

Friday
March 29, 1968

Dear Helen,

It had really been a long time since we'd heard from you but when you finally sent us the news.....you 'really' sent us the news, didn't you? Ha! When I came to that part of the letter where you said...quote...Mrs. Hinckley is going to have a baby in September...unquote...I read it about three times and thought, "Goodness, that must be a blow to Helen and Russ to find out that Russ's mother is going to have a baby." And then I was mentally trying to figure out how old she would be and thinking it would really be one for the medical books, etc. Then, of course, I read on.

Helen, your happy news did come as quite a surprise but I do know quite a few women your age who are still having babies. Jack and Vivian Morris, very dear friends whom we bought our house from, have four older children and a beautiful little three year old daughter. Jack celebrated his 51st birthday the 17th of February. So, see what we modern women can do? Just tell Russ to hold on to the smelling salts just in case it ever happens to Doug. Ha!

Please tell Russ that I meant no disrespect to his mother in what I wrote and I don't even know if his mother is still living or not. It was just my first reaction to the situation.

When Doug read your letter, he walked into the kitchen smiling and said, "Well, what do you know about that". He's very concerned about you, Helen, as I know we all are so take very good care of yourself and let the family wait on you as much as possible these next few months. We'll all be anxiously awaiting the good news in September. Being a woman who dearly loves children, I'm very happy for you and Russ. And what a great help Teri and Debbie are going to be. I think my children would be on cloud 9 if I told them there'd be an addition to the family....they love babies, too!

Well, we're really enjoying our pretty, new home but working ourselves to death. There's just so much that has to be taken care of when you buy a new home and then to come back from overseas needing everything as we did.....there seems

to be no end to it. However, the dust is beginning to clear now and Doug and I have hopes that we'll have everything just like we want it about the time we have to move on again. I try not to think about that but ^{we'll} enjoy these next few years as much as we can.

The weather has been beautiful in the Washington area. It was in the low 80's yesterday and the weatherman says we'll have some more of the same today. And to top that off, my sister phoned from Oklahoma this morning to tell me that she'll be flying out for a visit this Monday. I'm still in a state of shock because we really thought she, Grover and the two boys would drive out this summer. Jean will arrive just in time for the Cherry Blossom Festival which is grand and I do hope the weather holds for her. We haven't seen each other in almost four years and I'm wondering if we'll ever get through talking.....I can hardly wait.

Doug is attending a school at Ft. Belvoir this month and seems to be enjoying it very much. He gets to wear his civilian clothes to class which is a nice change for him. Doug is looking very well, Helen, and getting along fine... as are the children and I.

Please give Ron our regards when he gets home. I can only imagine how anxious you must be to see a son who has been away for such a long time. He's such a fine, young man, Helen, and I know the homecoming is going to be one of the happiest times ever. I want to thank you for Scott's address. Doug and I will write him every now and then.

Give Teri and Debbie our love and tell Russ that Doug's mighty proud of him.....said he always knew there was still fire in the old furnace. Ha!

with love
Leva Mae

P.S. Doug asked me to thank you for the offer of buying your share of the partnership. It seems that he's not particularly happy with the idea of owning something that he's away from all of the time. I should think it would be a marvelous investment for Ross and Madge. And who has more money?

4 August 1969

Dear Hink,

We received your letter and Helen's at the same time and were quite shook to learn that Helen is back on the Cobalt treatments. Be sure and keep us posted on her progress. We are, however, happy to hear of Ron's marriage plans. I didn't realize that time has moved as rapidly as it has, but when the youngsters start the marriage trek, its time to sit up and take stock in whats going on.

Mae and I have been checking to see how we might make the trip to Idaho, but it appears there are too many factors against us this year. We just received word that Mae's Mother is to undergo major surgery this week, so its entirely possible that Mae will fly home to be with her for awhile. If this happens, any other trip will be out of the question at this time. Then too, we are involved in getting our young-uns in school during the first week in September and helping Sharman get ready for her first year of college here at George Mason College in Fairfax. She is most anxious to make her mark in French. She and Ron would have a great time rattling French back and forth, particularly since they are used to that peculiar French accent.

