

PHOENIX

possible lead for section postmarked Wickenburg, March 7:

I always thought that a desert is just nothing, but have  
changed my mind. It is really beautiful out here, in the desert  
way. . . .Ivan is busy looking for gold. Every rock he picks up  
he asks Charlie if it is gold. }

March 18

Charlie went to the hospital here Tues. nite. Had his  
appendix out about 8 Wed. morn. And got out of the hospital  
today at 1:30. That's what I call fast work.

at least  
Montana weather gave you a little time to be on your guard. Here on  
the desert, the temperature crashed at night and rocketed during the day.

Montana weather, consisting as ~~it~~ <sup>roughly</sup> it does of about a hundred seasons of  
3½ days each, at least gives you time to be on your guard. Here on the  
desert, the temperature crashed at night and rocketed during the day.

*more* Storms spun themselves while you watched.

The rush of weather...

~~(water pooling & running intly after rain)~~  
When AZ weather was nice it was perfect.

*Belver who was - born to parallel p/s*

Parallel parking is a newfangled nuisance to her and she pulls around to a side street where the Ford can be nosed in. I tag along at her side on the round of chores. The post office, her letters ready for Wally, <sup>to</sup> *(get letter?)* to my grandmother, to others in Montana; as ever, we don't get quite as many as she sends. To the drugstore: film to capture the fact that we are where we are. Cars, busy. Wickenburg is an intersection for everything-- the Phoenix highway, the California highway, the highway north that we migrated down from Montana (all the way from WSS).

Basking beside the Hassayampa River, the town knows its commodity is sun. Motorists from Phoenix stop to coffee up. They are on their way to Yarnell Hill, on the Prescott road north, to take a look at the snow. My mother looks at them: snow is exotic? *with a 00-mi drive?*  
*How, how do we do it?*  
→ *(We have been)* in Wickenburg less than a week and already our belongings straddle two places. My mother steers the Ford carefully. She doesn't like bad roads (and has spent her entire life on them), but at least this one from the desert cabin is more sand than mud.

In less than a lifetime, Apacheria gave way to Dudeland.

People paid good money for stints of the horseback life my folks were born into.

Only after supper did Allen angle around to what he had come to say:  
a goodbye that was not just for the night. <sup>As soon as W's cold got better</sup> ~~The Prescotts in the morning~~ <sup>they</sup>  
were starting back north to Montana, to begin spring on their ranch at  
Battle Creek.

Neither my mother or father said anything for a moment. Then they  
quickly asked Allen to say hello to everybody for us, <sup>write us how</sup> to drop a lett  
their trip was.

My father hadn't had his prescribed walk yet--"This doctor of yours  
thinks shoe leather is the only medicine," he joshed Allen--so he decided  
to ride with Allen as far as the miner's cabin and walk back. "Ye want  
to keep me company, Ivan?" Naturally; ever since he came out of the

Dad  
longing for  
ranch work

caught  
by  
surprise?

declared

Soon after the snow, Allen Prescott came visiting. His wife Winnie was laid up with a cold, Allen not saying the obvious scruple, that she did not want to bring infection of any kind to my mother. But, he assured us, ~~Winnie~~ pretty pronto Winnie would be ready to footrace my father. I giggled at the notion of lofty Mrs. Prescott legging it out against my scampering father, while the adults got down to the business of conversation.

Soon after the snow, Allen Prescott came visiting. His time with us I halfway know, halfway imagine. It can only have been Allen who was behind the camera, catching a bit of his own shadow on the side of the cabin, for the only Arizona picture of my mother and father and me together, Dad and I with our workaday hats on (his with that jaunty crimp, mine sitting on me flat-brimmed as a lampshade) while my mother, wearing a striped frock and high heels and with her hair fixed, looks like the one doing the Sunday visiting to this bareboard abode. And I can easily enough guess a facsimile of the adults getting down to the business of conversation--war, weather, so on. But the continuing shape of that day, that desert afternoon, was Allen Prescott himself. Even then, people such as Allen etched into me in a way that would come out my fingertips. Like that bit of profile cast lastingly onto the cabin when he took our picture, Allen was the human extension of a story.

according to my shadows (I was) a hive of wizards.

