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25 May 2000

Dear Margaret:

I know that you must have heard some things about the wedding and reception from Laura, but she would not have been able to tell you anything about 5321 Baynton Street. Winnie and I, Alec and Jayne, Tom and Betsy and Patty and John all stayed Saturday night with the Nicholsons. They were wonderful to us.

We arrived at about 1:30 p.m. on Saturday. The rain had stopped but everything was cool, overcast and wet. Imagine Germantown cool and wet and not hot and humid. I felt as if I were in a time capsule. They have changed very little, and the repairs that have been done look sort of like Papa's.

In the front yard those same Japanese maples still stand and also all the azaleas and other flowering bushes – most of them just gone by with their spring adornments. Of the two large copper beeches the larger one has died and been taken down about 3 years ago. Chris Nicholson said it had some sort of blight, part of it fell down and the rest was cut. The cuttings are still there in part. In the side and back yards the bushes and trees look the same only bigger. You know how when you go back to a childhood place things look smaller? Not so for me, especially the rhododendron bushes out back from the dining room. They are huge. And the big hollow tree in the back and the linden on the other side are still there.

The color of the paint is a shade of green-gray the way I remember it. The flagstones look the same everywhere.

Those dog-faced door knobs on the big front door: one was stolen, the other still there (on the inside.) The papered walls inside the front hall have the same dingy gray color they always had, and the dark brown wainscoting in the front hall is unchanged. Same for the stairway and the closet on the stairs (now used by occasional visiting grandchildren as a cave.) In the study, Dante still reposes on the shelf high above the door to the Junk room (renamed by them the Museum because they keep collections of specimens that their children collected while in school.) I hadn't known before Helen and Chris told us that Dante had been there when we moved in and "was never to be moved under any circumstances." The layout of furniture in the study is the same and the books are jumbled in this way and that.

In the front room with the French casement windows they have a spinet piano at the near end, and some couches, looking much the same.

In the hall to the right after you enter over near the window benches they have a very large tropical fish tank on the left as you are facing those windows. The dining room is unchanged. In one hall approaching the pantry there is the head of an American bison hanging from the wall. The pantry looks the same.

In the kitchen they have removed the old gray paint from cupboards on the left and the result is pleasing. There is a small wood-burning stove on the far wall (next to the door to the back kitchen.) Some of the masonry wall has been exposed on that far wall and it looks nice. The back kitchen is fitted out like a little sitting room.

The second floor looks unchanged for the most part. In Siberia one room is a bedroom and the other a sitting room. Many of the bathroom fixtures are still the old ones although in Papa's bathroom the pipes had to be replaced and they took down the marble

shower, replacing it with a modern fiberglass tub and shower. But they kept the marble and used it in the construction of a "vanity" (sink and cupboards) and the result is excellent. The Nicholsons keep the second floor front for their bedroom. My old room is a computer room. Winnie and I slept in Peter's room.

The second floor porch over the dining room is in constant use for plants in the spring and summer and they use it as a sunporch as well.

On the way to the third floor the plastic draft barrier that I put in 40 years ago is still there and it is used in the cold weather to prevent heat loss, while the rooms on the third floor are unchanged. They peeled away some old paper on one of the walls in Teri's room and found a pencilled note from a paperhanger in 1870, giving his name, etc. The big L-shaped room ("Aunt Martha's room") is a playroom for grandchildren with a big doll house, a ping-pong table, etc.

You would have loved to see it. If you ever want to see it I'll bet they'd love to show it to you.

We had a nice time at the wedding visiting with family. We didn't know the other guests. In the meeting for worship both Alec and John spoke nicely. The reception was in a horticulture center in Fairmount Park, but I suppose you've heard from Laura about that. Peter Bingham transported her from and to the airport. It was very nice to see her.

On our way to Philadelphia we stopped to see Dave's friends Brendan and Nancy Hanrahan. Brendan was the man who read a letter to his two little boys at the March 4 memorial service for David. We have always loved the Hanrahans and it was good to be able to visit them again. Our trip home on Sunday was uneventful. We all went to the Traveler's Rest restaurant (the one with all the books) on the Connecticut - Massachusetts border and had a late lunch/dinner. And we all got home by 7 p.m.

We miss Dave terribly, every instant of every day. It is hard to know what to do. I sometimes think I might be better off if I were working full time, but I don't think I would be much of a doctor. Today I have been doing some errands preparatory to selling Dave's truck. The title was lost; it had to be re-registered, etc., etc. Now it is ready and I wonder whether I'll be able to part with it. Everything that I do that takes me farther from Dave Alive is painful. Every day that passes takes me further from him, and so I find that I resent the passage of time. I don't suppose this will change for us for a long time, if ever.

Love,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Anna", written in dark ink.