

Sunday Sept. 25 1983

Dear Murray and Rosa:

In Friday's mail, I had a note from Don Ellegood enclosing your comments concerning (for want of a better title) "Where Our Fathers Died." I am extremely grateful to you and hope the Press compensated you properly for your work.

As you may know, the initial version of this manuscript went in to the Press in October of 1981, following Earle's two surgeries in June, from which he had in no way recovered. I had from Don, at once, a hand-written note saying that he and his wife "loved" the book (They came from the Oklahoma area, you may know) and hoped the Press could publish it. I was, personally, dissatisfied with the manuscript and should never have taken it in. But I wanted both to get it out of the house and wanted someone's opinion on whether it was worthy in any way of consideration. I had not, certainly, expected them to xerox copies and get them out to readers.

After a while, Don sent me condensed comments from readers. One, obviously an authority on the history of the area in Indian Territory where Billie and Alice lived for a number of years prior to moving to Kansas, was very helpful. I made some changes on the original, which Don sent back to me, but then undertook a complete re-write, correcting each finished page as it came from the machine. This was done mainly piecemeal during Earle's final months of serious illness here at home, throughout his long hospitalization for brain surgery, and then the months back here when Roger was helping me to care for him.

After Earle's death, in October of last year, I set to work in earnest, determined to finish, and found in the routine a certain healing. I took the second manuscript (the one you had, I hope) to the Press in December. I had heard nothing of it since except for a couple or three notes from Don asking vaguely whether I could come up with a different title and if I had thought of illustrations. Obligated to get back to writing, I set to work to put together a packet of short stories with a Northwest setting. These included the title story KATE BADEN, a novelette, which I believe you read once and liked. You asked me, then, if I had other Northwest stories. I had had from Don the paperback Santos collection, and so I mailed him my collection shortly before I left for England. The manuscript consists of 12 stories, a total of 265 typed pages.

Friday's letter from Don was my first acknowledgement of these. He said, simply, that he had "enjoyed reading" them but didn't know whether "our faculty committee will permit us to publish original fiction or not." He went on to say that he was having the manuscript read and would be in touch when he had the reports on hand.

I returned from England on September 7, a little tired from the month's sojourn, but with the satisfaction of having found many records of my father's family in the books locked in a trunk at the little Pudleston Church in Herefordshire, and even a visit to my Grandparents' house, The Gobbets, built in the 1500's. We hunted and asked until we found it, were invited in by the owners, who hadn't "changed a thing," sat in front of my Grandmother's stone-lined and stone-ovened "inglenook," and drank tea, looked down the old stone-walled and stone-curbed well, where she must have hung her butter, and admired the stone salting table.