

Madley, Alabama

January 23, 1976

Dear Rowena, Melly and Mark III.

This is America's 200<sup>th</sup> birthday and everyone is much concerned about their heritage. Our family has quite a few names and dates concerning our forefathers, but that's about all they amount to - just names and dates. What I would like to know is much more than that. I want to know what they were like. Who they really were, what they did, where and how they lived. After thinking about it for awhile, I've decided to write to you, telling you some of the things I know concerning your forefathers.

I cannot tell you anything about your father or mother for they are not even borned yet, but I can tell you about your grandfather. Not of your grandmother tho, for as your grandfather is only fifteen years old as of this writing, if he has even thought of a future girl friend, its a deep and dark secret. You see he is rather shy. Like the names I've given you, you know I have no idea what your names will be. I just gave you the names Rowena, Melly and Mark III to rile your grandfather. He'll have a fit, but he would anyway no matter what I'd called you. He will say, "ugh Grandmother, those are the ugliest names I ever heard", cause thats the way he is. I can tell you about your great grandfather and especially about your great grandmother for she is my daughter. That makes me your great great grandmother And I remember my great grandfather very well and will include a chorotic

sketch of him also, so that will give you something all the way back to - let's see, your great great great great great <sup>(G.K. White)</sup> grandfather.

Now, back to your grandfather Edge. How I hope he is as nice and kind and courteous and lovable when you know him as he is now. And if he is still as ambitious and smart as he is now, he will probably be a wealthy old gentleman. As you can see, to me he is very special. Of course, I see his unpredictable side too, but then I always know there is a reason for that. He's either tired, or sleepy, or hungry, or feeling bad or maybe his feet hurt. Any way I know there's a reason.

<sup>your grandfather</sup> Mark was the baby in a family of three children. There are seven years between him and his brother and nine years between him and his sister. You would think he got lots of babying, but not so. He would not allow it. He was born sorta old. I mean in ways and temperament. I never remember seeing him playing games like; Cops and Robbers, Cowboy and Indians or marbles. He was much too serious for that. He entertained himself and found enjoyment in "clearing an entire jarret" with a tiny and very dull hatchet. He would tirelessly hack away at a tree the size of his arm all day. And dig post holes with a spoon or later when he was strong enough to lift them, post hole diggers. I know he has told you about all his dogs, especially, Chocolate, now there's a tacky name for a dog, but then, the dog is chocolate colored. Of how extremely intelligent the dog was, when if the truth was told - he's just an average dog. And Mark has had all kinds of 'whales' plus a horse, but he still

prefers to just walk and roam over the hills and woods and fields. He has an unusual love of nature.

When he was eight years old he began taking piano lessons and the piano has been his great love from that day still. This day, he could be talented, but certainly not gifted for it as some, he just loves it and keeps digging away at learning more and more. He plays very very well too. One of the greatest pleasures of my life is listening to him play. Maybe you have heard him play Compositions by Chopin and Mozart and many others. He has several music pupils now that he loves to teach.

He is a straight A student in school - except for Algebra. I won't tell you what he makes in that - but it's not even a B.

He is just now starting to build a Quail Empire. But I imagine it takes all the money he makes working long hard hours after school and all day Saturday at his Uncle Dwight Hall Super Market, plus what his piano pupils pay them to keep his birds going. That is one project I'll be glad to see wear off and away. Knowing him tho, there will be another to take its place. At least I hope so, for life is made of dream its up to us to turn them into realities and by trial only are we able to discern those best for us.

I want to tell you something of your Great Uncle Sam. He graduated from Auburn University last August and now has a position <sup>in</sup> with the Pay Roll department of the Federal Government in Montgomery, Alabama. He has been married two years. His lovely wife Sue is a smart and thrifty young homemaker. She works outside

their home too, as nearly all women of these times do. She is a typist. At Christmas, Thanksgiving, all our birthdays and often in-between, we all gather at Mark's home where his mother and sister has prepared a feast for us - well the high light of the occasion for me, is when we've finished the meal and all ten of us are sitting around the table, is for Sam to start in his humorous way, to telling tales and jokes. He makes all the motions and sounds required to give them their full meaning. I call them our laugh feasts. Sam too, is a straight forward, honest, clean cut Christian young man and we are so proud of him.

Debbie, your great aunt is a school teacher and such a good one. She has taught kindergarten for three years now. She loves it and is sweet, but I have a feeling, her little ones know the limit to which they can push her, for limits she does have. She is not married yet. Still looking for someone as wise and congenial as her father I think. Even tho she is less than five feet tall, she loves to roar about the country in her new and high-powered cars. No compacts for her. Her conduct and behavior point to the fact that she is a lovely and great lady. How we depend on her for so many things. She has been and is a dependable second mother for Mark.

Something on your great grandfather, Gene Thomas Edge. Perhaps the greatest compliment a father can have paid him, is to hear his sons say, "I hope I can be just like my father" or to hear his wife say, "I hope our daughter can find a husband as fine as her father." J.I. has heard both statements, and deserves them. He has had tremendous influence on

his children. They have learned from him without being aware they were being taught, lasting things that could not be learned in school. He too was a school teacher, then Business Manager for Southern Union College and now a college professor. The hardest working man I've ever known. From a monetary standpoint not the best manager - The wants of his family have always outweighed his better judgement. It's doubtful that he will ever leave any money to be passed along to his children, because he passed it to them as he made it. But then, money or the scarcity of it does not seem to trouble him too much. With a shrug of his shoulder, he says, "It will all even out."

Now, let me introduce to you, your great grandmother, Marie Mother and my daughter and only child. She is tall and stately, dark hair, eyes and coloring, and to me is very pretty. She is charming, and I might add aggressive at the same time. There's a force inside her that drives her endlessly. She has colossal strength and vitality and seems to collect and thrive on responsibilities, be they her own or those of others. She along with her husband and children are among the elite of our town. Among the leaders of every project of the town, school or college. When there is an impossible job to be done it will soon fall on Marie's shoulders - which she clutches gleefully and never lets up until it's completed, and done well. There is no "half way" about anything for Marie. She expects perfection from her family and others, but most of all from herself. And there in lies a tale - for no one is perfect of course and

it causes doubts and introspection, which is bad. All who search their inner selves too often and too closely are bound to be disappointed which in turn dims one's self respect - and only thru self respect comes inner peace.

She is a College Librarian and has been for fourteen or fifteen years. During those years she, with <sup>the</sup> wonderful help from her husband has been able to rear and educate their children, two thru college. To finish their own education; to maintain and successfully keep their home, that is always lovely and inviting. As a daughter to her father and one, no one could even wish for more. She or her husband or her children have seen and met our needs before we were aware of them.

Rewena, Mally and Mark III I hope you've gained some insight of some of your forefathers, of what they have been and are, so far. Perhaps you have learned something of me from my rambling writings, all I can think to add, would be that I am a lady of great and good and wonderful intentions - who never did, or carried out a single one of them.

I remember when I was a little girl some fifty five or sixty years ago, my grandmother would frighten us children so when she would wring her hands and say, "Oh, children these are perilous times" She was ever anxious about so many things. Now I find my self in like manner. However very few of the things she worried about most ever happened. So maybe

that will be the way of my anxieties, and  
yours will be a wonderful and peaceful world,  
with stout-hearted, second-minded, honest good  
people.

Love and best wishes to you and yours  
Your great great grandmother  
Quintilla Smith

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