Ross spent about 12 days in New Hampshire last month--had a ballard is now back with us. Linda is currently in Albuquerque studying art with her former art teachers from Paris. Both of them are now located in the Southwest. No doubt Linda will return with many stories about her art. Marcie is so busy playing football and baseball with the boys that she seems completely oblivious to the passing summer scene. All in all the summer appears a little hectic for one of the Harris families.

I am programmed for reassignment next summer. It is during these times that we try to take our long trips. Currently, our schedule calls for next year's vacation to include Oklahoma, Idaho and return to Washington. Hope things pan out so we can make it.

Your offer in New York sounds wonderful. Please include us in any stops you make going to and from there in the near future. And do have fun in Idaho—give Ron and his bride-to-be our best. Helen, take care. Our prayers are with you as we ask for your good health.

Love,
Doug & Mae

P.S. The picture of Helen and Shane is great! He looks like a real trooper — and such big eyes. No doubt there is a bit of the Harris leadership in him.

Sunday
December 7, 1969

Dear Russ,

I've waited until today to write in hopes there would be more in the Sunday paper about your evening at the White House. However, the only coverage they gave it in The Evening Star was this article about the *Burker Hillbillies*. They sure look like a cute bunch of kids.

Your calling Tuesday morning to give me first hand details on the dinner was just great. I related everything you told me to Doug and the children and we're all so happy that you could have such a beautiful experience. I guess the only way we're ever going to get invited to the White House is run Ross for President. ha!

Your little brood must have been beside themselves with excitement when you returned home. Teri is surely the envy of all now with her very own signature of President Nixon's. Do tell all of the children 'hello' for us and we'll look forward to seeing them one of these days when, perhaps, daddy can bring them along.

Richard got back to college all right and we received a very nice letter from him a few days ago. He'll be going back to California for Christmas and how anxious he must be about now. He's sure got lots to tell them.

Russell, I couldn't imagine who in the world had sent the gift when it arrived Wednesday morning. I anxiously and eagerly opened the package and was so touched by the beauty of your gift and your constant thoughtfulness. I'm sure you realize that the blue inside the dish exactly matches our rug. Pretty observant fellow, aren't you? Needless to say, we'll treasure it always and thank you most sincerely. As the old saying goes---you shouldn't have....but I'm so glad you did. ha!

Doug and I enjoyed so much our little chat with you in the coffee shop. I wrote Maxine the other day about your being here and told her that I always feel a bit prouder and a whole lot happier each time my life brushes yours. You generate such an optimism and hope that it soon becomes contagious. And to think it is still so evident despite your present agony and sorrow. You really are quite a man, Russell Hinckley...and don't you ever forget it.

Would you believe we had snow today? Boy! it has really put the family in a Christmas mood. All of us are looking forward to a lovely holiday season. May yours be the same!

The children send their regards and join Doug and me in asking you to come back and see us again soon.

With love To all, Leon Mae

Saturday
February 7, 1970

Dear Russ,

Many thanks for sending the clipping of you and President Nixon. We are all terribly impressed. I wrote to the newspaper hoping to get a glossy print for our 'rogues' gallery'. However, I was informed that they couldn't furnish the print unless it was made by one of their photographers (that makes sense). I assume the pictures taken at the dinner were made by local news photographers so I decided to improvise and make do.

I attached the clipping to a piece of black construction paper, covered it with plastic and it now holds a place of prominence on the wall by the bar.

Marcie was very kind the other day and took a couple of shots with her polaroid swinger so I could show you how nice you look 'on the wall'. ha! Doug and I are having a dinner party for some of our nearest and dearest friends this coming Saturday night...the 14th... Valentine's Day. You can rest assured we'll do a lot of bragging about you that night so don't worry if your ears start burning.

Blair phoned and told us of Jean Harvise's death. It didn't come as a big shock but I must say I was quite surprised. I guess I just didn't realize the end was so near. The family has really had so much sadness the last few months....and that's something I just don't think you ever get used to.

All is well with us, Russ, and I do hope you're coming along all right. I'm sure springtime will usher a fresh breeze into all our hearts and make life a bit brighter for a change.

