

364 72 Street
Brooklyn, N.Y.
May 24, 1953

Dear Frank,

I shall give you a brief run-down on my history. Since I last saw you, I left off working with the Department of Welfare and went, being fatigued, to Mexico. Home again, I am now employed as an executive secretary for the Dexter-Carpenter Company in lower Manhattan. I do not know how long I shall keep this job, but one must work at something (Must one not?), and it is experience. My more intimate and particular work is the composition of a third book, this time at last a novel, but a philosophical one, about man's search for refuge, and the ultimate possibility of it if he is to find himself, in the only way it can be done, in others. Like the Germans, I am always interrupting the flow of event in order to go underground and pick up the "deeper significance". It makes bad novel, but it is the only mode by which I permit myself to be interested in events at all. Another activity has been examination of the chances for investment in land, either up-state New York or in Vermont. I have long held the conviction, which I have no doubt burdened you with in prior talks or letters, that land, in the prevailing direction of economy in our state, is the sole ultimate source for the individual of both wealth and security. I have taken one trip already and will take more before the purchase of a considerable tract. I have not heard from Gene Dembinski, nor, indeed, from any of our classmates. Frank Brennan and I have made several overtures toward a visit to each other, but it never comes off, the reason being, I think, that I do not really trust him. Don O'Conner, I heard from a chance brush with Gene Murphy, is ill, having ulcers, some complications of the appendix, and other physical difficulties. Gene Murphy teaches the use of IBM Machines at New York University. His face twitches. Jerry Susillo is a Brother now.

An idea has come to me, Frank - one which we have discussed formerly, but either at times when you were warm for it or when I was, but not both together. The idea has revisited me since attending, as I have this winter, many travelogue sessions at the Brooklyn Academy of Arts and Sciences. Why do we not plan an extensive trip of exploration of some localities both of us have longed often to see? One lecturer at the Academy showed us his own films of a trip taken by car across the Sahara desert from Algiers to Timbucktoo. The immense silences. The immense silences... All my unsatisfied

hopes of travel flowed then to awareness, and I asked myself whether they would ever have deliverance. This lecturer had spent, it is true, thousands of dollars on equipment, because crossing a desert is no prank. But, strangely, he encountered on his trip an old Model-T Ford, containing an American man and wife, he an accountant, she a medical secretary, who were making the same trip on amounts saved from their inconsiderable earnings. This couple had already been from Alaska to Tierra del Fuego in the same vehicle, and were looking ahead to their next trip, from Paris to Singapore along the Ancient Silk Route of the Orient. Is your blood, as mine is, almost, but not quite, too stodgy to be enflamed once again by high adventure? Let us plan such a trip, not that daring, not that expensive, perhaps not quite that remote, but a trip, one flagrant with possibilities. Before this mechanized world, and close politics, and our own aging dispositions, lock us in, irrevocably. Not this summer, but next, giving the preparation of a year to it.

Now to be prudent. It occurs to me that it is quite possible that you are engaged, or near it. If this is so, then I fear any anticipation you feel must at once be quenched. But if you are like me, discouraged with what I see of the quality of modern women, and the burdens of a man in the sacrifice of marriage, and the joys which readily awake to a man not hide-bound by orthodox opinions, joys quasi-matrimonial yet where the shrew durst not edge her tongue, then you are virgin still, and free, a quality shared by all us virgins. Then you have but to consult your temperament and arrange your job and save some money.

Tell me what you think of all this.

Very truly yours,

John Collon

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