*photo of us: how our shadows fell.*

Hammers were in song in Wickenburg too (and divvying land into subdivisions)...

*subdividing of AZ*

...the Ford and I--the Ford and I pantomiming ourselves into Allen Prescott

and the Terraplane.

The desert, it is said, makes people more absolute.

The desert democracy of light caught me up at all times of day (shadows in morning toward W'burg, at noon toward Stanton, evening toward the Hieroglyphic Mtns. Shapechanging. Hive of wizards.)

trim adjectives?

is being  
fashioned  
must make

In everyone's upbringing the momentum collects for whatever U-turn

we will end up making from our parents' course, whether as casually defiant

as keeping house the other way from how they always did or a soul-shaking

veer that lets them know we see life as a route opposite from theirs; any

bloodline is a carving river and parents <sup>are</sup> its nearest shores. My mother

herself <sup>put my</sup> ~~put my~~ deviation in motion, determined I was going to fly free of

the close coddling she'd had as an ill child. She turned me loose in a

perpetual spree outdoors. A child is an instinctive test-pilot of such

latitude, and at the Steward ranch I had learned to try out my mother's

lenience by plummeting in headlong run down the sharp slope of the ridge

next to the ranch house. How I ever found it out without cartwheeling

myself to medical disaster is a mystery, but the angle of that slope

was exactly what I could handle as a headlong three- and four-year-old.

The first time my visiting grandmother saw one of my performances, she

refused ever to watch again. Even my father, with his survivor's-eye

view from all the times life had banged him up, even he was given pause

by those downhill plunges of mine, hotspur tyke roaring drunk on momentum.

But my mother let me risk. Did she know? Could she have? The way I

✓

Montana mountain clan that we had been, we needed to grow different  
eyes for the desert. Out there amid the joshua-yucca-ocotillo-cholla-  
who knew what alla, the trio of us got up each morning with nothing  
recognizable around except one another and the weary Ford. Earth here  
seemed to hold only such denizens as lizards and, for all we knew,  
rattlesnakes as long as well ropes. After the royal Rockies, the mountains  
waving up from every horizon around Wickenburg looked ashen, dumpy.  
The highest lump anywhere around was, gruesomely, Vulture Peak. No pelt  
of sagebrush to soften this country for us, either; to the entire contrary,  
saguaro cactuses stubbled the hills, spiky mittens out as if testing their  
hone. The bare green blush of palo verde hardly inflected the gulches--  
arroyos--where the black-green of Montana's jackpines would have shadowed,  
and beneath every other bristling contortion of vegetation, prickly pears  
crouched like shin-hunting pygmies in ambush. Even the desert birdsounds  
had a jab to them, the ha ha of a Gambel's quail invisibly derisive in  
the bush, the yap of a Gila woodpecker scolding us from his cactus penthouse.

I loved every fang and dagger of it.

What was taking place in me was something like an inward tuning,

Beer imdls  
in bar  
now  
considered  
of

mind?

move?

the wind-struck music of the bone harp that Robinson Jeffers has said

we all ultimately are.

transition: a harder squint needed for my parents (~~at~~ to adapt to the  
desert)

--aestivation

News of the war was dished back and forth. Iwo Jima had at last been  
bought in blood,  
captured, 0000 casualties; Okinawa was being bombarded for the next island-  
hop. (The Ault was in on the bombarding, that very moment: quote Ault  
log).

There is much shaking of heads about German prisoners of war continuing

Understandably so;  
to slither away. (The average was three escapes every day.)

## Transition

--Allen telling of seeing major drink from the Hassayampa.

--You know, the saying is if you drink from " " you ~~will~~ never tell  
the truth again.

--(daydream by me?--How ~~xx~~ old are you?--127--

My parents, then, having seen Allen Prescott with his dignity down

Allen: soldier @ Hasagampa

cut: { Stewart ranch springs when it was wonderful to have the winter behind them. Now they ritually ask Allen to say hello to everybody for us, to write us how their trip home was.

My father hasn't yet had his prescribed walk--"This doctor of yours thinks shoe leather is a medicine," he informs Allen--so he decides to ride with Allen as far as the miner's cabin and hike back. "Ye want to keep me company, Ivan?" Naturally; ever since he came out of the hospital I have stayed as close next to him as a sidecar, because you never know.

