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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.

Oct 16, 1955

Dear Mildred,

Thank you for your letter of Aug 24, which was a relief—and here is another flood in Connecticut before I got around to answer! From the paper the flooded area seems to be well <sup>sort</sup> west of you. I do hope you haven't suffered from this flood. Your house is up quite a bit above the road as I recall it so I hope the house wasn't flooded even if the area was.

It must have been interesting to visit your Yankee ancestors. When I was in England in 1922 the "Black & Tans" (English Soldiers) were playing havoc in Ireland. I had always intended to visit there if I went to Europe but I didn't go—besides County Down in N.E. Ireland is still held by England it is part of North Ireland, though a

majority of the population wanted to join Eire. - Not that I had any great yearning to visit Ireland - but it would have been interesting. I don't think any kins are there - the family had been in the Robert Emmett rebellion and had a hard time of it - and like all oppressed Europe "came over."

It is a great joy to you that Tim is happily married.

I hadn't realized that Eric was studying law in Virginia - in the college Jefferson founded isn't it? In 1930 when Bobbie Van was here we visited Jefferson's home, via bus, and went around the University - not in it.

Tell Eric if he has a free weekend to visit Washington his grandsons Mary would be delighted to have him visit us.

I hope your new novel will be a best seller.

But I know I'm Japanese

I'm still working in the Grass Herbarium - for 2 months I've been working on the grass part of a Flora of Japan - the first ever attempted, - a translation made by <sup>the author,</sup> Dr. Jussakuro Chino; with whom we have exchanged grasses and publications since before the war with Japan. His English isn't so bad, but his misunderstanding of the morphology of grasses, and his lack of precision in bibliographic citations, have given me an awful lot of work. Chinese botanists have come to U.S. to study and there is a Korean, newly made Ph.D. Univ. Michigan, good students. Yi Li Keng, Ph.D. <sup>(in U.S.)</sup> of Nanking is my adopted nephew and his sons my grandsons. Ruth Chow, Ph.D. Michigan, who lived with me a year, and was my assistant (after my retirement, when I was running the grass herbarium)

"research  
as associate" in Smithsonian, is also  
a granddaughter - a very fine woman  
head of Biology in the university in  
Foochow - can't recall its Chinese name  
With our insane foreign policy of re-  
fusing communication with  
China I have not heard from  
her nor can I send a letter.  
Eisenhower was supposed to have  
made a move toward world  
peace at Geneva, but I can't see  
that it is getting us anywhere.  
How have your boys kept out of  
the army? I'm very thankful they  
have. Do there any tolerance for the  
really conscientious objectors? From  
here I can't see any.

Florence sends love and best  
wishes. Dorothy returned to Oberlin in  
mid-September for her Junior year. She  
had a job washing dishes last year and  
has again this year. She is a fine girl and  
very pretty, too. Love and best wishes to all  
of you Love Aunt Mary

Sunday ~~August~~

Dear Mildred

Winter 55

Or Jan 56

I don't know whether or not  
I answered your interesting  
letter of ? December.

I hope the operation on  
your throat has completely  
cured all trouble there.

Thank you ever so much  
for your mother's lovely  
handkerchief - she loved  
dainty things and kept them  
so beautifully.

I do hope Tim has not been  
put in the army. I feel so  
strongly about it I can't always  
keep my mouth shut. We  
(U.S.) were always boasting of  
our superiority to Europe,



in that U.S. did not have a  
standing army and we pitied  
"conscripts" of Germany and  
France - and here we have  
armies in other countries and  
all our young men conscripted.  
I had hoped the young "War  
Resisters" would appeal to the  
vast majority of our young  
men - but they go like sheep to  
the slaughter - just as the  
Germans and French,  
whom we scorned and pitied,  
did.

You must enjoy having a  
C.O. for a neighbor.

I'm still working at the  
herbarium every day. People are  
becoming very considerate of this  
old lady. Head of Anthropology

who lives beyond here takes me  
to and from Smithsonian  
everyday. When he is away some  
one else offers to bring me home.  
Florence is always looking out  
for me, too. It will take at least  
a year to finish the grass index  
I am working on, then I plan to  
take a week off to rest and read -  
I've started for reading.

Love and very best wishes  
to you and Bob and all  
your children.

Lovingly  
Aunt Mary

Dec 8, 1956

Dear Mildred,

I was glad to get your letter of "Monday" - I think I had one earlier that I failed to answer and can't find. I am getting worse every year - I can't keep up. I'm always "leaving undone the things I ought to have done"

I hope you recovered promptly from your bad throat. I, like your son Jim, am glad you don't follow the fashion of smoking. When Jim was here once - apropos of something, he said "I'm glad my mother doesn't smoke!"

Our cellar was slightly flooded in spite of its having



2  
been waterproofed when I had this house put in good order 2 years ago. I had the man who waterproofed it back and he did the north wall and another coat (2 rather) on the east wall that used to leak before. Not a wet spot has appeared since.

I hope you were well enough, and Bob also, to enjoy Christmas. Florence and Dorothy (junior in Oberlin) went to Athens, Ga. for Christmas with Dr. Bill, prof bacteriology Univ. Georgia - 2 children there now, Kenneth 2, Dec 2 and Karen 4 months, both healthy and happy. Kathleen was home 10 days from Vanderbilt, sophomore. I had a kind letter from

3

Clifford - I'd sent a book to each  
of the children. Fran enters high-  
school next year. Willis is mighty  
lucky - so are the children.

