



A Letter from Seamond Ponsart Roberts to Mrs. Moore

September 17, 1990

Dear Mrs. Moore:

This is a voice from your past -- and a very long time ago. I'm talking about in the 1940's. I know this will be a big surprise to you, so please settle down for a bit of history in my letter.

Janet Bosworth gave me your address after I discovered the little booklets about Cuttyhunk and read the wonderful article you wrote about Cuttyhunk, including the part about me and my Mom and Dad.

I won't keep you in suspense any longer, Mrs. Moore, I am Seamond Ponsart Roberts, the lighthouse keeper's daughter at Cuttyhunk Lighthouse back from 1941-1946. I am now age 50 and am myself on active duty with the U.S. Coast Guard as Yeoman Second Class with a subspeciality qualification of military court reporter. I am stationed now on Governors Island, New York, right in the middle of New York Harbor with the city outline out my one window and the Statue of Liberty standing as a marvelous night light out the other one! (I'd be a lot happier on Cuttyhunk even if I didn't have the Statue of Liberty watching over me!) So many things have happened since you last saw me. I have lived in many places and had many experiences, some superb and some very unhappy.

My mother and father passed away in 1972 for Dad, and 1974 for Mom. I buried Dad over in the Cuttyhunk graveyard and one day went back and found, to my surprise, someone had erected a stone there with a lighthouse on it. (I was going to get this very thing done but living in Mississippi, at the time, complicated doing it and what a shock to find someone there had done just what I was thinking of doing.) I finally extricated a confession out of my cousin, Dickie Cornell, the last time I was on the island -- in 1988. I am so grateful that he did that, but it was a mystery to me for a long time. After Dad's death, Mother came to live with me (and my 3rd husband) in Mississippi and was doing quite well until on an Easter Sunday, she became stricken and so pale I could see quite through her. I rushed her to the hospital, and she had acute leukemia. She suffered terribly for a few weeks and then mercifully was gone, having strangely enough come down with the childhood type and gone through in her two weeks what the children do in years, remissions and all, only in ratio to the short time she had it. I was devastated over Dad's death, hoping that he would live forever, and then Mom dying almost mysteriously also took its toll on me and my family. We did not have the money to bring her body to the island, where I would like to have had her buried, so her resting place is in the little churchyard there in Toomsaba, Mississippi. Regardless they had lived to a goodly age, it was terribly hard for me to lose them as we were always so close, even though I had moved far away. They were such terrific people, and I was so blessed in having them for parents. They made me think that all parents were like that. Were that was so!

I've come so many miles since the lighthouse, it is hard to think where to begin. Well, we moved away in 1946 to Martha's Vineyard where Dad was head keeper for the next 11 years at West Chop Lighthouse. This was a joy to live at for the modern conveniences of real

electricity, running water, and a toilet! (But it was never as much fun as being at Cuttyhunk.) I went to school there and was between my junior year and senior year of high school when Dad had his first (and very severe coronary). He was sent to Brighton Marine Hospital for about a month and upon medical evaluation, they forced him to medically retire. Dad was heartbroken because he was just 57 then and wanted to be lighthouse keeper until he dropped. (Of course, the heart attack had actually dropped him out in the snowbank one night and when we had found him later, he was almost blue from the cold.) so he had no choice. At the time, the doctor advised him never to shovel snow again as this is a very strenuous exercise, and he had a blood clot that could dislodge because of this very activity. (This was the days before blood thinners and cardiac medications. All they had back then was nitroglycerine to ease the angina.) So, we decided on retirement to move to California where my sister and her people were.

We packed up what we could take and sold the rest and moved (like Okies) to California. Bette lived in San Diego with her little family and while I enjoyed this, it was not really to Mom and Dad's liking as the whole pace was so different. I graduated out of high school from there about a year later, thinking I would be able to go to college. However, the Coast Guard had made a monster mistake in Dad's retirement, and it was nearly a year before he got any money at all, during which they lived off my college funds. When the money did come in, instead of crediting Dad with 37 years plus, they only had documentation for 24 years and nine months! We were instantly financially devastated. Well, I didn't go to college.

Instead, I married a Navy fellow and about a year later had a little daughter, Lorna. She was so beautiful. We divorced about two years later and I moved back to Massachusetts with Mom and Dad, to New Bedford.

