mathematical formulas and foot-notes, italics and greek lettering, that all takes time to learn to handle. I am making advances, tho. And I enjoy it.

We were so pleased to learn that your trip was a success. Like you I find it a blessing that you have gone there three times without getting sick or getting into trouble. Jack Ives, who travels extensively in those areas, had at one time a serious food-poisoning that required hospitalization and at another time he was almost held up by some bandits on a "highway", but got away thanks to that he carried a gun and was bigger than they. He said he was terribly frightened but glad to escape as easily as he did. He was alone at the time, but takes care never to be so anymore. He lives in Davis now, as you know, and seems to be doing well there.

I have heard nothing from my Leningrad, excuse me, St.-Petersburg friends yet although I have sent them letters. The last I heard was before the plot and then they complained about difficulties in obtaining food. Apparently it is not a lack of food as much as lack of communications. Roads are bad and trucks worse and organization does not seem to be the strong side of Slavs. I hope, however, to hear from them around New Year or Xmas, if they again celebrate this latter.

My ms. of the Vavilov translation has finally gone to the printer. Hope it goes faster from now on. We had some disagreement on linguistics since the Brittons insist on that there use is the only correct one, whatever the Americans say. So the language has become a sort of mixed American-English and I am helpless to resist. So I just hope Nobody will blame me for not knowing how to write American English. Otherwise all is well and I hope, acceptable. Certainly some people will find faults with it, particularly when in a list I use Askell's nomenclature of wheat grasses, but I see no reason not to use the most correct names, which, by the way, is gradually winning acclaim within agronomical circles. At a recent Wheat symposium several speakers expressed their favor of his ideas which pleased us much.

Otherwise nothing new. Askell seems much better on the new medicine which is comforting. So just let me know in good time, so I can prepare for the packing.

With the best regards from both of us, yours always

Say Hello to Sammie also, please!

John and Askell

5780 Chandler ct., SAN JOSÉ, CA 95123

Nov. 25, 1991

Dear Bill, -

Thank you so much for your letter. It was quite interesting. Since I am writing this to your private address, I feel I can be more frank and tell you that even I spotted a trace of the "hostility" you claim exists between you and Tim Hogen when he phoned me the other day to tell me that you "did not want to have anything more to do with the reprints, etc. deal and that from now on, you have better contact me directly." For a moment I was puzzled and afraid that we had overstepped what we had come to expect from you, but could not believe that was true so I was glad when your letter confirmed that you are still a good and loyal friend. However, I was also happy to learn that Tim said the deal is on and that in a week or two, all should be ready to deal with the movers.

How different students are here from those in, e.g., Japan. Kawano, one of our own students from Sapporo was reluctant to have his thesis published because it was, in a small part, critical of his old professor over there and since he was still alive, it may hurt his feelings! Here such loyalty does not exist any more if it ever has. Your case and that of many others are typical.

So I will write to Tim and tell him that everything is prepared and ready to go. I have myself packed the loose copies of journals in boxes, and on Wednesday those up in the garage will be brought down. All the packers need to do is box the reprints in their folders. Ingela, Lóa and Geoff will help me with the heavy stuff, hopefully without anybody getting hurt. Those boxes packed are awfully heavy. The ones I packed ^{weigh} only ca. 45 lbs, so then I could handle. I have also removed everything else from the ~~XXXXX~~ "Library" and marked off the shelves not to be touched. (There are still books in some, but mostly literary and Icelandic stuff.) I have put slips inside the boxes indicating what is inside them, which should make it a bit easier when unpacking and arranging the content. The boxes from "upstairs" are already marked on the outside; at least most of them.

The work I have done this weekend, when I happened not to have any translation job, was not an easy one. "Somebody" was standing over me all the time,

requesting to see everything and criticizing me in every move. It was very frustrating, because I had to answer the same questions 100 time or more: "What is in this box" ... and in that", "Why did you pack that", "No, that goes to Iceland", etc., etc. But all you shall have is there, so do not worry. There is even a box full of reprints by us, that you can use for exchange, if you like. We have no more use for them and it would be a shame to throw them out. To deal with people not always able to reason sanely is awfully hard and sometimes my patience is hard - stressed. Most of the time he is fairly reasonable; when he gets excited or is tired, it can be frustrating. I am happy, however, that he is presently able to move around with more ease and he is a bit more active, watches TV more and even reads a little or at least leafs through books now and then. I only wonder why Fate had to be so unkind to such a bright and energetic mind as his? We could have had such a happy old age together, but that was not to be. Well, I have learnt to grin and bear it, but I think you understand me better than most.

I hope you will have a nice Thanksgiving. We are going to have all the family here plus two guests, one from Iceland, son of one of Askell's classmates. I was hesitant to take this on, because my stove has gone on the blink, could not open the door to the oven enough to let a turkey in. And it malfunctioned in several other respects, but had reached an age of well over 20. So Lóa talked me into buying a new one, which should be delivered today. It should make for a good meal, I hope. I remember how you and Sammie feasted us to Thanksgiving a couple of times, once when Sammie had got a new stove also. We have had many a good time together. In spite of the unhappy event with the U. itself, we still remember all our friends with fondness.

I hope you and everybody else will be satisfied with the shipment when it finally arrives. Let us only hope the weather will cooperate. There has already been a lot of snow in the Sierras and I see on TV that the Rockies have got their share too. We need the snow for water, but the fear of a sixth year of drought is not yet over. We have only got 30 percents of normal for this time yet, but more can come. = 1,54!

