

Sackville, N.B.,  
7 November 72

Dear Tom:

I have a short piece in the November Reader's Digest about a West Novie's death in Italy. They decided not to use his name, but I can't help wondering whether his parents would like to know. I found his body near the Hitler Line and in one hand he had a letter he'd written to his mother shortly before he died. Why he had it there, and my wondering why, is the theme of the story.

Anyway his name was Edward Drillio and, as I say in the story, I found it in your history of the regiment. I remembered it from the day I found him in a field, so the history confirmed it. I have no idea where his family would be, or whether, in fact, it would be a good thing to tell them. Maybe they'd like to know. Maybe it's better to let the wound stay closed.

What do you think? And, if you think I should write them, would you know where I could get ~~the address~~ the family address?

I'm finally whacking away at my Murray thesis. What a yern. A bitter feud with Jones, the admiral who fires him. A controversial wife whom people can't stop talking about. It makes the sober militarisms come to life.

All the best,



Douglas How

PS: I may call on you again. The Killam estate has asked me to do a handsome booklet on Ike, founder of Mersey Paper, so I'll probably be doing some research in Liverpool.

November 9, 1972

Hello Douglas:

Glad to know that your Murray thesis is coming along well. When you've got it finished I'd be very interested in reading it, if you could lend me a copy for a few days.

With regard to Edward Drillion, I don't know where you'd find his family today. The War Graves Commission (I'm not sure of their exact title) had a registry of all the dead, and in what cemetery they were buried. This was for the benefit of next-of-kin, so presumably they had a register of the next-of-kin as given by the soldier on his enlistment. But after nearly thirty years the address might not be any good.

■ I was on the Mersey Paper staff when the mill was built and for several years afterwards, so I saw a little of Killam on his fleeting visits. In one of my novels (The Wings of Night) I described him as "Luther Kinnoul" -- chapters 20 and 37 if you're interested.

Drop in any time you're down this way.

Cheers!

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27 Oct 74

Dear Tom:

As you know from our chat, I have been working on a biography of Izaak Walton Killam and his wife. It was commissioned by the Estate's executors with the idea of giving the book to winners of the numerous scholarships and other awards which bear their name. I am also free, once that is done, to try to peddle the story to magazines and as a commercial book.

I finished a first draft of some 100,000 words last January and sent it off to the top executor, Donald Byers, Q.C., of Montreal. He and his fellow executors like it, by and large, but feel it is too long--as I foresaw--for their purposes. Anyway, I am now wrestling with Draft Two after awaiting their word for some months.

In it, I have quoted at some length from some of your own reminiscences about the early Mersey days and about the threadbare background of the Liverpool area before Mersey got into operation. I picked these up in part from our chat and in part from some writing you did for Mersey's house organ. Byers thought I should get in writing your approval of this, and this hereby requests same. Your cooperation would be much appreciated. I got more on Mersey than on any other Killam project, and it helps.

Incidentally, I quote you at one point as saying that when you first went to that area you found game so plentiful that you actually saw men catching salmon from your office door up the Mersey. Did you also say you also saw deer shot from there too?

Tom, as you know, Killam had a reputation for being a tough, cold, stingy man, and I have tried to bring this out. But he also did a lot of good, and I have quoted people from Graham

Towers on as saying so. Towers, the later governor of the Bank of Canada, formed a very high opinion of Killam's courage and wisdom as a Royal Bank executive in the '30s. Killam then was into the Royal for millions but Towers says "The bank never lost a cent by him." I found this same recognition, even awe, of the man's integrity among many people who knew him well.

I wonder if you'd have a brief quote I could use at this stage of the book. Something about his courage in carrying Mersey on--Towers says a lot of men would have closed the doors in the early '30s--and what it has meant, and still means, to that area. There also is the question of his detractors. I imagine there are still a lot of farmers in that area who would cuss Killam's name as the man who gave them as little as possible for their pulpwood. Is this so, and if so, perhaps you could work that in too. I would like to give both sides.

I hope this finds you and your good wife well. I have had, perforce, to set Murray aside for the time being to earn some bread, and have become director of extension at Mount Allison. So as of now I have no time for a thesis but I will get it done. I have about 80,000 words written on that too.

All the best,



Douglas How

PS: I am also writing Mersey to get their  
OK.



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"Five hundred visitors came to the official opening of the Mersey paper mill, most of them from Halifax by special train. Premier Rhodes of Nova Scotia pushed a golden button, and the mill's main doors opened to reveal the machinery in motion. None of the eloquent speakers on this occasion breathed a word about the recent collapse of the New York stock market, but to those in the know it was plain that Izaak Walton Killam had got a very big fish on a very thin line at the mouth of the Mersey River.

"A Canadian bank had loaned him several million dollars on the security of first mortgage bonds. He had planned to sell a second mortgage issue and some of the common stock for several millions more, but that plan had gone with the wind from Wall Street. During the first few years of the mill's operation we were paying construction bills out of money received from paper sales, and letting huge debts accumulate in other directions, notably the bills of the Nova Scotia Power Commission, which ultimately caused a scandal in the Nova Scotia Legislature.

"As contractors and other suppliers came to the end of their own financial ropes and threatened writ and seizure, the bank had to put up more money or see its main loan go down the drain. These additional loans were made through the local branch in Liverpool, whose manager acted as watchdog for the head office in Montreal. For each I prepared the official form headed Loans Under Section 88 of the Bank Act, in which the company pledged not only the mill and timberlands but everything else it had, from food and other supplies in the logging camps to paper in the holds of ships.

"Long afterwards I was told that Killam pledged everything he owned himself, including his house in Montreal, during these early struggles of the paper industry at Liverpool. He had faith in it, and willy-nilly so did the bank. The mill had the outstanding advantages I have mentioned, which enabled it to keep its head above the slough which sucked down so many industries in the 1930's; but during its first ten years the company did not pay a cent of dividends. The outbreak of the Second World War, and the subsequent tremendous demand for news paper at fancy prices, which went on and on after the war, put the mill on easy street and Mr. Killam on fat profits."

With my best wishes,