

Levi Pennington

People

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Pennington to Mary & Cecil Pearson, May 2, 1965

Levi T. Pennington

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May 2, 1966.

Dear Mary and Cecil:--

One thing that I especially like about the Sunday Oregonian is the cross word puzzle that it contains. Not that I ever work that puzzle, but that it gives me an excuse to write a letter to you. This time I'd not have needed it, for that call by long distance last evening would have given me a good reason to say how much I appreciate this monthly call -- well, I can't put on paper how much I appreciate it, but can assure you that I do appreciate it very much. It makes a bright spot in the darkest day.

I've tried to call Bertha May and Leon repeatedly this afternoon, but I get no response, so I suppose they are visiting somebody, perhaps the girls. Guess I'll try calling them.

I've tried both 234-6340 and 228-2849 again and AG+IN AND AGAIN (Capitals unintentional and macrons poorly placed) got no response from either place. I'll call again later.

I've had my dinner -- I suppose it is dinner, or maybe it's supper -- braised short ribs of beef, fried potatoes, fried onions, bread and butter, chocolate cake with ground nut meats in it, which the directions did not call for, red raspberry jelly, and milk, my favorite beverage.

I called this afternoon on Curtis Parker and Carl Miller, and the other day I called on Gervas Carey. All four of us lost our wives in less than the past five years. They all make me think that they like to have me call. I don't do it often enough to bore them much even if they didn't like it.

Did I tell you about the will of Dr. Harlan F. Ong, who graduated from Pacific College in 1896? He left \$1,200,000 (or was it \$1,600,000? but what's a few hundred thousand dollars when you get into such high figures?) to the First Friends Church of Portland. He kept "the dead hand" on the gift, as they say, for the will provided that none of the principal can be used, only the income; and none of the income can be used for either education or foreign missions. The income alone, at only four per cent, is \$48,000.00, as I figure it, and that's more than enough to carry on the entire expenses of that meeting, new buildings and all if they want to enlarge.

A gift like that might kill a meeting, and would almost surely do it if they did not do something drastic about it. They have already started a move in that direction. They could continue to make their budget as large as ever or larger, and turn all the money they raise to education and foreign missions, and I rather think that is what they plan to do. In a matter of years they could build a college chapel, and that is certainly needed -- there may be an auditorium acoustically worse than the gymnasium, but I do not know where such an auditorium is.

Perhaps you know what is back of this strange legacy,

which, however much good it may do is not, in my judgment, greatly to the credit of Dr. Ong. I suppose nobody now living could be sure of the exact details of the thing that angered Dr. Ong and he held the grudge for nearly seventy years. How much he owed the college when he graduated I do not know. His sister also attended the college, though her name is not in the directory (left out along with the name of Herbert Hoover), and the future Dr. Ong was to pay that indebtedness, too. He made his way through medical college, and set up in private practice on less than the proverbial shoe-string, according to the doctor's friends. I was told that a cloth-covered box was his desk, and a few instruments in a hand bag constituted his only equipment.

The college was in need of money, as always, and Seth Mills, a member of the college board and its treasurer, was trying to collect debts that were still owed by former students. (When we came to Oregon there were \$20,000 of such debts owed by former students.) When he tried to collect from Dr. Ong, he got no money -- Dr. Ong's friends say that he did not have it -- but they did have plenty of words that had better have been left unsaid. It is said that Mills threatened to sue for the debt. At any rate the incident so angered Dr. Ong that he was the college's enemy from that time on until his death.

Education made him what he was; without it he could never have succeeded professionally as he did, though nobody can say that he would not have succeeded financially. At any rate none of the means he left can be used for foreign missions, and his anger at Pacific College is, I suppose, responsible for his provision that none of the income from his legacy can be used for education.

I remember only one time that I ever talked with Dr. Ong, and that was soon after I began my work for the college. He told me of his grievance; without trying to place blame, I tried to persuade him to be big enough to disregard whatever he had suffered and live as though it had never happened, but he did not give me the slightest grounds for hope that what I said had changed his attitude in the least. He not only died without leaving anything to the college, but he must have thought that he was giving it a big slap-in-the-face by providing that none of his gift should ever be used for education.

David and Florence Thomas were at church this morning, and they were recognized and spoke very briefly at the close of the service. They are returning to the Bolivian mission field of the yearly meeting, after some years following their first term down there. The yearly meeting has a very different relationship to the work in Bolivia and now Peru from that of former years. It is now purely a native church, by government requirement, and the workers from here are working for them, though supported by this yearly meeting. David will have his work mostly in assisting the native leaders. (You will remember, I think, that David was one of the students who during the years have lived up on the sleeping porch upstairs here. He started the church at Netarts, which is now a monthly meeting with a nice church building, all paid for, and a parsonage, also paid for. After their first term in Bolivia he was called back to that church and they served there till just recently. They are leaving before this week is over, next Friday, I believe.

I finally got Leon, and Bertha May is again in the hospital, as I feared. She was suffering intensely this morning, and when they got to the hospital another physician was called in,

a specialist of some order, I judge from what Leon said, who said that there was a good deal of inflammation in the region of that block in the bowels, and they are giving her heavy shots of penicillin, and if that does not bring speedy relief they say that surgery will be needed. Leon will go to the hospital in the morning, and will let me know by noon what the situation is at that time. If things look as if I ought to be down there I'll be going not later than tomorrow afternoon.

But there are two or three other letters that I ought to write before I go to bed, and I'd better get at them.

I do hope that health of both of you may improve as the days pass, and that it may not be long until you may feel that you can begin to make definite plans to be out here soon after school closes for the summer.

With love, as ever and for ever,

Dr. and Mrs. Cecil E. Pearson,
P. O. Box 241,
Greene, New York.