Again, I tried marriage with a Navy man and enjoyed seeing a lot of the United States in the process. We lived in Rhode Island, South Carolina, Florida, Tennessee, California and Mississippi. Lorna got a little sister, Gloria, in 1963 while we were in Charleston, South Carolina, and these two grew up closely, like twins. I was a very happy Momma. Actually, I was a very happy Navy wife. I started working when Gloria was just a baby, at the telephone company as a telephone operator because it was a job that I could transfer with as my husband transferred with the Navy. I did, too, as I worked for them in Charleston, Jacksonville, Memphis, San Francisco and Oakland, California. During the Viet Nam crisis, my husband went to sea on an aircraft carrier and was away a year, lacking four days. We were then living in Meridian, Mississippi. Sadly enough, he was just not the same man I married once he had gone to war. We divorced and there I was stuck in Mississippi with two young girls growing up without a Dad. I remarried and this subsequent marriage lasted about five years but didn't work out either. (He was very much older than myself -- 17 years my senior -- and the age difference did make problems for us, too.) However, a very good thing did come of this marriage and that was I had my last child by him, Norman Jr., who is now my young man of age 18, and such a delightful guy.

While I was living in Meridian, Mississippi, I stopped working for the phone company and started working in the medical field, doing hospital admissions and medical insurance. I really found this fascinating work and now wish I had done these years before. From working at the Catholic Hospital there, I went to working for all the staff doctors and then went to work as an office manager for a psychiatrist who was a very, very unique person. He was from Cuba and

one of the best people I have ever met in my life. While I was his office manager, I had an opportunity to also go into the Coast Guard Reserve.

It is a funny story of how this happened too.

My daughter, Lorna, had turned 17 and the service recruiters had come to her high school. She came home with all this literature they had handed out to the kids about joining the various services. Lorna was very keen on going into the Navy. So, I asked her if the Coast Guard also had a recruiter there and she said they did and handed me the literature for the Coast Guard. I wondered if they had women back in the Coast Guard again, as they had disbanded the SPARS after World War II. We looked at a picture of this one group of smiling Coasties and in the last row, there was either a woman there or a guy wearing lipstick. I thought I would probably talk Lorna into going into the Coast Guard. So, we went to Jackson, Mississippi, where all the recruiters have joint offices and while she was checking out the Navy, I went to see the Coast Guard recruiter. I found out they did have women back in the Coast Guard AND I was three years too old to join the Coast Guard Reserve. I was really disappointed over this because it is really what I ALWAYS WANTED to do since I was a little girl at the lighthouse. At that time, there was a SPAR Coast Guard lady on the inspection team, doing the inspections and I told my father, "That's what I want to do when I grow up." (By the time I got out of high school, the SPARS had disbanded and going into the Navy was not as attractive to me.) So, I told the recruiter there about this and he told me they had just a year ago let women come back into the Coast Guard and there weren't many of them and he would surely like to get me into the Coast Guard Reserve -- he needed numbers. So, he got me a three-year age waiver and I got into the Coast Guard Reserve in November of 1977 and went to Reserve Boot Camp at the age of 38, the oldest woman to ever do this. (It KILLED me, totally, but all the "kids" there pushed me through.) I was so happy I had made it.

My Cuban doctor passed away and I was at loose ends. I worked at some other jobs and was thinking of returning to the phone company when I got an opportunity to go active duty for a summer with the Coast Guard Reserve. Well, that meant a few more paychecks; so, I grabbed it. I did this again and again, first at Yorktown, Virginia and then in New Orleans, Louisiana. After doing this "temporary" work for them, I decided to go fulltime active duty with the Coast Guard and that is what I have been doing ever since.

In the middle of this, I met (about 10 years ago now) and married my present AND LAST EVER husband, David. He was in the Navy then and we met at the mess hall there at the Navy Base in New Orleans. He was just finishing 14 years in the Navy and decided to get out. He is a really rugged guy from Kansas and just "good people." We both felt like some kind of derelicts and took each other in. (If anything goes wrong with this marriage, I will NEVER marry again -- I've had too much grief with it.) When David got out of the Navy, he worked in the Louisiana oil fields until that economy collapsed and then he went into law enforcement. He did security first and then was a deputy sheriff for a few years. Now, he is a corrections officer with the State of Louisiana at a prison we have right there in New Orleans. He has a tough job, but he is really good at it, and he is good with the prisoners. He tolerates me and this Coast Guard stuff and realizes that I have a career to do, whichever way I want to do it. Just a good guy all around and my best friend in life.

