

"Springfield"
Spring Street
Middle Ridge
TOOWOOMBA Q. 4350

My dear Tom,

. Thanks a lot for the handsome Xmas Card My, but that's a different winter to ours right now! But than I forget we are completely A.)H. to your Northern aspect.

Glad to hear you are well, but watch out for the Arthur, now. I find great relief in the copper bngle old woman's remedy. In fact, if it had not been for the constant wearing of my own, I honestly don't think I'd have lasted so well, and not nearly so well.

Am not in the least happy with my progress as it is. Last May, I suddenly went almost legless and had to use a wheel-chair. Don't ever be misled by those dam things, Tom. They don't grow on you gradually or anything as kiddly. Mine is a very kind, patient sort of BASTARD thing. It lurks in my vicinity very inoffensively and then, preferably on concrete, leaps out and deliberately and with loud cries, springs forth on to both my shins. It's so regular that I'm never without one and mostly two plastered shins. Then, they feed me Lasix to keep the "water" moving, and this, together with the constant "running" to and from used to keep me busily lame if I may be allowed to say so. I kicked up the Lasix dose to 2 pills a day, and that finished up the ulcers on my shins but now since June last, I can get about only in the damned chair. The only really bright side is the Arthur Itis. I can't kick it, but they give me a yellow capsule twice a day which certainly makes it more bearable. Remind me, the moment you think of it Tom, to get me a new ribbon for this machine!

You will notice that my typing is very poor. the fact is I can't type at all any more. Fingers like fountain pens. Luckily my Duchess (Missus) does all my typing. Never touched a typewriter but has been an expert of piano all her life. She took to it like a duck takes to water.

Am glad to hear you had a successful flight and return to Banff. It very famous of course. In fact, it reminds me of the Stephen King's book The Shining which I read without being over-thrilled. I haven't heard anything about dear old Hythe for many years now. About all I do remember is The Roughs (target practice, "dry tobogganing down" steep slopes of only fairly frictional khaki-clad wooden figures for "aiming off" (wind) at; and they had a long spike of iron at the end for standing them upright. And a very small Hun behind the counter in a corner sheep. He was Mr Euden, about as German as he could be and with a magnificent moustachio that would have graced a mountainous Uhlan better than it did him. He lost a side of bacon one summer and cried like a kid over it. And the old Reach field where occasionally our fathers would play a game on Saturday afternoon. I had no idea how football was played in those days, except that the big round ball got a frightfully kick in the guts once a game and it seemed to fly into the air for an enormous distance before beginning to drop faster and faster until some idiot shoved his head underneath it and everyone yelled "well headed, man!" And the fellow strutted off looking all shy and overcome in the best Anglo Saxon manner imaginable.

I have two grandchildren, Kylie 13 and Ben 12. My younger son Jan is trained and qualified journalist. P R for Public Health Canberra has been married 15 years one only child (adopted girl). recently walked out on his wife and no earthly possible prospect of any further issue from that direction I'd think. Anyway at my age in such an advancing age I'm more concerned with drawing the Pension than any other reaching for stars. As a matter of fact, those of my stars not already set are getting a little shaky right now.

Did I mention that I now depend on a WHEEL Chair for my locomotion? Disgraceful thing to admit, but I don't get on at all well with the rotten thing. I think it must have been inoculated with Anti-smith at some dark corner of its murky past. Sometimes I even imagine the thing is shining an evil light over me from the end of the bed/. One thing I am sure of, it has both of my poor shins raw and bleeding from having been thrashed and punished from vicious continued contact with the sharp edges of each practically constantly. I have been threatened with an ulcer by the Dr; and my Specialist to whom in the course of my illness over the past ten years I have paid about \$4,000 in medical benefits, have both given me a hearty wall-of where my shoulderblades once were, have given me the hearty horselaugh and shouted Sorry old man, but there's no cure for you. You'll probably take quite a long time, but after all, take it from me, there's thousands like you and many worse.

My only reaction was, But most... all of them..are dead!

To which the specialist bastard murmured 'You are so Right!

I will send you and my friend Wendy both copies of my book Reading high when I get them from publishers next year.

(belated Merry Christmas, Tom

GEORGE SMITH



'Melrose Valley'
via Queanbeyan,
New South Wales,
Australia 2620
January 9, 1980.

Dear Mr Raddall,

This is far from a happy occasion to receive a letter from the son of your old friend George Smith. My father died on 4th January. As you know, he had been in very poor health in recent times. A stroke in 1968 laid him low, and although he rehabilitated himself admirably (and wrote his two books), recent years had seen him getting increasingly crippled. Parkinsonism didn't help at all, and in the end he could no longer use his typewriter (which I use to write this letter). Hand writing was quite out of the question and he could not even master a tape recorder.