I have been so desperately  
tired of late - must be getting  
old - only 86! Besides keeping  
the copyist (Florence Van) busy  
on the index to grass names -  
(just beginning the 3d year  
in November and now nearly  
beginning the last third of  
this wearisome task) I have  
just completed the editing  
and endless corrections on  
<sup>in the Flora</sup> Grasses of Japan, translated  
into English by the author Dr.  
Jirokuro Ohmi. His English is  
pretty good but he doesn't  
know the structure of grasses

4

well enough to describe <sup>besides</sup> correctly  
the unusual genera, and I had  
to check his thousand names -  
Japanese seem to vie with each  
other in publishing names that  
have no standing, that is, names  
without description. It took an  
awful lot of time and it isn't  
much good anyway. A good  
English Flora of Japan would be  
a godsend to herbarium workers  
here and in Europe and India  
for many species have been  
described from Japanese isles  
in scattered journals, the last  
20 years. I just got all the  
ms., Ohwi's and my corrections,  
off to the chief editor (Missouri  
Bot Garden) Friday. U. S. Science  
Foundation is granting the money  
for publishing. Ohwi's Fl Japan  
in Japanese exact for Latin

names, was published in 1953,  
and the English-language ed.  
isn't a revised edition, but a  
translation, so we keep to the  
original as nearly as possible. I  
don't know what the other  
englishifiers are doing, but I  
rewrote descriptions that were  
inaccurate and made many  
corrections besides. I have other  
work waiting for me and  
feel as if there was a ton on  
top of me — but I'll shed  
the Ohvi burden — until  
proofsheets come.

I hope your children  
were with you for Christmas  
— or some of them. Dorothy was  
home for 10 days and she and  
her mother were with Bill's

family  
8 days.

Kathleen was home for 15 days  
deeply devoted to preparation for  
nursing course beginning her  
junior year next September.

I do hope you are fully  
recovered dear. Forgive my  
delay in writing and write  
again some time, dear.

Lovingly

Aunt Mary

It has turned awfully cold

Dec 11, 1956

Dear Mildred,

I've been a long time about congratulating you on being a grandmother - I meant to do so when I received the announcement - but my 87 years are weighing heavily on me and I don't do what I want to do - except going to work every day as usual at the Smithsonian. When Florence came I started an almost endless task - editing, correcting, verifying our index to the botanical names of all the grasses. This index was begun in the 90's and has been kept up ever since so far as the publications came over



way. Miss Miles did excellent work and I kept at it after she left. It consists of some 70,000-80,000 cards. I have been editing (to make citations uniform) looking up thousands that were incomplete and the like. Florence is typing ~~the~~ new cards on heavier cards, doing the work at home and earning about a hundred a month. She is doing excellent work. We are now in Stipa in the <sup>32nd</sup> ~~30~~ drawer of the 36, so I hope to finish in the spring. It is really important - Index Kewensis prepared at Kew in England does not ~~list~~ list subspecific names and often omits dates - which are very important to an accurate botanical nomenclature. But the

task is anything but fun - no such pleasure as working with the grasses themselves, but my eyes are what they used to be - and this will be a well-worth contribution I'll leave behind - but it is deadly tiresome and I'm always tired anyway - just to explain my neglect.

I hope all is going well with you and your family.

I've written to Tim and Martha. What is Tim doing in N.Y.? I hope they are getting on well - the baby will be a joy to them. Love to all your boys, including Bob.

Lovingly  
Aunt Mary

Sunday

Dear Mildred,

I'm trying to clean up my desk and came to your letter of "12/11/56" marked by me "2 handkerchiefs" - so I see I never thanked you. I'm awfully sorry. I never catch up. I congratulate you on your first grandson - I did write the young parents. I remember. You were born in the days when cuddling and rocking to sleep were forbidden. I remember your mother standing outside the bedroom door, the tears streaming down her face, while you yelled after being put to bed. I am so glad Eric is exempt from the draft - is this permanent? I hope so - or I hope he does not get a raise if that would cancel his exemption. I feel most strongly about the draft - it isn't a "free country" while we have it, and I can't see why everybody submits to it. Bill Van Eseltine was

repected because of his eyesight- I felt it was a blessing and I hope Eric's asthma will do its worst when he comes up for the draft. I had hoped, years ago, that the "War Resister" in the tens of thousands would make the draft impossible, but I see don't understand Huns sapiens a little bit.

Most American families are spread all over the country- you will be fortunate in having your children near you. You will remember my little grandchild Kathleen Blake (who loved to play she was an Indian in spite of her very blond hair). She was married (age 20) 4 weeks ago today, to John Rogers, (jet flyer, of all things! but otherwise very fine) and is at Havelock, NC, on the coast. She left Vanderbilt Univ. in the middle of her third year. John has a year to finish college and she plans to

go to college, too, Univ. of Minnesota. I hope she does. They will eventually live in International Falls on the U.S.-Canada boundary- make me shiver to think of it. I gave her my fader-docke from Vienna- she doesn't need it now, it is worn down there she writes.

Dorothy Van Eseltine has been engaged for nearly a year to a fellow student, George Crowl, and they plan to be married in early fall- the draft again facing them. George is near-sighted, like Bill Van Eseltine, has worn glasses since early childhood so we hope that will free him (Dr. David Starr Jordan called it "reverse selection".)

You mention spending February in Florida, returning in March. I wish I had written earlier asking you to stop here to see us (we rent a room next door for our rare guests)

but I suppose you are already  
home. If not and if this is forwarded  
to you in Florida please do stop to  
see us.

I'm still working in the Grass  
Herbarium - I took on an awful but  
badly needed task the fall of 1958  
editing and verifying the most index  
to grass names - some <sup>80,000</sup> ~~20,000~~ of them.  
Index Kewensis (the accepted authority  
for botanical names) does not include  
subspecific names, and from Linnaeus  
on down agronomists have been  
busy publishing <sup>subspecies</sup> varieties, subvarieties  
no end, and they must be accounted  
for. It is the only work on grasses I  
ever did that I don't like. But it is  
necessary, and nobody else has  
touched it - our index to all grass  
names was begun about 1896 and  
has been kept up - and all the back  
publications searched ever since. I'm  
editing the whole, making citations in  
form, etc. etc. I have about 75,000 done, and  
hope to be done by summer. Love and  
best wishes to you and all your  
family Love Aunt Mary



Smithsonian July 10, 1957

Dear Mildred,

Last week I received an invitation to Eric's wedding. I am just saying thank you and too old to travel, but I don't know the Penniman's address. The wedding is in Wilmington, Del. and the "reception immediately following" in West Chester, Penn. (just across the river, I suppose) but I haven't the address for my letter. Will you please address and mail it? Thank you. And please send me the address because I have just bought a big aluminum tray to send to Caroline.

You wrote me what a lovely

girl she is and I am happy for you.

