
Levi Pennington

People

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Levi Pennington To M.B. Robbins, December 21, 1965

Levi T. Pennington
George Fox University

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December 21, 1965.

M. B. Robbins,
Robbins Realty and Insurance,
112 South College Street,
Newberg, Oregon.

Dear Friend:--

With the passing of the years -- it is more than five years since Rebecca died -- I find it in some respects increasingly hard to live alone.

My experience with having college young men to room here and take their meals somewhere else has varied widely. In some ways the memory of it is amusing; in other ways it is frustrating; in still others it is disgusting.

The first student I had was as nearly ideal as anybody could expect to find in this mundane world. But he was with me only from January till June, and after that was no longer in the college here. He is married, is almost through his medical course, and for him I'd feel safe in predicting a successful medical career, in this country or on the foreign mission field.

That fall after he left I engaged the young man who had been his room mate. I learned after he was living here that he had done such poor work in the college the year before that he was in on condition of his doing good work this first semester. He was to do the work that I could not do outside, picking the few nuts and prunes that I had, trimming the hedge, mowing the lawn, raking up the leaves, and such things; but after he had moved in he informed me that he had decided not to do any work outside of his school work; and I had to chase around a good deal to find somebody to pick the nuts and prunes before they were beyond saving, and for all the other work I still had to hunt for a worker. This student did such poor work that he ended his college career with that first semester.

For the second semester I secured a Freshman who was said to be all right. He was to do 100 hours of work, and more if he cared to do it. At the close of the semester he had done, according to his report, 3½ hours of work; and on the only night I needed him, when I had a sudden and violent attack of pneumonia and had to crawl down stairs and call my physician and wait in the cold, and ~~and~~ ^{and} hustle me off in his car to the hospital, this young man was in Portland.

So the next year I lived entirely alone, which was not pleasing to my daughters, my brother and sisters, and others of my relatives and friends, so the next year I tried another Freshman who could not come to college unless he had a place to earn at least a part of his expenses. Well, he proved to be a "problem child" in the fullest sense of the term. He was good hearted and honest, but when you had said that in his favor, you had about

exhausted your grounds for approval. He was not dependable -- went away to spend a week end while I was on a trip back east, leaving two outside doors open and one of the heat units in the electric stove turned on; he left lights burning all day and all night unless I saw them burning when I knew he was not here and turned them off; left doors open that were supposed to be closed; lost his key to the door so that anybody finding it could enter my house at will; and so on and on. He had little consideration for others, and never knew it. He had no more idea of "the eternal fitness of things" than a five year old. As I sit here at my type-writer my knee is less than a foot from the piano -- while I was writing a letter that needed some real thought he sat down on the piano stool and began pounding the keys, making up with volume what he lacked in accuracy as he struck the right keys only part of the time. He played a number of musical instruments, including the clarinet, and I never knew until then what hideous noises one could make with that instrument. He brought into the house a lot of diseased guinea pigs, and the stench was actually worse than that created by an angry skunk. The parakeet that he kept in the bathroom was not so bad. When I came back from my trip east he had the living room with wires for his recorder, his radio and what not. Once when I came back from Portland with my daughter and her husband he was sprawled in one of the bigger chairs with his shoes off and his feet on the coffee table, and when we came in he did not even trouble to take his feet off the table and put them on the floor. He was to take his meals somewhere else, but he took possession of a good part of my refrigerator and ate a good many of his meals right here. But why go on? Do you wonder that I called him my problem child? He called me his "room mate"; and when he told me that he was not going to be with me the next year, and saved me from the necessity of telling him, he took it upon himself to get a couple of students that he thought might want to take his place, and brought them over to see about the matter. It never occurred to him that perhaps I'd rather do my own choosing -- he wanted to be helpful.

The next year I thought two or three times that I had the right student ready to come, but one of them was planning to be away week ends, when I'd need him most that we both agreed that the arrangement would not be satisfactory; and the other one who had been eager to come made other arrangements without telling me -- he never did tell me, but I was informed by one of the college staff -- and it was by that time too late to get anybody, so last year I was all alone, which was much better than the previous year had been with my "problem child."

I did not intend when I started this letter to bore you with all this detail -- that's the sort of thing that my fingers do when I turn them loose on a typewriter and do not keep a check-rein on them.

This year I have a fine chap rooming here and taking his meals at the dormitory where he lived last year. He is the son of one of our Quaker pastors, an earnestly religious young man, good looking, a good student, and I'm fortunate in having him.

But it still leaves me with the cooking, the house keeping and other things that are not what I think most of the time

that I would like. I'm not the worst cook in the world, though far from the best, but if anybody wanted to compete with me for the title of "Worst House Keeper", I'd give that contestant some real competition. I dislike dish washing and mopping and dish washing and sweeping and dish washing and dusting and dish washing and house cleaning and dish washing and dish washing and bed making and dishwashing and other things, especially dish washing.

Now as to what I really intended to write about -- no need to read what I have written before -- it seems to me now, as it has seemed many times, that if I could have a congenial couple to rent the place, with an arrangement that I should live with them as if I were one of the family, it would be a better arrangement than any other that I could make.

If either of my daughters were well enough, and if they were ready to live here, that would be the best arrangement possible, now that Rebecca is gone. But Bertha May is not able to do it, and anyhow her husband has to hold his job in the maintenance department of the Portland City School System in order to have a more substantial pension when he retires. I'd be tempted to try a full year with my older daughter and her husband in Greene, New York, but Bertha May, the younger daughter in Portland, has such severe attacks of intense pain from her neuritis that when her husband is at work sometimes she very much wants to see her father for a day.

Now to find a congenial couple and a couple who would find me congenial would be no easy task if I were to hire them, pay them a good salary with free rent and all their living expenses, and I have no income that would enable me to do that no matter how eager I might be to do it. It ought to be a couple who had an income of their own, who wanted to rent a place to live, and who would be willing to have me living much as if I were one of the family. I'd have to have my desk in some corner of the warm part of the house, and a room upstairs that has some heat in it. The man should be able and willing to do the things out doors that the doctor does not encourage me to do. With your help we could reach a fair financial arrangement.

I don't think it very likely that you will have contact with a couple who would be interested in such an arrangement, but if you should, I'd like to meet the folks,

With Jerry Baker, the college Sophomore who is rooming here, my situation is the best it has been for the past three years, but I'm still my own cook and housekeeper, and Jerry is away at vacation and other times, and he will not be here at all during the summer, and if the right pair were living here, it would be more satisfactory to me and to my daughters and to my brother and sister. If you discover a possibility, I'll appreciate it if I can be informed.

Sincerely your friend,

Levi T. Pennington.