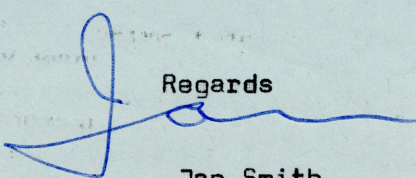
My mother told me that he died the day after the 57th anniversary of his arrival in Australia. I came across your Christmas card when I was going through his things this morning, and am glad that you thought to put your address on the card. I know that he would have been glad to know that I am writing to you. Mother says that Dad was always a bit of a square peg and that he missed his real vocation of writing. Looking at some of the things he wrote before I was born (I am 44), I believe that he would have been most successful. Instead, he became a farmer and the back-breaking work left him little or no time or energy for writing. I have been a journalist for 26 years, but my own writing bears none of the real talent I see in Dad's early writings. At the time of his death he had his third book with his publishers, but I'm afraid that it may not see print, as his powers were fast disappearing. I have done my best to edit it, and although it has charm, it is possibly not up to standard. I will, by the way, be sending you a copy of the local newspaper containing an obit which I wrote. That will be by surface mail, and will not reach you for some weeks.

My father and mother would have celebrated their golden wedding anniversary in two weeks time. However, my mother is not unduly saddened by that. She was becoming increasingly worried about her ability to get Dad out of the nursing home for even a day. An old friend of the family had suggested a small gettogether of old friends, but that would have proved pretty difficult. Mother feels grateful that she has managed to outlive Dad, as he would have been unbearably lonely without her. She is in poor health also, with cancer, and feels so grateful that she has held on far beyond the time indicated by her original prognosis. To look at her one would be hard put to imagine that she is so ill. She still manages to drive the car on her better days and visits her many friends around Toowoomba. Fortunately she has her daughter-in-law and two grandchildren here in Toowoomba and sees a lot of them. My brother, who was five years older than me, died last year. My sister-in-law, Leith, moved to Toowoomba after Mick's death and has done very well selling advertising time for a local commercial radio station.

I have often heard Dad talk about you and I am sure that I have one of your books somewhere. I must be honest and say that I have not read it, but feel that now is my opportunity, since I now feel (after reading your Christmas message to my father) that I know you better. I guess I have always been a bit of a black sheep in this family. I regret to say that my first marriage came to an end recently, but that is all behind me and I re-married some months ago. My wife Lorraine (and three of her four children) now live in a farm cottage just outside Canberra, where I work. It is a peaceful place and so pleasant after the stress of the city and the office. I work for the Commonwealth Department of Health, editing a quarterly magazine on community health, doing some speech writing, press liaison, film making and publication work. My father was very proud of the fact that only a month ago I completed a part-time five year degree course in professional writing.

I am not usually so informative about myself as this, but I felt that you would probably be interested in hearing something about the life and family of your old friend. May I wish you good health and happiness.

Regards


Jan Smith

BY AIR MAIL

PAR AVION

AEROGRAMME



Mr Tom Raddall,

P.O. Box 459,

Liverpool,

Nova Scotia,

C A N A D A Bot 1K0

COUNTRY OF DESTINATION

SENDER'S NAME AND ADDRESS

J.W. Smith,

'Melrose Valley',

via Queanbeyan,

New South Wales, AUSTRALIA 2620

POSTCODE

PLACING GUM FOR

TO OPEN SLIT HERE FIRST

Jan Smith
Melrose Valley
New South Wales
Australia

BOT 1K0

January 22, 1980

Dear Jan:

It was good of you to write. I had a letter from George on December 28, air-mailed before Christmas, and obviously typed with great difficulty, in which he said he did not expect to live another twelve months. Nevertheless, your news was a sad shock.

I saw him last in the summer of 1920, when my ship went to London to load telegraph cable, and I looked him up. On my last night before sailing back to Canada we saw a show together and parted in Trafalgar Square about midnight. I was then about seventeen and had been two years at sea with the Canadian merchant marine. I seem to recall that George was working in a London office, and hating it.

I didn't hear from him again until War Two, when he picked up an American magazine and read a short story of mine. He wrote to me in care of the magazine, and told me something of his adventures since he left London for Australia in 1923 -- the same year in which, having left the sea, I came to work in a small wood-pulp mill in the forest of Nova Scotia. We wrote back and forth a few times, but the war was in full uproar then, and I was involved in army affairs here, as George ~~X~~ was there. What with that, and the mail delays of wartime, there followed a long gap in our communications.

In the autumn of 1976 I was autographing copies of my autobiography in a Halifax bookshop, and one of the customers mentioned that she was from Queensland, Australia. She wondered if, by any chance, I remembered a boyhood chum named George Smith. I jumped up and said, "Of course I do! But I lost his address years ago. Do tell me about George!" We had a very interesting chat, and she gave me George's address and lent me her copy of "Once A Green Jackaroo". I thoroughly enjoyed the book. George had a marvellous sense of humour, and he put it on paper with great skill. Behind the fun I was able to see something of his life in Australia, a very different experience from mine. I agree with your mother that George could have made a good career as an author had he chosen.

How strange it was that two boys from a little town in Kent should go to ~~to~~ live in such widely separated parts of the globe, to struggle and eventually make out successfully in such different ways, and to wind it all up by publishing our autobiographies at pretty much the same time!

I had a birthday last autumn and am now in my 77th year, so in the course of nature I cannot live much longer myself.

My deep sympathy and best wishes to your mother and yourself,

Tom Raddall