I miss him terribly right now though. I have just been transferred up here to Governors Island for the rest of this part of my enlistment, which is about a year away. We have a little house

that we bought down there in New Orleans, and it is totally not salable due to the bad market after the oilfield business went bust. (I call it MY Louisiana Purchase.) Because we cannot afford to pay on it and on a place here, David is staying down there with the house while I am up here as a "geographical bachelor-ette". It is going to be a long, long year for me, and I haven't been doing too good at the loneliness department at all. My "hitch" (enlistment in the Coast Guard) is up October 1991 and I think I am going to get out rather than go another eight years toward the retirement I should go for because I cannot think of the fact that we would have to be apart that long, with me being somewhere else other than with him. The chance of me going back to New Orleans with the Coast Guard is remote.

I am a Yeoman Second Class in the Coast Guard. That is the 5th enlisted rank and is like an administrative assistant. Normally, if you are a yeoman, you do just general clerical and personnel work. However, I was extremely lucky and was selected to go to a special school and so I am one of the 20 or so working Military Court Reporters in the Coast Guard. We attend court-martial hearings and make the record of the trial that goes with it. This is fascinating work, and I love it. However, it has certain drawbacks though as there are only a limited number of places that I can be stationed. Up here at Governors Island is one of them. The island itself is a beautiful one and looks sort of like a college campus. But I am ensconced in missing my family back in Louisiana.

While I have been in the Coast Guard fulltime, I have also kept up with my medical interests and am a part time medical transcriptionist in which I transcribe doctor's reports of admission and discharge summaries, surgical, pathological, radiological and autopsy reports. I really love to do that and had a long-standing part time job back in New Orleans and am now looking for a weekend job up here where I can also do that and keep up with it as that is really what I plan on doing when I get out of the service next year as a full time thing.

Oh, I went to court reporting school in Newport, Rhode Island about two years ago and had a chance to go to Cuttyhunk then and I took David over. He can be somewhat of a pessimist at times, and I thought going to the island would probably bore him to death. On the contrary! He fell in love with the place and all the way back to Louisiana talked about nothing but how he would love to become fulltime police chief of Cuttyhunk. I couldn't believe it! (Of course, I know that the Cuttyhunk charm gets to everyone -- but, I hardly expected the spell to hit my Kansan husband.) He wasn't kidding though and, of course should any opportunity like that come up, we would grab for it immediately. He mentioned it to my 2nd cousin, Kit Dennis and my other cousin, Richard Cornell, and they promised to pass it on. I have been writing Janet Bosworth regularly and have joined the Cuttyhunk Historical Society and wish we had had that years ago. I think, if we had, my mother would have had a lot of artifacts to donate to it. (She kept all kinds of junk, too.)

When Dad died, I was pregnant with my last child, and I could not drive, or I would have gotten a U-Haul and brought all her junk/heirlooms and mementos with us. I packed as much as I could and then stored two huge boxes of other stuff in my cousin's. Her house burned down two years later and so there went the rest of Mom's stuff. How I hate that! History into smoke.

So, as it is, I have very little left from that time we were on Cuttyhunk at the lighthouses except grand memories of our life and the good parents I had. I have just recently started doing family genealogy. So, I have been doing long-distance genealogical research from

Louisiana and during the two months I was at school in Newport, I went over to Westport and New Bedford as much as I could to check things out from there. Surprisingly, I have found a lot and yet, there is much, much more to find out.

Being that I have just gotten to Governors Island in July, I have quit doing research for a while but since I am in this general area, I do need to get back at it. I hope perhaps later to go to Boston to the New England Historic Genealogical Society there (of which I am a long-distance member) and dig into some documents that can tell me much more than I have found before. It is a very interesting thing to do, and I am so sorry I had not started long before this -- particularly when Mom and Dad were alive.

Dad's people were Belgians and lived in New Bedford once they got to this country. I did "find" the grave of my Belgian maternal great-grandfather while I was in Rhode Island and this was something that no one had known of for years. So, I progress in some areas while awaiting news from others.