With the best regards from us all here and happy Thanksgiving to you and Sammie, always

Chris

Christmas 1991

Dear Bill and Sammie, -

Just a few lines to wish you and all of yours a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year! And to thank you for all the help rendered us in the year past. Without your help, Bill, we had got nowhere with the reprints. Now the young people have brought all the heavy stuff down from the garage-attic and I have to go through and sort it out when I can. I am only afraid that it cannot be finished before Christmas. There is just not enough time for all I need to tend to, Xmas-preparations, translations (it seems everybody want something translated before the holidays, when they can themselves relax and wait for it) packing reprints, etc., etc. But I try to use every little spare moment to do something to it. I have not heard anymore from Tim, So I suppose he is not in any big hurry either. And I am just as happy to have the money next year so I do not have to pay taxes of them this one.

Thank you for your last letter, Bill. We so enjoyed hearing of the "concert" by Axel Schütz daughter. It must have been a wonderful experience. We all liked them so much and were sorry when they left Boulder.

Actually what I miss most during our monasterial existence is music. I grew up in a very music-oriented family. My mother was an excellent pianist and my only memory of her is her feet working the pedals of the piano, while I was sitting under it listening. I was only two when she died, but this scene is vivid in my memory. She had shoes covered in silk. Curious how a detail like that can stick with you. She was later replaced by my "aunt", no relation but an "tant" in Swedish meaning. She, too, was a musician. She had intended to go public, but a back-ailment prevented that career. My father and his friends were all musical, father had an excellent tenor, a friend of his had a beautiful bariton and another a deep, booming basso, while a fourth could take almost any voice, had an enormous range. They sang "Gluntarna" together at all occasions and other ter-and quartets whenever there was an occasion. My sister has a nice voice, too, and I am the only failure in that respect. But I have a good ear and love good music. In Boulder, like in Montreal and Winnipeg we regularly went to concerts but since we came here I have to be satisfied with radio and TV and that is not quite the same. In the evenings after Åskell has retired I often

listen to a classical station. Usually they have a good program but lately a new director wants to have at least one "modern" piece per evening that I have to suffer through in order not to miss what I call the good parts. I cannot really understand "new" music, I think it is noise and disharmony that grates on the nerves, but perhaps I am too old for it. But I admit that it depict modern life with all its difficulties and disharmony and noise and annoyances. However, I want relief from that not have it ground into my ears.

They are predicting rain again. Let us hope that it really comes now. Almost every time a front has approached, it has turned away in the last moment or dropped its load north of the bay, leaving this area bone dry as usually.

But I really like not to have to shovel snow any more or driving on slippery streets. You seem to have one storm after the other with both winds and snow. Does it have time to thaw out between onslaughts?

Our Thanksgiving was very nice and we hope Xmas will be the same. We got a new stove so we do not have to worry about the cooking, it will be perfect. All the family is coming here for Julafest as usually, Ingela and Geoff usually go to his parents in Temecula (a little N. of San Diego, for Xmas day, while we spend it at Goy's place.

Well, again, to both of you best wishes for a Happy Holiday Season from yours alway

Wolcott & Goy + family

5780 Chandler ct., SAN JOSÉ, CA 95123

Dec. 29, 1991

Dear Bill, -

Thank you for your letter and the marvellous tale of the mandala! It is probably worth its weight in gold to some ethnographical museum, so keep an eye on it. I can very well understand your wish to find out its real meaning and function. Is there any buddist center in Boulder (I know Dalai Lama visited there some time) where you could inquire about it? If not, we have one here in San José (Buddist Church Betson of San José, 640 N. 5th, SAN JOSÉ, CA 95100). I know this because Ingela's best friends, inseparable at school, consisted of a Buddhist (Japanese), a Mormon and a Catholic plus herself, agnostic. A peculiar four-clover, but gave Ingela an interest in various religions from a strictly ethnological point-of-view. You could write them and ask what the ceremony of those Tibetan monks meant without disclosing that you, yourself, have such a treasure. They may want to claim it for themselves! I wish you luck in your quest!

We had the usual family Christmas here with all the opulence but the gifts this year were all "practical" and no luxury allowed. It is really the togetherness that makes us celebrate, and we all gave to homeless and so on to calm our consciences. It is pityful to see these people in this rich country. I feel badly for the Russians and others in the world who have no home or food, but I think one must not forget those in one's own backyard either.

Between Xmas and New Year Áskell and I have literally let out lives pass revue for us. We have finally cleaned out and discarded all unnecessary junk piled up over the years, old correspondence and letters of no concern to others. I know this is chocking to some who think biographers should have access to one's private life, but I feel it a big stone off our chests to have "purged" ourselves of these, sometimes painful memorials. We found much to enjoy also, and have distributed pictures and worthwhile mementos on various family members, so they do not have to sort out all the mess when we are no more. And we see how idiotic it is to "save" every scrap of paper all once life. We feel clean now.

The best Xmas present came after the feast. It RAINS, POURS, Comes down in buckets now for two days on the third! You cannot imagine how wonderful it is to hear that pitter-patter on the patio-roof and see the lawn take on a greener shade hour for hour! And to hear in the radio that the reservoirs, a few days ago holding ca. 10 percents of "normal", slowly rise again. And to know that the snow falling on the Sierras eventually will reach us here. Unfortunately this snow is rather "dry", they say, but if there is enough of it, we still will get something out of it. Every drop counts now. Before this rain we had a total of 1.7" since July 1st. Normal for this time is 4.6". Our yearly normal is 13.5, about the same as Sahel! So we actually live in a near-desert climate here. We love the sun and warmth, but we cannot exist without some moisture once in a while. Not too much, like in Texas, but just enough to keep our lawns green and the trees bearing fruits.

Finally, all of us here wish you and Sammie a really Happy New Year,

Through yours always

Tom

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*Thought you might enjoy the
inland material!*