I haven't answered your letter nor thanked you for your excellent paper on birth control. Florence read them, too. I am getting more inefficient every day. I am still working and trying to finish several things before my memory goes entirely - it is a nuisance the way I forget things. A few weeks ago I finished editing and verifying a card index of grass moths (started in Dept. Agr. in the 90s) including varieties as well as specific names - only such index in the world. Florence Van (librarian and bibliographer by trade) has been paid by Smithsonian for <sup>typing</sup> copying it - she worked at home, so, with no time

spent coming and going, the underpayment of 90 cents an hour wasn't as bad. She averaged about <sup>3</sup>100 a month.

The old index in various handwriting is worn and faded and citations, many of them, needed verifying. I was at it nearly 4 years (some botanical work done but most of my time on this index.) <sup>1941-42</sup> My room was full of the boxes, but all were brought down here a month ago and are waiting for permanent card-cases - government year begins July) and all supplies needed in spring must wait till then. I still have some 100, <sup>names</sup> or more to verify - <sup>in</sup> obscure journals and the like I haven't been able to get in libraries here. I wasn't interested like working on grasses themselves but necessary to avoid confusion and duplication of names and all sorts of errors. Now I am trying



to finish up odd and ends.

Dorothy Van is to be married in September. Her betrothed, George Crowl, (both graduated from Oberlin in June) took an exam. and got an appointment in Ordinance in the Navy <sup>Navy</sup> - has his "service" to do in the army yet. His father is prof. of geology in Ohio Univ. He got a room near his work and comes out nearly every evening on a "scooter" he just bought. Dorothy cut her right hand badly on a swinging glass door (glass broke) before Easter - a second operation was performed here just after graduation and the cast is now off and she is using her fingers - the third and fourth had remained stiff after the injury healed. Of course everything revolves about the young pair and the coming wedding - same as the Penniman's, no doubt. I think I wrote you that Kathleen quit in the middle of her third year of college and married John Rogers, a jet flier, in February. She lives in Milton, Fla. just now. They have already moved three times.

[Albany, N.Y.] 10 July 1957

I hope you can see your grand-  
son occasionally. Give them all my  
love.

Will Willis be up for the wedding?  
I suppose he will. Please forgive  
my neglect and write to me.  
Love to all of you

Affectionately  
Aunt Mary

[5]

SW03-41st St

[1957]

Washington 15 SE Dec 21  
Sunday

Dear Mildred,

Thank you for your kind and interesting letter, and for the lovely handkerchief. I am glad to hear of Eric and Caroline's happy home. Give them my love and best wishes, please. I am so glad I had even a little visit with them.

I understand your satisfaction in being a grandmother—as I have been there many years. You can't rival me in the number of grandchildren—Zoraida and her two children in Venezuela, all the <sup>great-grand</sup> <sup>daughters</sup>, <sup>as</sup> so far, Kathleen, now Mrs. John Rogers, Ruth Chou in China, the McChes here with 2 daughters, one, with <sup>3</sup> children in Saskatchewan, Barrada, a family of 4 girls in Brazil and their mother, and some young botanists here who call

me grandmama. They add interest to life.

Your home and your 8 acres I realize are a real joy to you. It is fortunate that the strict regimen prescribed for infants 50 years ago has died out. Your mother was so earnest in doing what was "best" for you on doctor's orders, I recall her standing at the shut bedroom door crying while you yelled inside.

My birthday is April 20, and I'll be 90 next one. I'm desperately tired and my feet, the best in the world all my life, are getting worn out and ache most of the time - so I have not done any shopping. Florence does, for anything I need. I am on my feet a good deal in the herbarium.

I rejoice that you are planning a cruise to the south. I botanized in Puerto Rico, Brazil twice, Venezuela - with a short stop at Curacao - a bit of Holland set down in the Caribbean, and I collected a new species of *Paspalum* there! Cura-

cas is the southernmost of Dutch West  
Indies, very interesting, maybe your  
Cruise will include that.

I wish you (plural) would visit  
us here - it is an awfully long time  
since I've seen you. You have met  
Florence, haven't you? She takes the  
best care of this grandma. She left  
this afternoon for a visit to her  
son Bill and family, 2 children,  
boy and girl - Bill's wife thinks the  
world of her. She was an orphan  
at 14 and worked for her board to  
put herself through high school.  
She was employed in the laboratory  
in Cornell when Bill was working  
for his Ph.D. and when he got it  
they were married - I went up to the  
wedding. Bill is prof of Bacteriology  
at Univ. Georgia and Marian (his  
wife) did her 4 years in college there,  
graduating a few weeks before her  
first baby, <sup>a boy</sup> was born. There is a  
girl, now 3, too. They were all here  
last Christmas. Dorothy, the youngest



of the Vans was married <sup>here</sup> to a fellow-  
student at Orlin, in September 1957.

They live in Waco, Tex, but are  
driving across to Georgia for Christ-  
mas. I am very fortunate to have  
such dear kind grandchildren.

I shall be with the Davises  
(you remember Geril, I guess, Kath-  
leen's mother). Her second <sup>Jim Davis</sup> husband,  
is English, American [something] here  
for British Empire - looks after needs  
of British possessions in <sup>all</sup> America  
and has an O.B.E. (order of the British  
Empire) for his services during the  
war - very kindly interesting man -  
Jim grandma to them, too. They will  
take me home Christmas eve. For  
a lone and aged woman of 89 I am  
very lucky, with Florence here for a  
daughter, you and the Davises for  
children and grandchildren - and  
work I can't stay from! Love to Bob  
and all your family Lovingly  
Aunt Mary



5403-41st St

Washington 15 DC

April 20, 1959

Dear Mildred,

Your kind letter was here when we got home about 5 o'clock from a visit to Williamsburg-Friday to Sunday. This was the Davis's birthday gift to me. We left here Friday morning and had a most interesting visit to Colonial Virginia. [You remember who the Davises are Ignace-Jim Davis (in British service here) and Geraldine Blake were married some 11 or 12 years ago (after Roger Blake, to my horror, took up with another woman - previous Kathleen is her daughter, happily married herself too, now) - [this looks like "Dramatis personae" at beginning of a play]. I am grandma to the Davises and they are most kind to me. Have you been to Williamsburg? It is most interesting, and well kept. I'd like

5403 - 41st St., N. W.