I left Cuttyhunk when I was very little. Even so, I have the very BEST memories of it. It is after all MY HOME. When I went over with David, it was but a few minutes before I found someone who had known me as a little child. After a while and some more people knowing me, David said, "Gosh, I didn't know I had married an island princess!" I love that! I guess I love it because that is always the way I have always felt about being there at Cuttyhunk, as an island princess. And, what's more I don't think that I could ever feel that special particular way about anywhere else. I remember keenly the days at the lighthouse. I remember tragically the sinking of the lightship and being in the tower with my father, watching it happen and even being a child, KNOWING what was happening. Dad cried and I cried too because I knew that all those "uncles" that I had on the lightship were drowned. I remember seeing what a drowned body looked like, and it knew it was death when the top lights of the lightship were no longer seen by us. The 1944 hurricane at the lighthouse was a fearful thing. We were completely ringed in by water and were an island of our own, the pond having been merged with the ocean totally. Large debris floated everywhere. Our chicken coop almost floated away -- Dad had put the chickens in the barn. we hadn't been up high; the water would have gotten us. Dad was worried what "the government" would say when they saw that he had nailed railroad spikes into the beautiful wood floors upstairs to timbers to keep the house from sagging in. (He acutely remembered how they almost died at Dumplin' Rock during the 1938 hurricane.) My older sister went into labor and almost had her baby that night. Dad dug out the old Lighthouse Manual of Medicine and I guess it told him to boil water or something like that, really useful. We couldn't get Mrs. Allen there -- we were totally cut off from the rest of the island and, to us, the world. When the wind finally stopped the water remained high and it was a while before we could get through the mire from the mud that had washed in from the ocean. Where our garden had been was about seven feet layer of sand. Dad bewailed that but just moved the garden up the slope the next year and where the sand was planted the best asparagus probably every grown on the island. (I would think it probably still grows wild there.) When we got to go into town, we were still so amazed at all the damage from the hurricane. It was terrible. Of course, since then I had read that the eye and the exact center of the storm passed right over Cuttyhunk and, thinking that way, we were all extremely lucky. Every time I go to Cuttyhunk, I try to go to the west end -- if I can't, I go to the pillboxes and look out there and think of the men on the lightship. They drowned like rats -- and they did because their Captain was following orders. I remember Dad in the tower, himself an old lightship man, saying, "Cut the mushroom -- cut the mushroom!", referring to the mushroom

anchor of the lightship. They didn't and they were pulled under by staying on station. They died -- heroes to their duty. I've always wanted to have a plaque erected at the west end to their memory, because I sometimes feel I am the only one who remembers now. Dad wanted to launch our dory to try to save them (which probably would have lost his life) but our dory was swept away minutes before he mentioned this. He really, all his life, felt terrible over this loss. The storm was so terrible, I don't think he could have saved anybody.

I remember so much of the island. I remember going to the spring and getting the best water ever. There were mayflowers that grew there then, and I would bend over to the ground to smell them because I knew that they were the protected and sacred flower of Massachusetts and should you pick them, they would die, and the root would die and then there would be no more mayflowers. How I wish someone could make a perfume that sweet! It was wonderful and was my herald into spring. (I also thought that they were Mrs. Brewer's private flowers for quite some time because once she was there and asked me if I, too, knew about the mayflowers.)

Dad would trap muskrats in the west end pond for supplementary money, which lighthouse keeper's pay wasn't the greatest back in those days. I would go with him from pond to pond. When it got murky, he would sit me on a big rock and tell me to wait. I would. One day, a giant loggerhead turtle decided that she wanted my waiting rock. Rex, my Labrador dog, came over to defend me from the angry turtle. Dad, hearing Rex barking, came running from the swamp and picked up a large tree branch to ward off the turtle which was after me and climbing up the rock to get me. The loggerhead took the branch in its mouth and snapped it in two. Rex diverted the turtle and Dad grabbed me. We LET the turtle have the rock.

Dad would go ahead and prepare these pelts and then after they ready, he would send them to Sears and we would get credit instead of money at Sears. So, this is what they used to buy my school clothes with. To me, it was muskrat money. They bought me a really beautiful green winter coat one year that had fake leopard fur down the front. I told all the kids it was my muskrat coat. One kid said, "That isn't real fur, and it was, it isn't muskrat." I told him I knew that, but it was my muskrat coat anyway. [Muskrat money bought it for me.]

