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Dear Murray and Rosa:

I seem to be constantly indebted to you. For which I am most grateful. "ISLANDS OF THE SMOKEY SEA" came yesterday from Shirley Dearth, who had enclosed a note saying you were the donor. Thank you very, very much. I should certainly pay for this one. You don't need to supply me with all your books.

This is a lovely paperback, cover, color, and all. I like the long Appendix and I have poked in through the text at length, especially rereading the part about Vitus and Co. anent the Bering Sea exploration. Even though, as I told you, I was able to borrow a copy of BRIDGE... from Tom Fransen for whom you had autographed the book when it first came out.

I am most happy to have this one; my BRIDGE just may show up some day, as it, too, was autographed. I have a notion it is in the extensive library of my late sister-in-law Irene Price, who was a great fan of yours. I may have told you that she died in the house where I was born, just a week after we returned from England, a very great and sorrowful loss to me. She was widely loved and respected, and the Emporia State University Library in Kansas profited by thousands of dollars of memorial funds following her death. There is also an on-going scholarship by the Kansas AAUW in her memory.

I have just called Rick Anderson, who called Lael the day she left for Dutch Harbor, giving her a number of phrases and words he thought would be helpful on her Korean boat. I told him about her wire, that she had been transferred to the CRYSTAL ~~DAH~~ DAHLIA, and he hazards a guess that this one may be Taiwanese, which is something all of her training classmates who had been on Taiwanese boats told her she should avoid. But she wired that she was doing "fine", so we know she has coped, whatever. I learned in England that she is a "coper."

Well, I hear nothing at all from Don about "Black-jack Country," which irks me a little bit. I had a jolly letter from him recently that didn't mention the manuscript. It would be nice to know, one way or the other.

I may have told you that I got together a dozen short stories, most of which I thought pretty good, to submit to the annual U. of Iowa Press short story collection awards contest. They came back with humiliating promptness, in a package ripped open at the ends and in bad shape and with merely a form card saying they did not make the "finals", I haven't counted to see if any were missing, but they all looked abused. I thought of your "hula hoop" comment.

I had started to work on a novel, wanting to stay with fiction, at least for a time, but it seemed to me, after less than a hundred pages, to go nowhere. I had used a boy growing up as a protagonist, and decided that was a bit of a mistake, so I started another novel, using a girl and then woman, with a female second character and more females...men, too, of course. I am liking it better, or, I should say, enjoying the writing more.

I am not going to attend the Press-Author thing on Tuesday next. If you go, give my love to Don, with reservations.

But do keep a bountiful supply of the stuff for yourselves, without any reservations. I just can't say how much you have helped me along the rocky road. But I know you know.

Cheers to you, too,

*Hazel*

I have talked to Lois Scholl again about Laurel's upcoming doll. I am trying to think how old she would be now. Rick's baby is six months, has had recent open heart surgery, and is whole again, with a long, long scar down his front, and totally adorable.