Mrs. Agnes Chase

Washington 15, D. C.

to take children in the grades there for several days.

Very glad to get your letter and delighted that you and Bob are coming here next ~~mon~~ in May. You have met Florence Van Eseltine, haven't you?

I'm glad to hear of your children and grandchildren - Florence is expecting her 7th - 4 in Hawaii - we visited them, you remember, and 2 in Athens, where Bill (the father) is professor of bacteriology in Univ. of Georgia. Dorothy, Florence's youngest child, only daughter, married in Sept. <sup>1957</sup> ~~1956~~ is expecting in July. They were in Texas while her husband was in training in air service and have been transferred to Sacramento. [I keep still about my feelings in regard to training for war - George is a lieutenant and apparently is well-esteemed - I like him very much but not his profession].

I hope you will have the desired  
girl in the fall. I'd love to see your  
Carl.

*I have found it, thanks*  
You say you are enclosing a  
copy of an article by Tim, but I guess  
you forgot to put it in - or else I  
mislaid it to read your letter - but  
I don't think I did - I mislay things  
and forget things terribly - distressing  
but I try not to get too worked up  
over it. I am still working at the  
herbarium on grasses. My little  
First Book of Grasses, which ran out  
of print twice was published by the  
Smithsonian in far finer form than  
than ed. 1 and 2. I'll send you a copy.  
You don't have to read it - but the  
latter part - page to is readable  
I think.

Love to all your family - I'll be  
so glad to see you in June and thank  
you for your good letter.  
Lovingly  
Aunt Mary

3403 - 41st St., N. W.

Mrs. Agnes Chase

Washington 15, D. C.

Sunday

Dear Mildred.

I'm sorry to miss your visit, but I'm glad to get your letter and the lovely photographs. In yours with your grandson you look so like your mother - I never saw the likeness so strong before. I'm sorry Bob missed making his speeches. I received notice of Bill's daughter's debut last winter. And now she is to visit Europe - lucky girl. I hope the French will understand her much better than they did me. After the first day I carried a pad of paper and wrote - and the French "can read written" if they "can't understand their own

language" as Mark Twain said.  
I'd like to go to Austria again, and  
hear more Wagner at the Staats  
Oper.

Florence is expecting another  
grandchild in July, Dorothy's first  
and she is going out to Sacramento  
to be there when Dorothy comes  
home from the hospital. She has  
been in fine health so all seems  
promising. Her husband is in  
the air service - I keep very still  
about what I think of the army.  
He likes flying - I hope he will  
never have to fly war planes.  
(It is a relief that Dulles is gone).

Please send the enclosed note  
to Eric and Caroline - I have n't  
their address. I'm very glad I  
had that visit from them  
short as it was. Love Grandma Mary



90 - APR 20 - 59

Mrs. Agnes Chase

5408 - 41st St., N. W.

Sunday

Washington 15, D. C.

Dear Mildred,

I wrote you a very short letter last week - I couldn't find yours, then but did a few days ago. The clippings you sent are interesting. I'm going to return them, you may want to keep them or send them to someone else.

I'm afraid I was not very cordial to your friend Bevo Farmman. I had told her over the 'phone that I hadn't time, said good bye and hung up. And then she turned up with Dr. Carmichael. He is a psychologist, and while he is very kindly he seems to be interested in people - in personal things, I mean, which isn't what I'd expect of a scientist. He is doing wonders for the museum - the first Secretary, it seems to me who had any interest in it. Old specimens in boxes (for study by scientists) are made into good museum



exhibits, with proper background and the like. One of the taxidermists told me soon after Dr C. came, that he had spent an hour in the taxiderm. shop - and the Museum is beginning to look like a modern one, instead of about one of 1880. But when exhibits an agrostologist, she doesn't like it much better than the stuffed birds do, for all they look alive.

I hope you will not be over-run by people you don't know who read the write-up. It is most interesting to have so historic a home - and you had a good time making it look historic - as I recall when I visited you. Eric and Caroline's pointing out the battlefield was a clever way to get people out of the house. — I enjoyed the brief visit of Eric and Caroline - wish I could have seen more of them.

I'll be glad to see your article in Parasite magazine. Florence has been commenting

how much earlier people are marry-  
ing now. I surmise some of it is be-  
cause girls marry but keep their jobs.

I'm ashamed for being so long  
in writing you - Your letter of June  
was so dear - took me back to visits  
of your mother, which were so dear.

Florence's son Bill (Prof Van  
Eseltine, bacteriology, Univ. Georgia) his  
wife and 2 delightful children, Kenneth  
<sup>soon 5,</sup>  
4, and Karen soon to be 3, arrived this  
afternoon - they are in bed now: nearly  
10 p.m.

Thank you for your interesting  
letter, dear. Love to the family.

Affectionately  
Aunt Mary

Washington DC May 31. 1959

Dear Mildred,

Thank you for your letter of May 21. June 14 is 2 weeks from today. Can't you come here for dinner, lunch or supper - when do you arrive? Are you driving down? Please let me know. If you can't come Sunday I'll expect to hear from you by telephone WO 5209 here - at the Smithsonian NATL 8-1810-

here at home till 8 AM. and after 6 pm. Florence Van is here all day mostly. She is going to California in early July - Dorothy is expecting her first baby about the 6th. They are in Sacramento.

I'll be ever so glad to see you  
- it is ages since you have  
been here.

Bill Van (Professor of Bacter-  
iology at Univ. Georgia, Athens,  
Ga) and family will be here in  
August - at least the children  
and their mother will be - lovely  
boy and girl 6 and 4 I think.

