

203 Jefferson  
Sandpoint, Id 83864  
March 7, 1986

Dear Bob and Wendy,

Good to hear from you. Glad to hear that both your house and your book have progressed so far. I enjoy the final stages of revising too. I find that I don't really get immersed into the book until that stage. I have the same problem as you do about stuffing my book with too much material. I made some good progress this winter clarifying what the main characters wanted and eliminating background material (flashbacks and memories) that didn't apply to that main want. I found some good tips in John Gardner's ON BECOMING A NOVELIST and checked out one of his books MICHELSSON'S GHOSTS from the library because it was a complicated book which I thought might give me a better idea if it was possible to make this kind of novel readable. This was the first of John Gardner's novels I'd read and I was very impressed with his technical ability, especially his talent in picking up and pointing out small gestures that added character and lifelikeness to the story. I was very excited that this would be one of my favorite books but after I finished it I was disappointed. It seemed to have too much sex and violence in it (to appeal to the mass market?) and I felt left at the end with the feeling that Gardner's great writing talent had been wasted on a story that never developed any real significance. It came close to being significant but just missed the mark.

The weather here isn't as bad as Organic Gardening leads one to expect. Here is a paragraph from a book on Idaho Archaeology I happened to be reading--the information is from the United States Department of Agriculture:

"So far as temperature and precipitation are concerned, altitude is in general a more potent factor of control than latitude in the climate of Idaho. The entire state lies within the region of prevailing westerly winds and is affected in a marked degree by the ameliorating influence of the Pacific Ocean, so that the climate is milder than its latitude and altitude would indicate. It is considerably milder than that of the States lying in the same latitude east of the Continental Divide, the lofty ranges of which frequently serve as a barrier against the cold waves and blizzards that occasionally sweep down from the Canadian Northwest."

We have had 10 days of warm sunny weather that has melted most of the snow and given Jack a chance to work on his vehicles. At the same time I notice on the TV weather maps that the Northeast has been having snow and cold weather. So don't feel too sorry for us. I think spring hit us first this year.

If we've seen the last of the snow for the year we would have had  $3\frac{1}{2}$  months of snow on the ground, which is more than normal. Jack doesn't like the snow because it restricts his outdoor life but I don't mind it so much because I don't have to shovel walks and driveways and I kindof enjoy being confined to the "cabin" for 3 or 4 months out of the year when I know I can get in a good block of writing. When the weather is nice Jack likes to go here and there and so I don't get much writing done.

I feel very noble today because I finished and have ready to mail our Federal tax, our Idaho tax and our California Tax. That's why I'm answering your letter so soon. I'm getting caught up on letter writing the next day or two before getting back to the book.

We plan to drive to California sometime in the next month to visit Jack's parents in Crescent City and to pick up the last load of stuff we have stored there. It will be a nice change.

Oh, I finally found a second-hand roll-around, swivel office chair. Jack put a big sheet of masonite on the floor so I can roll from desk to typing table to files to bookcase. He also bought me a light to attaché to my typing table so everything is bright and convenient. It really helps to have a comfortable quiet place to work. I'm sure you and Bob will enjoy your soundproof office. There's nothing more distracting than hearing conversation going on when you're trying to concentrate.

*Love*

*Marian AND Jack*

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