I was going through Marcie's valentines and found this cute one for Shane. I know I haven't grown too old for valentines so perhaps the girls won't think Aunt Mae is in her second childhood for sending them one, too. I do hope it will be a Happy Valentine's Day for all of you.

Again, Russ, many thanks for the clipping and do keep in touch.

with love
Leola Mae & Family

Tuesday
June 23, 1970

Dear Russ,

It's been quite a long time since I've sent any news from this end but mainly because there is so little....something to do with no news is good news. However, I do have something to pass along today so will try to catch you up on the latest.

The main purpose of this letter is to tell you that Doug left the 15th of June for a year in China. Quite coincidentally, he's back in the same place he was in 1958-59..the island of Quemoy. He will serve as the chief army military advisor there and from the sound of his first letter, which we received today, they're really giving him the royal treatment in Formosa. He's been wined and dined and continues to rave about the Chinese friendliness.

Doug received a letter from his predecessor a few weeks ago telling him about the golf course that has been built on Quemoy since he was last there. That certainly was a bit of good news. Doug hasn't had a moment to himself since we returned from Europe what with his job, a new house and keeping up with a very active family. I think the year of rest and relaxation might be a welcome change for him. I know he's looking forward to playing golf again. He mentioned being met in Formosa by a Jack Clifford. Does that ring a bell with anybody? I know Doug will be working for a fellow whom he knew at Rick's College and I think that was his name. It's really a small world sometimes, isn't it?

We were even hopeful that Doug wouldn't have to make this tour. Doug and I had hoped they would extend him a year in his old job and then reassign him in this area for the last three years of his army career. However, the army doesn't always see things the way we do. ha! He will be assigned back here when he returns next year and I don't think anyone can know the peace that is beginning to permeate my whole being just knowing that the children's lives won't be disrupted again and that this will be the end to those awful separations. As far as we know now, we will stay in this area until the children are grown and gone, at least. After that, who cares? I have written you that Doug has been working on his master's degree which he should receive about the time he retires in 1974. He plans to get a teaching 'position' at either George Mason College or one of the high schools in this area. Cousin Hubert Cole is a professor at George Mason and Doug has been keeping in touch with him.

Doug got the bright idea that we would paint our house before he left and we really lucked out. The weather was beautiful and everything went off without a hitch. I'll tell you one thing... painting at the top of a house separates the men from the boys real fast. Doug's got a lot more nerve than I. I started out doing the shutters and wound up painting 26 of them. If I never have to paint another one it will be much too soon. The house and yard do look beautiful now and Doug is so happy knowing that he doesn't have all of that work to come home to.

Now, I'll do a little bragging on my family.....The army presented Doug with the Legion of Merit award before he left. That's the second highest peacetime award given and Doug was understandably thrilled to receive it; Marcie decided she wouldn't be outdone so she won the President's physical fitness award—which isn't very easy to come by. It requires pretty rough competition in the broad jump, 60 yard dash, sit-ups, pull-ups, etc. Marcie said she was required to throw a softball 90 feet and she threw it 95 feet, 5 inches. How about that? Don't be too surprised if you see her in the olympics one of these days. ha!

The other children are getting along very well, also. Sherman enjoyed her first year of college and is looking forward to going back this fall. She's working full time at her job this summer. Linda did a magnificent sketch of our climbing roses when they were in full bloom and will transfer that to oils this summer, plus some other painting. Ross is becoming quite a 'pro' on the drums and enjoys them so much. He and Marcie have a lot of fun together and are always playing baseball, touch football or some other sport with the neighborhood gang. The children are so happy here and it thrills me to death to know they are going to have some continuity in their lives. I was thinking the other day that all four of them will graduate from the same high school. Not many army families can make that statement.

I'm salting away some shekles while Doug is away and we hope to make quite an extensive trip when he returns next year. We do want to get all of the children around for one more visit with the 'in-laws' before life gobbles them up. So, keep your fingers crossed and if everything goes as planned, we'll look forward to seeing you in 1971.

with love
Lora Mae