We shall be very glad  
to see you Love to all

Lovingly  
 Aunt Mary

5403-41st St

[1968]

Washington Jan 19

Dear Mildred, (Herbarium)

Tuesday

I'm so glad I'll see you soon -  
it has been a long time. - I had the  
grippe (?) thought for 3 weeks but Florencis  
(and the newspapers' editors) don't agree with that, so  
I'm accepting Jan 19 for today - came back to  
work yesterday - your letter awaited me last  
night. You will stay over night with us  
on your way down. <sup>Feb 23</sup> I'll be ever so glad to  
see you - it seems years. In that photo  
of you and your grandson you look  
very like your mother. Since the time of  
your arrival is uncertain (in your letter please  
drop me a line in time to meet you - and  
what time of day? or better, take a taxi to the  
Smithsonian (the "old brown stone building in  
the Mall," if the taxi driver does not know it -  
some doubt!) and I'll await you at the front door  
and we'll go on home. I'll be so glad to see you,  
and Florens will be, too.  
We had a baby here for Christmas, Doro-  
thea's first, Lawrence Alan Crawl, a perfect darling.



born last July - Florence went to California for  
the occasion. Dorothy has been devoted to  
babies since she was little more than a baby  
herself - a "baby sitter" all her teens.

I'll be so glad to see you (and  
you will have photos of your grand-  
children I hope).

I came back to work Monday - yes  
Sunday - still hard to get dates straight.  
You arrive Washington Feb 23 - Tuesday,  
day after Washington's birthday 1:25 or 4:55  
pm. - right?

I was so confused while I was sick  
I still verify everything. I want to hear  
all about your grand children.  
Love and best wishes  
Aunt Mary

Monday night  
Dear Mildred,

Your postcard came today. I fear I am really getting dippy. I can't remember getting 2 books from Bob, but I have a book I didn't buy and can't remember how I came by it. "Strange than Science" by Frank Edwards is one - the other I can't recall and we are in the midst of being painted throughout - every thing stacked away. I am awfully sorry. It is no fun to be 91 and have enough work for several years laid out to do in the herbarium and a great pile of mss on *S. Amer. Paspalum*, about  $\frac{3}{4}$  finished and typed - but unable to get at it because of the pile of work - the best <sup>young</sup> agrostologist left for twice as much salary elsewhere though he loved grasses and liked the work - but has a family. Physically I am remarkably well for 91, but I get confused and forget (do the same work twice sometimes) - ought to retire, but can't leave work half done - and more

keeps coming in. I work every Saturday-  
did July 4 too - excuse my waiting -  
this old woman is too tired to think  
straight. Florence is doing typing  
of the endless index <sup>published by her name</sup> and in every  
way is the kindest daughter a  
woman ever had. I am almost  
scared because I forget things so  
completely.

That little First Book (third edition)  
#2 - is selling very well the office tells me.  
Did I send you a copy? Not of interest  
to you - except the last part on what  
grasses have done for civilization etc  
etc. Florence says "give Mildred my  
love."

Please excuse your very aged  
aunt Mary, dear. - If I had any sense  
I'd quit the herbarium and grasses, but it  
would be easier to stop breathing.  
Love to your family - any more  
grandchildren? Lovingly Aunt Mary

Stranger than Science  
by Frank Edwards

Aug 10 '61

Dear Mildred, Please excuse penitence I must have  
my pen at the restoration machine my bag. You had  
liked to tease your mother by telling her she was  
born on Halsted St, but I think it was on Lake St near  
Halsted. Her grandfather, Erby, was a baker and had  
a bakery on Lake St (I think) near Halsted. At that time  
Halsted was the business street west of the <sup>Chicago</sup> river and not  
more than a  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile I think from the river. The grand-  
father had died when I first knew Evan. The Campbells  
lived next door to my grandmother Branick on  
Huron St. (between Taylor and Polk I think). My father  
Marion Merrill was the only one of his family who  
came to America from Tipperary, Ireland. Some time  
ago I read of the settlement of east Ireland by William  
the Conqueror by imported French, and I had read  
somewhere that Merrill was a Norman name. (I  
often wondered about Merrill from Tipperary) We know  
nothing of my father's family. He went to Liver-  
pool ship yards to learn his trade, ship smith -  
in the days when anchors were beaten out on the  
anvil - Do you remember

"What anvils rang, what hammers beat,

In what a forge and what a heat

Were shaped the anchors of our hope" in Longfellow's

"Building of the Ship" in our readers? My father was



2

ship-  
a smith in railroad shops in Cincinnati and  
Chicago, when <sup>and other non parts</sup> wheels were made on anvils.  
Grandfather Ely was dead when I first knew Eva, whose  
family lived next door to my grandmother Branick-  
my mother's mother. My grand father (mother's father)  
was Michael Cassidy. He died in Louisville, Ky when my  
mother, Mary Cassidy, was a baby. Her mother later  
married Edward Branick, the only father my mother  
knew. My Chicago cousins were Branicks.

Your grandmother Campbell I think grew up with  
greater means than her husband had - your mother  
had really good hand-me-downs made over by her  
very clever mother. My father was the only one of  
his family who came to America - he had a step-mother  
we were told - and I do not remember ever hearing of  
any of his family. That was not uncommon in immigrant  
families. We knew my grandmother Branick's relatives  
from North Ireland. They were followers of Robert Emmet  
who was executed by the English. "Robert Emmet Dennis"  
was the name of second-cousins in this country I  
heard about but never saw. My grandmother was

Rosanna Dennis and there was Dennis in Chicago.

This is all the ancient history I remember. I think I  
once knew where in Germany the Elys came from, but I  
can't remember now. Your mother's uncle, Charles Ely, was  
almost a fairy godfather to your mother - gave her pretty  
dresses (or the money for the material) probably - Mrs Campbell was fine  
seamstress and Eva was much better dressed than ever I was.



3

I once saw your grandfather Campbell - a big, musty man  
as I saw him, but I never saw any others. The Campbells (and  
Centers) were born in Chicago - the Ebbys did. There is a lot  
in Rose Hill Cemetery with a stone coping around it and  
"EBBY" on a stone. — Your grandfather Campbell was  
killed by railroad train while your mother was on her  
wedding trip. I had a great admiration for your father in  
the way he took on the family till John married.

