

My dear Evelyn

I should have written to you before to explain about the prints, which I hope you have received by now.

I have quite a big selection, so did not know what to choose to replace the ancient Bernsteins that you still have on your walls. So I sent what I hope is a fairly representative selection, so that you may be able to find one or two that appeal to you. The Vervet Monkey I do consider to be one of the best prints that I have made (both visually and technically - quite complicated, for it is made with only two plates, and all the colour in my prints is on the plate, not painted in afterwards.) What I thought you might do - if it isn't too much trouble - is choose a couple, if you like any of them; and please do not think you will hurt my feelings if you do not - pictures on your walls are a very personal thing, and I don't want you to hang them up as a sort of duty! And then, if you can be bothered, ring my friend Ellen Broido (786-3848) and ask her if she would like the leftovers. She and her family were so hospitable and loving to us. She has some fine pictures on her walls, and I don't know whether she would actually like to hang one of mine, but maybe she would like it as a souvenir. Otherwise - give them away to a worthy cause. (Her address: 47a Lyndhurst Rd)

Rusty says to wish you many happy returns for the 7th - he thinks it's the 7th, and so do I. We saw Rae last week; she is happy about her planned visit to SA, determined to make her own arrangements where she stays as much for her own convenience with the dialysis etc as for her hosts; wants to stay in Jhb only long enough to see family & a couple of friends, and then go and look at the waves in the Cape.

We went to a luncheon for veterans last week (had an invitation from the President himself to attend one in Pretoria, but they anticipated many of us wouldn't be going there - although some did - so an alternative was held in a very spacious suburban London home - quite like SA - large garden, beautiful swimming pool, trees, etc. Veterans of the '50s. Oh, how old everyone looked, people we don't see for years on end, and I know they look at us and think the same; or rather at me, because everyone exclaims with surprise about how wonderful Rusty looks. They relayed Nelson's address to the Pretoria lot live to us. Oh, and to complete the SA feel, the weather! You must have been reading about it, but it has just been a most wonderful month, impossible to do any work, you just want to be in the garden the whole time because this is a gift that can not be relied on to last or to come again.

Toni's son Mark is getting married in September to a young woman living in Los Angeles, and wants us to come to his wedding. We haven't made up our minds, because we haven't really that kind of money to spend on fares. So even in laid-back Britain young people do actually get married sometimes.

That's all I can think of for news. I had an exhibition in Santa Barbara while we were in SA, and sold quite a few pictures. Don't know how the book is going here, it fades out of sight once it has been reviewed, and goes off the shelves for the next batch. Hope you have read it by now, and made all your friends buy a copy.

Much love to you both from

Box 5069
July
19/12/84.

Dear Hilda Leo,

Forgive the paper - nothing more suitable is to hand. It does not take long for the relaxed holiday feeling to disappear - and although this is true in general, Jean and I often discuss the really lovely aspect in such pleasant and natural surroundings as also the hospitality and company you both provided, making that stay in Apirala a truly memorable experience.

I have picked out a couple of photos I thought you might like to have. Fortunately for my reputation as a photographer, the pictures of the interior of your flat were poor so I do not feel justified in sending any of them to be detrimentally compared with those taken by Keith. Some of my pictures of Apirala and surroundings have come out amazingly well and will be constant reminders of our holiday when even our memories need the stimulus. Of the snaps enclosed, I like both photos taken in Uentangiia especially the two of you. The diving scene unfortunately does not show any view from the window - a view I think of with regret. But picnic table is fine.

Well, what happened in the

end to the exhibition, Nilda. Please let us know - I hope it ended up as a resounding financial success.

Please too advise of your settling-in process and how the house responds to the cold. How too are the collection of packing cases going - growing or going?

We have had rain but not enough to fill our dams and presumably the indication is that water rationing is with us for another year. Thank goodness for our bottle. We supply Pky Ana China with vegetables and also flowers and the garden looks lush and colorful.

Drought, dropping gold price and weak Rand, is spreading gloom all over the country not to mention the real hardship that unemployment (growing) and drought are having on the African rural communities. Major problems indeed, whether sympathetically handled by the authorities or not.

Our and associates are having major successes in and out of Govt circles in propounding the inevitability of urbanisation and the necessity for abandoning influx control et al. There are signs that this may be recognised in the coming session of parliament.

Best wishes to you both and all your family from us both.