You know that Mom was a Cuttyhunker and that she and Dad met over there while Dad was fishing with her brother, Tom, to earn money during the depression. After they got married, Mom and Dad fished in her cat boat. I am sure you know about the tragedy in her life that happened one Easter when she and Dad were fishing, and her 13-year-old son went duck hunting at the west end pond. Kenny was the apple of her eye, and she was never mentally right after the accident. As his stepfather, Dad had bought him a .22 gun and given him shooting lessons but warned him to never use the gun by himself and so the gun he bought for Kenny sat up on the mantel. However, in grandfather's attic, there was an old, old gun, perhaps from the 1800's. Kenny and Donald McKay wanted to go (by themselves, feeling the vigor of youth) duck hunting while Mom and Dad were away. They got Kenny's gun out of the attic and Donald McKay got a gun also. They went to the west end pond, and one would chase the ducks out of the marsh while the other one was in the boat and then do it the other way around. When they went to shift doing this, Kenny pulled the old skiff up to the lighthouse pier in the pond (where we lived years later and from the very pier where we would take and use the boat) and he used the old gun without a trigger guard as a boathook and shot himself point-blank in the chest, the load going straight through him. Donald McKay ran all the way to town for help and was in extreme shock by the time he told the men. They ran and got Lucille

Allen who administered "spirits" to Kenny and who was just out and out dying. They carried him to the pier and put him on someone's (I think it was Bob Tilton's) boat and were about to take him to the city when Mom and Dad arrived from a day of fishing. They grabbed Mom over to the other boat and Mom always told of how he died in her arms before they reached the Padanaram pier where he was declared dead by the medical examiner.

She never really was right after that, ever. Every Easter, she would pull out her trunk with Kenny's school papers and some of his clothes in it and she would cry for weeks. As a kid, I dreaded Easter and to this day never want to see Easter eggs or anything to do with it because it was such a sad time in our household. I don't know how she tolerated living at the lighthouse and every time we would tie up our little skiff in the pond knowing that that was where he was shot.

Dad was working fishing then and odd jobs for the town and doing WPA work, anything to feed the family. He had applied for an appointment as a lighthouse keeper should one come vacant. He knew that Mom drastically needed to get away from Cuttyhunk. He was right. In 1936 or so, he got his first appointment as Assistant Keeper at Great Point Light, Nantucket Island. Mom loved it there. The regular keeper was Frank Grieder and Mom and Mrs. Grieder were good friends for many years, including later when they were transferred to Gay Head, Mass, and where they retired. Mom loved the extensive sand dunes there. I think it was like being on Cuttyhunk without the reminder of Kenneth's death.

After Great Point, Dad was transferred to Dumpling Rock Light, which is (as you know) off Round Hill, South Dartmouth, Mass., and on a rock in the ocean. The nearest point to South Dartmouth is at Colonel Green's Estate and this is where they would row to. Mom said that she and Hettie Green had tea once in the mansion. Dumpling Rock Lighthouse is where they endured the 1938 hurricane and lost everything they had. Financially, I don't think Mom and Dad ever recovered from this really. They were so thankful to have lived period, though, that it didn't matter too much to them. But they lived as Mom said, "In the ruins" for three more years, as the government had not decided whether or not to fix up the lighthouse, so it stayed mostly unfixed, except for what Dad and the assistant keeper could rig up as temporary fixes. The reason that they lived through it at all was that a boulder the size of the living room was lifted right up off the ocean floor during the tidal wave surge and came right through the side of the house and held the house in place rather than it -- and my folks and the assistant keeper family -- washing into the ocean. Mom and Dad, both called it and believe it to be a miracle. I can't disagree with them on that.

I was born while they were there and was almost born at the light. So, I went to my first lighthouse, Dumpling Rock, when I was just hours old, and they said I was a real sea girl right from the start. I have a picture somewhere with Dad holding me up for a "portrait" with him in his uniform and me enclosed in the life ring that says, "Dumpling Rock Lighthouse ". I gave a copy of that picture to the recruiter, and it helped get me into the Coast Guard as he sent it right along with my recruiting package up to Headquarters.

I suppose Mom told you about the incident that happened while we were at Dumpling Rock that caused us to be moved away finally. The war was on by then and it was generally known that there were people on our shores that were Nazi sympathizers. We had a large amount of fuel oil stored on the rock as the supply boat didn't want to have to come frequently and so we had a huge drum with an all winter's store aboard. One day during a thick fog, Dad was in