Did your mother ever mention that "Grandma  
Bransick" smoked a clay pipe - we don't mention that  
and don't put it in your story - or if you do don't  
attach any name to it. It was prescribed by a doctor  
for something when she was about 40-45. Her big sons,  
who did not smoke, always kept her in tobacco. She  
was a valuable old grandmother and I enjoyed being  
sent to stay with her in vacation time - especially  
when she had ailments. She told me about her  
home in County Down, nearest town Downpatrick, in  
north Ireland. She went sea-bathing in her "roomy  
chimney!" <sup>(Honey)</sup> and she once visited Giant's Causeway - as big  
a museum to her. I guess, as Brazil is to me.

Grandma Ebbys was short and fat, my grandma Bransick  
was tall and very thin. They liked each other.

I never mind the heat - it is the cold that I dread. It can  
be achingly cold here - damp and miserable. Uncle Charles Ebbys was  
in the city government for some time - I don't know whether elected or  
appointed. Florence and I were there. The youngest pair of grandchildren, Laura  
and Linda Crowl was here a week this summer - there are 9 grand-  
children in all 3 families. But make up your mind. Love Aunt Mary.

Aug 12. I mailed this and only found it today - Saturday - in my desk at the herbarium. I'm pretty much of a miser at 92 - I hope I shall not last much longer - or at least not ~~be~~ lose any more of my limited gray matter.

I forgot Uncle John Erby he was the one who apparently had money to spare or was extra generous. I don't know ~~to what~~ his work was. He had an adopted (or step) daughter who married your uncle John - Gladys I think her name was. You must have known her when your mother took you & Bill to Arizona & New Mexico where John was sent for tuberculosis.

I recall that Eva walked George Evans from World's Fair grounds to Uncle John's - some few miles. George took off his shoes. Uncle John told Eva later that she would never see that man again! You probably know she was a remarkably good walker - we walked miles to see each other.

Do you remember hearing of Uncle Fred's wife an actress, Lillian Russell - It seemed terribly romantic to Eva and me, and Eva at least once had a very beautiful blue dress that was made over from something of Lillian Russell's.

Your uncle had an adopted or step daughter - forgot her name - John Campbell married her - you visited her and John (who went to N. Mex or Ariz. because of tuberculosis). Did John have a family? I'm much interested in your books. I've been working all day in the herbarium. I shall mail this on my way home. I'm getting to be such a nit nitid hope I don't forget to mail this on the way home. At 92 I'm losing what meager brains I ever had and it is awfully hard to finish the work I'm doing here and leave ~~things~~ <sup>some</sup> in order.

Aug 10, '81

Dear Mildred:

Please excuse pencil - I must have left my pen at the herbarium - not in my bag. Your Dad liked to tease your mother by telling her she was born on Halsted St., but I think it was on Lake St. near Halsted. Her grandfather Erby was a baker and had a bakery on Lake St. (I think) near Halsted. At that time Halsted was the business street west of the Chicago river and not more than  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile I think from the river. The grandfather had died when I first knew Eva. The Campbells lived next door to my grandmother Branich on Huron St. (between Taylor and Polk? I think). My father Martin Merrill, was the only one of his family who came to America from Tipperary, Ireland. (Some time ago I read of the settlement of East Ireland by William the Conqueror by imported French and I had read somewhere that Merrill was a Norman name. (I'd often wondered about Merrill from Tipperary.) We knew nothing of my father's family. He went to Liverpool shipyards to learn his trade, shipsmith - in the days when anchors were beaten out on the anvil -- Do you remember

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Were shaped the anchors of our hope" in Longfellow's  
"Building of the Ship" in our readers? My father was a shipsmith in railroad shops in Cincinnati and Chicago, when wheels and other iron parts were made on anvils.

Grandfather Erby was dead when I first knew Eva, whose family lived next door to my grandmother Branich - my mother's mother. My grandfather (mother's father) was Micheal Cassidy. He died in Louisville, Ky, when my mother, Mary Cassidy, was a baby. Her mother later married Edward Branich, the only father my mother knew. My Chicago cousins were Branicks.

Your grandmother Campbell I think grew up with greater means than her husband had - your mother had really good hand-me-downs made over by her very clever mother. M

My father was the only one of his family who came to America - he had a step-mother we were told - and I do not remember ever hearing of any of his family. That was not uncommon in emigrant families. We knew my grandmother Branick's relatives from North Ireland. They were followers of Robert Emmett who was executed by the English. "Robert Emmet Denvir" was the name of second-cousins in this country I heard about but never saw.

My grandmother was Rosanna Denvir and there were Denvirs in Chicago. This is the ancient history I remember. I think I once knew where in Germany the Erbys came from, but I can't remember now. Your mother's Uncle, Charley Erby, was almost a fairy godfather to your mother - gave her pretty dresses (or the money for the materials probably - Mrs. Campbell was a fine seamstress and Eva was much better dressed than ever I was.

I once saw your grandfather Campbell -- a big austere man as I saw him, but I never saw any others. The Campbells (ancestors) never lived in Chicago -- the Erbys did. There is a lot in Rose Hill cemetery with a stone coping around it and "ERBY" on a stone. Your grandfather Campbell was killed by railroad train while your mother was on her wedding trip. I had a vast admiration for your father in the way he took on the family till John married.

Did your mother ever mention that "Grandma Branick" smoked a clay pipe--



we don't mention that and don't put it in your story - or if you do, don't attach any name to it. It was prescribed by a doctor for something when she was about 40-45. Her big sons, who did not smoke, always kept her in tobacco. She was a lovable old grandmother and I enjoyed being sent to stay with her in vacation time - especially when she had rheumatism. She told me about her home in County Down, nearest town Downpatrick, in North Ireland. She went sea-bathing in her "swimming chimmie," (chemise) and she once visited Giants Causeway - as big a memory to her, I guess, as Brazil is to me. Grandma Erby was short and fat, my grandma Branick was tall and very thin. They liked each other.

I never mind the heat - it is the cold that I dread - it can be achingly cold here - damp and miserable. Uncle Charley Erby was in the city government for some time - I don't know whether elected or appointed. Florence sends love. The youngest pair of grandchildren, Larry and Linda Crowl were here a week this summer - there are 8 grandchildren in all 3 families. Best wishes for your book. Love Aunt Mary.