Love
Lena

Feb 6 1985

Dear Jean and Harold,

Thank you both for your letters, and for the photos, of which I particularly liked the one of us eating -O figs? - outside the market. At this moment, with mist all around and rain dripping from everywhere, it all seems a long way away, and even rather a long time ago. One of my future projects (for which I need at least another 50 years) is to make a montage of these and other pictures - including Amsterdam - and put them on display. Although in our present house there is no wall space to accomodate even a minimum of pictures. Unliike Rothwell Street.

I'll deal with the bad news first. The exhibition was the most expensive and miserable disaster, something I guessed was going to happen even before the opening time. When people come to an exhibition to look at and buy pictures they start coming before the official opening time, to get in first. I knew by 6 o'clock that the whole thing was a dead loss - and what a loss! Counting in the cost of things like frames and editioning, which eventually - over some years - will probably be recuperated - and adding the travelling and hotel expenses, it is well over £2,000 - probably £2,500. To counter this I sold two only of the cheapest pictures, and have not yet got my pictures back because Mme Cuchet keeps demanding more money. The whole thing was an enormous con - imagine sending out 6,500 invitations and the only people who came were a few villagers enjoying their monthly free wine. On the night of the opening I felt truly humiliated; I have never yet displayed my pictures anywhere, in galleries, libraries and other places in London, in the USA and Africa, without selling a great deal. They may not be great art, but lots of people like them. Why did Cuchet do this? She must have known . . . I have my theory, but dont want to fill this letter with it all - its done and finished. Experience, they say, but who wants that kind of experience at my age? However, I have a London exhibition lined up for October and all I now need are some new pictures (which I havent done) For Christmas we had our whole family - 14 of us, plus one extra - and it was a very happy occasion, although we tried to moderate the spending and gift-giving because of the awareness of the hungry and deprived (here and where you are - miners and 'homelanders'). The weeks merge, but some time after that came snow and bitter cold, which provided a firm answer to the question: Can we live in this house without central heating? The answer is no, so by next year (too late for this) we will have it installed. There were a couple of days and occasions when we did not try to get down to the village, because of the snow and ice on the roads, but they do clear the lanes here (piling the snow on the verges so that I could scarcely reach the bird table to feed the birds). It was just astoundingly, marvellously beautiful. Hard to paint. Black trees and hedges patterning great expanses of white. Gradually it became warmer, the mornings and evenings are lighter (it's not pitch dark when I get up), snow drops are in bloom along the banks of the roads, all sorts of bulbs pushing up and buds on trees, and bird-song at its best in the mornings. A tremendous promise of beautiful days to come, dashed to the ground this morning by weather reports of more rain and some snow . . . But it wont last. I think I am accustomed to living here now, although I will never become indifferent to the marvellous aspects of the countryside, the ever-changing skies. It is beautiful and I love it.

Your brother, Harold, is very fit - everyone who sees him remarks on it - and has had quite a lot of outdiir activity, chopping wood and digging over land where we intend to plant vegetables; in between, working on details of both the house next door and the unfinished one in London (that was supposed to be completed last October) - that takes us to London about every 10 days, where we stay with Toni and Ivan, who is off to El Salvador soon. We have had builders here since the beginning of January, although they had to stop for some days during the worst of the snow when the cement was freezing. It is gradually taking shape, and they have succeeded in creating the usual horrific mess that builders love, and grey dust from their stone-grinding penetrates into our part of the house, so that I spend a good deal of my time trying to clean up and wipe the dust-covered leaves on my plants so they (and us,xxx we) can breathe. They will soon be finished with their part of the work - the breaking down of stone walls for new doors and windows and the building of new walls, and then Rusty will have work ahead of him for ages and ages - which I am looking forward to - he wants to get on with it, and is enjoying the prospect of being able to work in his own time, as he wishes.

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We were sorry not to have seen Evelyn and Felix - the day they were to have come to us was the height of the freeze - I think Rae rather thought we should have come to London to see them, but it was an impossible week for us, with builders here and all sorts of mess and things. We saw Rae last weekend, she looks fine and seems well and content. I am finishing off so that I can go to Hay - it is market day there, the stalls will be covered with plastic sheets and dripping down on us all. I have lots and lots of work - too much - writing and drawing, articles, re-doing all sorts of things. When the weather improves I know it will impel us outside - it is a magnet that draws you inevitably, to walk, to weed, to admire this part of England that - so far - has managed to be by-passed by the developers and country-destroyers that have ruined such huge expanses of lovely countryside. We very much want you to see it. You must think of your next overseas trip in terms of a visit to the Old House Farm. You will love it - like Apricale.

Much love from us both

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