the tower and saw two blackened out boats setting anchor and putting men in dories and loading hoses into the dories. He wondered about this for just a moment and then he knew they were coming for our fuel. (He was afraid they were real Germans at first.) He ran to the house and told Mom to get me and Bette (my older sister) and go hide in the cellar and not to come out until he said so and to DO IT NOW. Dad had no guns on the station. Sure enough, the men rowed toward the light and Dad went down to meet them, "armed" with a crowbar. Dad hailed them and they were quite surprised to see him. He said there were 10 large swarthy type men, dressed in oilskins in the dory. He said one of them had a submachine gun. (Great, 10:1 and the 1 having a crowbar.) They wanted to know if "this island was occupied." Dad said it was U.S. Government property, and they were not to come ashore under wartime regulations. They again asked if it were occupied, and Dad ignored their question and asked what they wanted. The guy asked him if this was the way to Block Island. Dad said it wasn't, and they were to leave. The leader said, "We need your oil and we're coming ashore. Dad repeated that it was U.S. Government property, and they were not to come ashore. They started rowing. Well, the Coast Guard Calvary showed up. About that time, the lighthouse tender (which was never on any schedule at all) decided it was time to deliver paint and toilet paper. Dad said, "You are not coming ashore. I have called the Coast Guard, and they are coming after you." The men looked up and saw the tender and believed they were. They hauled off for their boats and started up the engines and disappeared into the fog. Dad hollered at the tender as soon as they were close, and they radioed a message to the real Coast Guard ashore who took chase after the men.

Later, Dad was called on to give testimony to the FBI regarding descriptions of the men. (This was at the same time that the Germans had come ashore at Amagansett, Long Island and while Dad never knew for sure, he always suspected it was the same set of 5th columnists. All he was told was that the Coast Guard had caught them, and they were aliens being detained in Boston.)

The Coast Guard decided then and there to automate Dumpling Rock and move our family ashore and pronto. So, we moved into the city into an apartment and Dad was stationed temporarily at Butler's Flats Lighthouse in New Bedford Harbor and "pushing boots" teaching them seamanship skills ashore at the Base in New Bedford. During this time, Dad was giving a practical lesson to the boots on how to jump onto a buoy in the harbor and he fractured his knee, he thought. He always had trouble with this leg. No wonder! An x-ray done years later revealed wrong spot diagnosis. He had also fractured his hip at the same time, and it had set itself wrong as they had missed it back then.

One night while Dad was at the Base in New Bedford, we felt the repercussions of Dad testifying to the FBI about the incident of the "Axis invaders" at Dumpling Rock. We were all asleep and our house was chloroformed with rags filled with it stuffed in all the doors and windows and all over. Our little dog barked and barked and woke up my mother who thought that we had a gas leak, and she pulled us all outside. We all went to St. Luke's Hospital for oxygen therapy and were o.k. after a while. The Coast Guard (and the FBI) now was also worried for Dad's safety. And that is why we got stationed on Cuttyhunk.

As it turned out, Dad was the last keeper of Cuttyhunk Island Lighthouse. The 1944 hurricane took a lot of banking near the tower and the Coast Guard was afraid it was going to topple into the ocean. So, they decommissioned the lighthouse and about a year after we had moved to West Chop Light, Cuttyhunk Light (despite many citizens despairing of it) was torn

down. I understand that the house was auctioned off for \$25.00, in the agreement that someone move it. I wonder where "my" house went to. I wish I could find out. I did not go over to Cuttyhunk for some years and it was so shocking to see just the bluff left there. At least the sidewalk Dad had made with my name on it was still there. I felt somewhat mollified. However, I hated to see that the outline where the tower had stood, no closer to the ocean than it had been in 1946 and definitely NOT in the ocean. The Coast Guard had made an error. The banking had stabilized itself and the tower I think would still be there had they not torn it down.

I remember wonderful things of the Cuttyhunkers. Of course, there were my relatives, Uncle Tom Cornell and his wife, Lina. Uncle Tom would bring his boat around to the lighthouse and toot his horn, to which Dad would row out to him, and he would load the dory with lobsters, all clacking their claws at us. We would take them and put them into a large lobster car that we had in the pond thereby "sweetening" them with brackish water and making them fat with fish heads and slurry that we fed them all the time. When we had company, did we ever had lobster to eat -- they wanted and more. I loved Aunt Lina. She was of German descent, you know, and probably had a hard time socially on the island during the war. I used to love to listen to her talk and how she loved and scolded my cousins, Dickie, Caroline, Anita and Cecily, all in the same breath. They were my older playmates at the lighthouse, and I loved their visits.