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I recall that Eva walked George Evans from World's Fair grounds to Uncle John's - some few miles. George took off his shoes. Uncle John told Eva later that she would never see that man again! You probably know she was a remarkably good walker - we walked miles to see each other.

Do you remember hearing of Uncle Fred's wife, an actress, Lillian Russell - it seemed terribly romantic to Eva and me, and Eva at least once had a very beautiful blue dress that was made over from something of Lillian Russell's.

Your uncle had an adopted or step daughter - forget her name - John Campbell married her - you visited her and John (who went to N. Mex or Ariz. because of tuberculosis). Did John have a family? I'm much interested in your book. I've been working all day in the herbarium. Shall mail this on my way home. I'm getting to be such a nit-wit - I hope I don't forget to mail this on my way home. At 92 I'm losing what meager brains I ever had and it is awfully hard to finish the work I'm doing here and leave things in order.

Love, Aunt Mary.

93  
Aug 10, '61

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I recall that Eva walked George Evans from World's Fair grounds to Uncle John's - some few miles. George took off his shoes. Uncle John told Eva later that she would never see that man again! You probably know she was a remarkably good walker - we walked miles to see each other.

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Love, Aunt Mary.

107 Park Place, Peoria Heights, Ill  
January 4, 1964

Dear Mildred :-

When I first knew Mary Agnes she spoke frequently of Eva Evans. It is quite possible I was introduced to her when I visited my aunt in 1893 and she took me to the Worlds Fair, but if so I have entirely forgotten it.

While my aunt was called Mary in her younger days, Uncle Will preferred Agnes. For a while after his death she wrote it Agnes M. Chase but soon after dropped the M and I know after she went to Washington letters and drawings were always signed Agnes Chase.

Grandfather Philander Jr. was a missionary preacher and made his living with his farm and stone quarry. He died before I was born.

During my childhood Will must have been lying a cripple from tuberculosis of the hip on his black chair which you must have seen when you visited Mary in Washington. However I have no recollection of him as I was so young. After he recovered enough to walk with a cane his sister Alice Corbett took him to live with her in Chicago. She had worked in two or three newspaper offices and for David C. Cook of Elgin, Ill who printed sundayschool papers and quarterlies. She wrote little very moral stories for his papers. By the time she took Will to Chicago I think she had a steady job conducting a department "Curiosity Shop" of the weekly edition of the Chicago Inter Ocean in which she answered all questions subscribers sent in, religious, political or what have you. She did a good job and later was made editor of the Weekly edition. The main edition was the daily. *ali* ~~She~~ helped Will to found and publish for several years the School Herald, a small paper particularly for country district school teachers who could not afford the higher priced educational publications which the college type of educators subscribed for. At that time out here on the level prairie roads were mostly all north and south and east and west at every mile and there was a little one room every two miles so every child was within walking distance of a school house. The teachers were mostly girls of 16 or 18 just out of school just waiting to get married. The schools were of 7, 8 or 9 months, according to what income the district had. The girls pay for spring and fall terms was at the rate of 25 dollars per month and for the winter term at the rate of 30 dollars but she had to build her fires and do her own janitor work and teach usually from 5 to 25 pupils in all grades. After corn picking was over big boys older than the teacher often came.

Will not only published the School Herald but some other paper covered books of his own writing on civil government &c. He must have made it pay for a while but he died in debt. Since he left no estate Alice was willing to let the bills go unpaid but Mary considered it a debt of honor and lived on oatmeal and beans for months until she paid every cent.

*Just, Mother* If she had let her in-laws know perhaps they would have come to her help but most of them never knew of her sacrifice until years after.

*W. W. Peterson & Son, Peoria*  
My father ran a general country store, and mother trying to keep house, raise a family, keep books and wait on the customers sometimes needed help. She had been paying the usual \$3.50 a week with board, room and washing to any country girl she could get. She now offered Mary \$5.00 a week and so for the summer she lived with us. I had no congenial friends and I collected bird eggs, fossils and looked for Indian arrows (but found none).

The Botany I found beyond my comprehension. Mother had 3 months of Botany in College but apparently little taxonomy and that already forgotten. I about wore the book out and learned the terms but never learned to use key to find the names of the species.



I had learned the common names of the showy wild flowers and of the common weeds but Mary having lived close to home in the big city knew not even that much.

She had learned to love me dearly and was determined to find a way to help me. So together we went at it pulling flowers apart and learning which name belonged to which part. One night after I had gone to bed she tackled a tall plant with a blue blossom which I had never even had a common name for and in the morning she told me it was Campanula americana. Then she had me go over the key with her and I came out the same. It was not easy, some times we needed the fruit or seed and our plant was too immature to furnish it. At the Worlds Fair we both saw our first herbarium specimens in the Minnesota building. After she got with Prof. Hill when ever we had to give up on a plant he could name it for us. The first spring after she went back to her job reading proof every time on sundays or holidays that she could get out she collected plants, pressing one foreach of us, taking some home to analyze and some to be sent to me fresh. If our determinations came out the same we concluded it was correct, if not we did it over. I collected and sent to her the same way.

So I take much satisfaction in thinking if it had not been for me Agnes Chase would probably have never become interested in botany and never become the best agrostologist in the world.

One can never do good to another person without receiving more benefit themselves than does the recipient of their act. Mary made my life a happy one but in so doing became world famous and the honored Fellow of the Linnean Society.

Early in our cooperative collecting Mary became acquainted with Elsworth Jerome Hill. He had in his youth been crippled with tuberculosis in the hip. Being crippled nothing was expected of him, so he had all his time to himself and being of a studious nature he would get out into the fields on his crutches carrying a stool, his portfolio and botany. Dropping the stool by a plant he would analyze it, put a specimen in his portfolio and thus became proficient and built up a fine local collection. Later he outgrew his affliction, got an education and became a teacher and afterwards a preacher. When Mary met him he was retired and together they collected for years around Chicago and in the dunes of Indiana at every opportunity. He frequently wrote for botanical papers and Mary made sketches to go with his articles. He taught her to use a compound microscope and one day brought her the notice of a Civil Service examination for a microscopist to examine pork for trichine. The United States was at that time sending a lot of pork to Germany on which they demanded certified inspection. The job paid much better wages so Mary worked at that for a year or more. Then Hill brought another notice, the government wanted an artist for the Dept. of Agriculture. Of course Mary passed at the top of the list and went to Washington. Her kindness in doing sketches for Hill gave her the skill to get a well paid job that she loved from the first. I think she got \$100. per month which at that time was fine for a woman.

