

Mom wrote this to Nina very carefully in hopes that the latter would respond. But of course she never did - Nina didn't write letters or make 'phone call - just received them!

July 16 1980

Nina Dear,

I started writing this letter on June 18th in a motel room in Santa Fe Springs, while Dick was doing some weekend work for a corporation in the area. The motel was just off the Santa Ana freeway, and I was there, of course, but my mind was in the desert and the mountains and all the things I'm about to write in better form than the first disjointed scribble of my thoughts just as they came to me.

We have enjoyed your book so much ... I especially, 'cause it takes me back to my childhood, and tells me things I never knew before now. But oh, I'm deeply saddened to learn of all the grief that you had to endure, and I'm so very sorry. You are indeed a rare person, and don't you deny it!

Mother and Jerry and I were on that camping trip in Rattlesnake Canyon (that you mention in your book) and I remember Perc and Earl getting down to bedrock in the creek, and our stone firepit, and Earl tossing the flapjacks in the air to turn them over ...

Can you tell me where it was that we had to wait an hour or so in a parking area for the down traffic to pass before the up traffic could go up the mountain? I asked Earl some years ago, but he couldn't remember. Maybe he wasn't there, but I'm sure that you and Perc and he must have been. Also, on what fork of the American River did we camp that summer of 1931? What was the name of the people who owned that interesting old house on the trail (down to the river) from the mine tunnel at the end of the road? I remember picking raspberries and blackberries along a fence there.... enough for dessert for everyone in camp, as I recall ... And the big framework (was it a quartz crusher?) that was our "pantry," where we'd hang venison.

You told of camping on Black Rabbit Creek in the Santa Rosas, and we were fascinated, for that was the name the Forest Service gave to the land exchange that we made with them. It was the same area that I owned: we bought some aerial photographs of that part of the Santa Rosas, and one clearly showed a large square outlined in rocks, which must have been man-made. We mentioned it to the Forest Service, and they sent a couple of men there in a helicopter to inspect the area and they told us later that indeed there was evidence of rather long habitation, and there were many pottery shards. However, that particular area was at a lower elevation and I rather think it was not on the land that I owned.

It was so interesting to hear all you had to say about Nellie Coffman. She must have been delightful. Hanging on our dining room wall is a 300-year-old wrought iron Spanish BBQ set that she gave to Kenneth Peck many years ago, which he and Catherine subsequently gave to me because iron rusted in their home by the ocean after they left the Coachella Valley. Did you know that I inquired about a job in public relations or as activities director at the Desert Inn in January of 1941? It was a very rainy winter, though, with little tourist business, and they weren't interested. Wish I'd had a chance to meet Mrs. Coffman!

Do you know where I can find a copy of *The Winning of Barbara Worth*? I read it years ago, and have been prowling around old-book stores trying to find a copy, but so far with no luck. Maybe the desert would be a better place to search ...

Thank you so much for those old snapshots. I'm tickled to pieces with them, and

especially the picture of "The Ruth Cottage," that you call "The Nest," where we were that summer of 1933. It's the only picture I have of that cottage and the area around it. I've tried to describe to Dick where my cot was, beside the wall of the promontory that I call "the Lookout." Often I'd take my cot up to the flat space by "the Lookout" at night, where I could read a magazine by moonlight, and where sometimes I'd put myself to sleep counting the shooting stars that were darting about the heavens in profusion that summer. That's where I chased the end of the rainbow one afternoon and fell down between some upright rocks in a small cliff (it seemed large at the time!) and skinned my left leg to a fare-thee-well ... still have the scar on the back of my knee! Alas, no pot of gold! How I would love to see the homestead again, though I'm sure it wouldn't look the same at all. Did I tell you that some years ago Dick and I drove to the entrance of "The Tors," but it was all fenced and locked. Before we saw the fence and gate, I said excitedly that after two more bends in the road we'd see "The Tors" ... how disappointed I was to find it inaccessible! It was somewhat surprising to me that I could find the road in, after some forty-odd years ... and well did I recognize the part of the road that Perc blasted out of solid granite (was it granite, in fact?). I chuckled when I read in your book your comment about the fact that Perc preferred to blast the road, any road, through rock rather than find a way to go around...

Your Desert and Mine is a delightful book, Nina, and I've ordered a copy for Lana, for I know she'll enjoy it for its accounts of the desert as it was, as well as for family history. Incidentally, Lana is now expecting, unexpectedly,