Oh, and the soldiers during the war that were stationed there at the sites. Mom took them all in and gave them seafood and mothering. When they were stationed at other places, we always got letters from them. They always invited us over for holiday meals too. When they first got there, they had a cook named Zeke. He was not a good cook, and he ruined a lot of stuff. One day, Dad was up in the lighthouse tower polishing the brass. He saw our little dog, Rexena, struggling to drag something that he thought was maybe a dead animal. He went down to check. It wasn't a real dead animal. It was a recently partially burned large roast that Zeke had done in. It was during rationing, and we hadn't had meat for about a year. Dad grabbed the still warm roast, and we took it home, scraped off the burned sections, popped it in our oven and had a delightful meat meal that evening. (Rexena got the bone.) Somehow the soldiers found out about this and every now and then an Army piece of meat would show up in our refrigerator with Zeke's compliments. (We never locked our doors.) Mom taught Zeke to cook lobsters and while he didn't approve of this inhumanity, he did remark that his post was probably the only one anywhere to feature lobster on the menu so frequently.

One of the soldiers during the war told his officer over in Fairhaven about us and this officer, a Captain King, needed someone to take care of his two daughters, Nancy and Jean. So, for a few years, I had two "sisters" who stayed with me. I hated to see them go at the end of the war and wish I could locate them again. I bet they never forgot their times at the lighthouse either. We had great fun together and they got spankings along with me whenever they needed them. Someday I want to check the school records at Cuttyhunk and see if I could locate them through that. I think perhaps I could.

I loved Harold Deane. He was so entertaining. He would tell us stories of all his visits everywhere. He was like a walking travelog. He came to visit us when we moved to Martha's Vineyard, and we always enjoyed his visits.

Then there was Aunt Etta and Uncle George King. Whenever Dad had business in town, I would go stay with them. When I went to school there, I would go to Aunt Etta's to eat lunch. She taught me never to drink water until the end of the meal and how to properly use a fork. I remember that when I went there, I would play with Wilfred (now the hermit) Tilton and he and I were great friends. I think that Aunt Etta also took care of Wilfred part time, too, as he was always over there.

School on the island was a wonderful experience for me, although I did miss a lot of it due to bad weather. I went when I was 5 and thought that going to school was the best thing that had ever happened to me. (I still believe that.) Mrs. Haskell was marvelous and through all my school years I never met another teacher to rival her. Though I was only her pupil in first grade, she was a friend forever and we wrote for many years, she always giving me counsel when I asked. I also loved to go visit her (and her husband, George) and have them tell of the birds they had discovered during the watches he did. Being taught by her was a privilege and gave me a pretty good footing when I went to the first grade in Vineyard Haven the next year.

Then there was Louis and Priscilla Ramos, he at the store and she at the post office. These people were great favorites of our family. Well, of everyone! Mom and Harold Deane would tell of stories of Louis Ramos back in Rum Running Days -- but not to his face, of course. But he was a sage. When the Standard Times ran an article on his 95th birthday, Dad called him up and he was a very spry man then, remembering everything. Of course, I remember when he would get in my special cocoanut candy at the store, because he knew I liked it. Priscilla, as you know, was a woman of many talents and knew the postal business like the back of her hand. She was loved by all and mail day, particularly in the winter, was a social event up in her little post office on the hill. The whole island was there, and it actually didn't matter whether you got your mail in or not because it was so good to talk to everyone at the post office. Priscilla, I learned later in life, would even hide out Christmas presents at her house until it was time for Santa to arrive for the island children, the parents surreptitiously sneaking over to get them at opportune times.

The Woods! Yes, how I loved to walk over his estate in the wintertime and imagine it was a castle in England. I thought it was so neat that he had his own barbershop in a little building off by itself. (Dad would go over and cut hair for him occasionally, as Dad had learned barbering out of necessity while he was on the lightships.) Most of all thought I loved (and probably coveted) his trees! That sweet little pine forest on an island that was so windswept and devoid of "real" trees. One Christmas, the Alert could not make it with the ordered Christmas trees from the Manhattan Market in New Bedford. With great misgivings, Dad and my brother-in-law went to the narrow edge of the Woods Forest and snatched a little one. (I think this is probably the only dishonest act I ever know of my Dad having a hand in.) We had a tree then for Christmas and then a real tree for New Years (from the boat) and put both of them outside for the birds for months afterwards. Many years later, Mr. Wood came to visit us on West Chop and being all kid, I blurted out the "truth" and thanked him for his Christmas tree while I lived on Cuttyhunk. He was so good natured about this Dad was so embarrassed I think he could have died on the spot and Mr. Wood said that he was glad I enjoyed the tree and someday I could plant a tree over there to take its place. I haven't done it yet, but I owe him one for my "borrowed" Christmas tree. I will do it, if Oriole will let me. [I've got to ask her.]