From here on you probably know more than I do.

Her field books at the Smithsonian record, with date and place, every plant she ever collected.

When she went to Washington she gave all her grasses to the institution and the rest of her herbarium to the University of Illinois at Urbana.

When I collected grasses I relied on her to name them for me so now I am but a poor agrostologist but most other things I do not usually have too much trouble with. I sent during the years several thousand specimens for the herbarium and for their exchanges.

October 9, 1966 I sent my entire herbarium, some 40,000 mounted specimens acquired by collecting and exchange to the University of Illinois at Urbana.

Now I am collecting local plants for the new Peoria Museum already under construction.

You say W.I. Chase died of tuberculosis. The death notice I read said "suffusion of the brain", what ever that is-I am no physician-You are probably correct.

You asked "was the job with Will her first." So far as I know it was.

After Will died Mary went to live with Alice for a short time but soon found she could save no money. Alice insisted on a fine flat with a spare bedroom always prepared to entertain any of the Chase clan and she kept up correspondence with dozens of cousins who accepted her hospitality any and every time they came near Chicago.

If you have any other questions I will be glad to try to answer them.

Thank you for the invitation to New England but at the age of 88 (next Wednesday) I do not expect to get that far. But I would be delighted to become acquainted with you if our paths ever should cross. Pitier (possibly not spelled right) once worked for the Dept. of Agriculture in Washington. I think he is head of that Dept. in Venezuela. He wrote Mary that he had a girl in his department who aspired to be the "Agnes Chase of Venezuela". Mary said to send her along and until she learned the language she could live at Casa Contenta. She came and lived with Mary until she went home and got married. Mary was always very proud of Zoraida's work and I think Zoraida visited Mary twice afterwards. And as Carmichael mentioned Mary visited Venezuela and Zoraida was her guide. The enclosed picture is of her two beautiful children. You may keep it. So far as I know Zoraida is still in a fair way to reach her goal of becoming "the Agnes Chase" of her country. Carmichael in the foreword to "First book of Grasses" 3d. edition mentions Mary's work with Millspaugh. She was all that time working at regular job and the work for Millspaugh was done on her own time and so far as I know absolutely without pay. She felt that she was learning and helping some one.

Mary and I loved each other dearly and I think I helped her and I know she did much for me.

I never even went to High School but Kenyon College of Gambier Ohio October 22, 1949 gave me an honorary Masters Degree and the next year Bradley University gave me an honorary degree of Doctor of Science.

This may fool some people but I know there are many holes in my education.

I tell people I am more of a plant mortician than a botanist. They tell me at the University of Illinois I have prepared more botanical specimens than anyone ever did in Illinois.

I will be looking forward to seeing your article in the Reader's Digest.

Very sincerely,

*Virginia*



Peoria Heights, Illinois February 3, 1964

Dear Mildred :-

I cannot tell you anything about how Mary's mother was living or when she gave up the keeping of boarders. Her sister "Syd" was overseer of a bunch of young girls who were working for a firm who bottled or packaged many botanical products both medicinal and otherwise. She gave me samples of Tonka beans used to adulterate Vanilla extract, also the very expensive pods of the vanilla plant, long very slim pods like grow on our Catalpa tree. Her brother Jo about 1895 she told me was working for Corn Products Co. When they were to open a new plant he made the plans and figured out the diameter of each wheel to give the proper speed to each of the machines. He received \$10,000 a year, which at that time was very high pay. So I do not think he ever let his mother want for anything. If Rose had been as ambitious as Mary I never thought she would have needed to be helpless all her life. After Syd's death when she came back to live with Mary the Smithsonian was paying women 8 cents a sheet to mount the herbarium specimens and Mary took some home and suggested that Rose would be able to break the monotony of being alone all day and could earn four or five dollars a day. After a day or two<sup>4</sup> she refused to do any more.

You say you thought of me on my birthday; so did some others! It was planned to have a surprise party at the "Corall", a smorgasbord supper. No one seems to know who put a notice in the paper the day before: but no matter--I do not read the daily paper, so when Dr. Cyril Evans a chemist at the Regional U.S. Laboratory picked me up and started out Glen Avenue I was moved to ask where were going (as his wife had invited me a week before to eat at their house) When we arrived at the Corall they were turning away all transients as the birthday party of 81 filled the house.

Among the group were retired teachers of the public schools, both active and retired Professors of Bradley University, Girl Scout leaders, Members of all sections of the Academy of Science, members of the Garden Clubs and three members of the Manx Society (my maternal grandmother was born on the Isle of Man). A box with a slit in it was on the table where each signed the guest book into which some dropped a birthday card and others put cash, which totaled over \$100.

There is no substitute for friends! In collecting coins, stamps, or antiques there always duplicates; but in a collection of friends there are never any duplicates!

Yes, I was at the University of Illinois when Mary received her honorary Doctors degree. That was the last time I ever saw her.

She did her Christmas shopping early. She died in September but two weeks before Christmas I received notice from National Geographic that she had extended my subscription a year.

Even when eating alone Mary insisted on a white table cloth and she told me once "there are some necessities of life I am willing to do without, but some luxuries I must have!"

I will look forward to your writing, it will be more worthwhile than a block of cold marble.

Affectionately,

*Virginia*





### *Happy Birthday to Distinguished Botanist*

Dr. Virgilius H. Chase, right, who reached his 88th year Wednesday, was a guest of honor at a birthday party attended by friends and members of the Peoria Academy of Science. Dr. R. H. Rundle (left), medical director of the Peoria County Tuberculosis District and himself an amateur botanist, said there were 81 friends present and 81 speeches. "Most of them stressed his absolute disregard for chronological age," he said, "and his patience with children and his willingness to teach them what he has learned." The dinner was held at the Corral Restaurant, and there was one candle on his birthday cake.—Staff photo by Alan Harkrader.