

at home & a husband demanding a certain amount—is so delicately balanced I can *just* find time to work if nothing else is thrown in.

But add just one thing—Christmas—the extra work due to problems of being an executor of ECM—or the extra mail & having to say *No* to a number of demands—the apple cart is upset.

Scott's Cove

February 9th, 1956

Dearest Land,

We have just picked up your letter, early, from the post office. Your father and I have both read it. There is not time for me to write you the kind of letter I would like—I will do that from Canada, I hope—because I have only 3/4 hour before we start to leave, but I want to drop a letter in the mailbox as we go so you can have our first reactions and not be wondering, "What the hell are they going to say to that letter?!"

There are many, many things to say. That was a thoughtful and honest letter and it brings up much to think about, and it shows that *you* have been thinking—churning things over, questioning, weighing, and trying to do it as sincerely and honestly as possible. I can't answer all of these thoughts here. It will take *me* some thinking. But certain things can be, and should be, said right off the bat.

You are *not* "disappointing" us and you are *not* "letting us down." Nor do we feel you have or are wasting our money. I am sure from your letter that you have "learned" many things—perhaps not just the things you expected, but you have learned certain things about life today, and you have learned things about yourself and other people which are invaluable lessons and which can help you all your life. I think you can learn still more by analyzing the situation and yourself in relation to it before you leave it.

We are not disappointed because we do not feel that college marks* are a criterion of character or intelligence or success in life. (I will have to come back to this point, because getting through college with passing marks may help one, of course, may be valuable in the world's eyes. But it is not an invaluable *criterion*.) We are both highly doubtful of the mass-production education of today, applied with pressure to the amassing of facts: knowledge, not wisdom. We are both of us very sympathetic to your reaction to the pressure routine of this year. I wrote much the

same kind of thing to my parents my freshman year (and college was far easier then), and as you know, your father just left college. I felt there was no time for thought, for life, for any kind of creative work, and I got so I couldn't sleep, find time to be out of doors, etc. I was pressed by my father and mother who felt this was a "wonderful opportunity" and that "I would always regret leaving," and by the inner compulsion and humiliation that my sister had done well and loved it and been the perfect college girl ahead of me (more popular with boys too!). I was pretty much pressured into staying in college.

It is hard to say now whether it was a mistake or not. What I *do* know is that I should *not* have gone to the same college as my sister. I should *not* have felt I had to compete with her or live up to her, or to my mother and father in college. It took me many, many years to realize I had my own gifts and they were utterly different from either of my sisters. (And Con was *summa cum laude*, and Dwight was a scholar, Phi Beta Kappa. I was the poorest student of the family.) I am telling you all this because I think some of your feeling of "letting us down," "failure," depression, etc. (which worries me *much* more than your marks or your wanting to leave), is bound up with your very natural and similar feeling that you must live up to Jon!

Jon has his own gifts. You have yours—and you have great gifts. They must be used and you must, and will, find the environment that gives them scope. Jon wasn't so perfectly suited to Stanford but, as he once said to me, he was more of a conformist; you are more apt to question and rebel. Rebellion can be a sign of great strength. I am proud of you for seeing the shortcomings of your situation and facing the fact that you're not getting anything out of it—and that most people's shocked answers about the value of college education are merely conventional and have no thought behind them. Rebellion is often healthy and I feel it maybe is in your case. But it must be used wisely, like any kind of explosive material. It can teach you much. Ask yourself, with that incentive of rebelliousness as a spur, what it is you are rebelling *against*? And what *toward*? Don't let rebelliousness simply blow you out of a bad situation into a worse one. Try to make the transition smooth. It is a waste to use all that gunpowder to blow yourself out of college and leave a hole and broken bric-a-brac in the process.

If it is the best thing for you to leave—and it may well be—try, if you can, to tie things up so that your next step won't be too difficult or wasteful. A B and even a C can count for a lot; a finished course, even

*Land was a freshman at Stanford University at that time.

with a D, makes for a smoother transition into the next step you want to take infinitely easier if you want to transfer to A&M or another college. Maybe you don't want to transfer. All this you must discuss with your father: the draft, etc. I hope you will wait to talk it over with him before taking definite action. I think he feels sympathetically toward your attitude and *can* help you toward the next step.

If you can, don't go on at this pace—let up a little—even the marks. Set a limit for yourself. Work just so hard, and then get out and away from it. Accept the fact that you're not an A-student or a B-student. It doesn't mean you have a lower intelligence—you're not in that narrow groove, that's all. Use your intelligence to live balancedly. I will add more to this—

Mother.

P.S. One more thing: you are *not* lazy. You have shown that you can work hard and long at difficult jobs—new and green and all-to-learn, as you did this summer on the ranch, when you felt the work was worthwhile and you liked it. You have that behind you and you can be proud of it. It is a good record. And we were proud of you. But, as you yourself know, the ability to take hard physical work is not enough to make one a successful rancher. It is not enough to escape into hard physical activity day by day. One must have some kind of broader vision of the whole project and the world into which it fits, what you are working toward. This is what you need some kind of broader education and/or training for. We—and you—must figure out how best to get this for you.

I could write you another long letter on the "unrealistic" side...