Of course, Uncle Howard Cornell who was always off on tugs and merchant marine ships. I remember he sent me the most beautiful Fairy Tale book, printed in Canada and also a

souvenir spoon from Canada with the picture of the King on it. He was always after me to brush my teeth and sent me a little bear tooth powder holder and brush set. One day, he decided to try a new tack to this. We were rowing across the pond and over by Gosnold's Monument, there was a rock that always had a gull sitting on it. He told me that he had a special spy gull that sat on that rock and the gull would tell him if I didn't brush my teeth. I took this all in and nothing would prompt me to talk while we were rowing the pond if that gull was sitting on the rock. Uncle Howard always sent us photos from his freighters on the Great Lakes and his other journeys. He was engineer for a yacht called the Galaxy and it was beautiful. I clearly remember him telling us about it. He was a very brilliant person and married late in life, a marvelous lady from New York, Irene, who was a professional milliner. I last visited her in 1988 in New Bedford and now her daughter, Kathy takes care of her, and she is in a rest home on the Cape. A wonderful couple and visiting them was like going to a talking museum. When Dad died, Uncle Howard took care of helping me sort things out and get mother to Mississippi. He always knew what to do.

You know we always went beachcombing while we were at the lighthouse. We found really neat things. There had been a ship wrecked years before that had a load of sheep hides and cow hides and these were still washing ashore. Dad used them as binding on all kinds of things. Then there was the wreck that washed ashore coal. We would take and dry this out and use it. We saved the Coast Guard lots of coal delivery this way. One wreck had been years before torn apart but even in the 1940's we were still finding shoes from it every now and then, especially after a storm. We actually found two of them that were the same kind once but never a matching size. Dad even got enterprising during the war and made me some shoes from the cow hides that looked like pixie shoes from the cow hides. I loved them, but he wouldn't let me wear them to town. We grew stuff in our little garden and had plenty of veggies and we canned them for winter. We had our little flock of chickens and when we couldn't get feed because of rationing, we let them run wild. For improved shell production we would break up oyster shells from the oysters in the pond. Oh, the quahogs on the beach were so good and Mom made best quahog chowders from them. I loved the shells and could see why the Indians made them into wampum because they are so beautiful. (Have you ever seen the quahog shell pictures that beautiful. Manny Sarmiento made from shell pieces. They are gorgeous mosaics, and I think worthy of lots of praise.)

Manny Sarmiento, the caretaker of Nashawena. I used to get so scared of him. He used to tell me that he was going to put me in his mail bag and steal me off to Nashawena. I thought he looked like a gypsy and was afraid that he would do it. Now, I wish I had visited them over there and seen all the sheep and the other island! But it was all in jest and later I found out he was sorry he had really scared me. I would hide behind Dad when I saw him. His wife was lovely, and I would see her at the post office sometimes.

Then there was Aunt Kate and Uncle Walter Loveridge. She was my mother's oldest sister and I guess had earned the "wise owl" moniker from the rest of the family. She, to me, was the real Cuttyhunker of the whole Cornell bunch. I can't think of any of them who loved Cuttyhunk more. She would watch with her spyglass out of her room and know who was coming on the Alert long before it got close. I think she would tell Potter how many packages to expect even. Town meetings with Aunt Kate attending always knew of her presence because when things got good, she would sing out, "Ha! Now, the dirt comes out! Uncle Walter was such a kindly man that for years he is my prototype of what an Englishman is like. He had wonderful stories of when he ran the boats to Penikese and other tales that kept me

spellbound. I loved to go over to their house for tea and toast and marmalade. I always think of them when I have marmalade. When Aunt Kate died, I couldn't go to the funeral and so I sent Uncle Howard a poem to read at the service that ended with "An Island Girl Come Home" -- they put it on her tombstone. I was glad of that.

I write this and I get lost in memories that all seem to blend into a sense of warmth and peace and wanting to return to Cuttyhunk. I surely hope that while I am here, I can do just that. You and your family are part of that too and I know you know what I mean. I hope that you don't get tired of reading all this -- I hadn't meant to type "Gone with the Wind" but guess it turned out this way.

I would love to hear from you and see what this last 40 years or so has been for you. Mom and Dad always, always thought the highest of "The Moores" and every year treasured the Christmas Card you sent us. Thanks for all of that from me, on behalf of them.

Fondly,
Seamond