

November 2, 1977

BENJAMIN [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS

Dear Dean,

A note to keep touch.

My health is very good. I am now, for three years, without seizures. What's more, the latest scans show no signs of active disease. Days at a time go by that I think only of my family, my work, and the perfectly ordinary things of daily life. But every so often a dread reminder intrudes itself and, catching me off ~~guard~~ guard, causes me to become tense and anxious. It passes soon enough but leaves in its wake an increased urgency about the passage of time.

We ~~x~~ used to be great day-dreamers! "We'll live in a house by the sea and flourish there beyond imagining." Etc. But now, we can't (or rather feel like we can't) make plans, so we don't much day-dream this way any more. This is for the good; we have grown more appreciative and realistic in our expectations of the everyday. We live, as I believe, most families do with all the usual satisfactions and dissatisfactions. We delight in our children and ~~exaggerate~~ exaggerate their failures and successes with equal fervor. And we love one another as we did when we married 15 years ago.

My work goes slowly, fitfully. I tend to worry about it. But I have in fact learned by doing and ~~do~~ understand that, with added experience, the disconnected bits of knowledge I've so far acquired will join together in greater force. In any case, I'm still not at the point where my damnable pride will permit me to show my work.

I think of you often and berate myself for not calling you. ~~xxxxxxxxxxxx~~. I remember our visits vividly and how good, how "improved" you would cause me to feel. Perhaps because there is no persuasive, ~~understandable~~ understandable reason to be given for the presence of a cancer inside its' victims, they come to feel that this presence is an "unnatural" presence. ~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~ In the diseases where blame falls easily on bacteria, or on a particular virus, or even on a systemic susceptibility to the agent of disease, the victim --if he will blame himself at all for his sorry state-- will find fault with some part of his character. Perhaps he indulged himself too freely in, ~~this or the~~ other vice. Perhaps he should have done this or that thing. <sup>he neglected to do,</sup> But when one has cancer he has nothing to blame and therefore often comes to "explain" its horrid presence ~~xxxxxxxx~~ by some unnameable flaw in doing his very being, in his soul. Whether or not he is conscious of this, ~~xxxx~~ I believe that, in greater or lesser degree, he will come to feel himself to be unworthy and pariah. Among the things you did for me, ~~my~~ at the time I felt these things most forcibly, the one that counts most in my gratitude is the friendship you offered me so simply and so warmly. You made me feel not less but more human, not less but more worthy, "improved".

I don't know ~~that~~ that I'll see you before (and, of course, unless) this remission of mine comes to an end. But I want you to know that as long as I live I will care for you.

My best to Rochelle and your family,



PS Although I would like nothing better than to hear from you, I know how busy you must be and will not be the least bit offended if I don't