At the miner's shanty there is ~~still~~ still enough daylight for Allen and the miner to stand around and diagnose gold out of various outcroppings, but Dad has other things on his mind. We make our goodbye and begin walking.

For the first time in my life, I can walk as fast as my plunge-ahead father, slowed as he is by the <sup>incision</sup> ~~incision~~ soreness in his side. We are not halfway home to the cabin before the wind comes up, strong as soon as it arrives. Around us the entire desert gallops in the wind, the tops of creosote bushes wobbling, the stiff palo verde and mesquite abruptly

own. Maybe my folks were amused by the notion of the pair of us being pups together--Pup carried that name from day one in our literal family-- and simply turn him down when somebody gave him to me. But chances are he was intentional, because a German shepherd dog was not my parents' usual kind of whim. No, chances are Pup was intentional on their part, playmate compensation to me after the doctor's verdict that I was the only child my parents dared have. For the first four years of our lives Pup and I were a duo unto ourselves at the Stewart place.

Cowdogs, sheepdogs, dogs that were just dogs and barely even that, the ranch boiled with dogs. But Pup's idea of good company was, inexplicably, me and the bum lambs that my mother fed with a nipples bottle. In photographs we look like the nursery in Lollytoodum Land, lamb and pup and toddler deliriously butting each other flat, turn by turn. Then as Pup grew he became a kind of furry gendarme assigned to me, and on a place with a creek and irrigation ditches, that was no bad idea.

Pup lasted until the summer before we came to Arizona, when we

My father, who had got himself into some memorable fixes in his horseback  
life in the Sixteen country, always nominated...

Something about the Sixteen country--the isolation, OO--seemed to invite  
mishap, and Allen Prescott

We pose for pictures under the arms-up saguaros.

Then they woke up one morning to the desert under snow.

Sure been having the weather last night and today, my mother jabbed  
down onto paper to Wally, Make you think you're in Montana. Make you  
think you're loon crazy to be in Arizona for coziness of climate, too.

Soon after the snow, Allen Prescott came visiting. His time with  
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was behind the camera, catching a bit of his own shadow on the side  
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fingertips. Like that bit of profile cast lastingly onto the cabin when  
he took our picture, Allen was the human extension of a story.

The light, the light. The democracy of the sun (on the desert; cactus shadows...

→ desert democracy of light...

she is in memory, a ranch duchess who did not quite know how to connect with children. Allen, on the other hand, I see as if he has been next door for forty-five years. Round in the shoulder and middle, squarish of jaw and nose, he resembled a droll upright turtle. Where my father went at ranch tasks in a flurry, Allen entertained himself with them; he thought up a name for every cow he had and spent the time to teach each one to come running when summoned. Yet Allen too would have faded off into high-toned vagueness but for the carrying power of a story. Even without our crisscross in my mother's pages, Allen Prescott etched himself into me forever, the way a person-become-story will.

*# approx date was?*  
 This ~~had been~~ <sup>was</sup> at the Stewart ranch, the suppertime when Allen

came trudging to our door, shaken and disheveled--this normally the most heveled of men.

"What're ye doing afoot, Allen?" my father ~~had~~ asked before anything ~~else, for~~ <sup>this neighbor of ours</sup> Allen habitually pattered across his Battle Creek ranch in an old behemoth of a Hudson Terraplane that he had cut the back out of, hybridizing it into a kind of deluxe runabout and carryall. He and his Terra-jitney were never seen separately, until then.

p. 42A follows →

Allen always took God's own time to tell a story, and this one dated back to noon when he'd thrown aboard fenceposts and reels of barbwire and other fence fixings and headed out to do some mending on the fenceline between his place and the Stewart ranch. As he and the Terraplane motored crosscountry along a sagebrush flat near Battle Creek, though, a small swale turned out to be deeper than it seemed. With a jolt, the rear bumper of the car hung up on the low shale bank.



water like a gargantuan salmon determined to spawn.

The Terraplane was planing across the terra, you just bet it was. Allen panted frantically after the runaway. A reel of barbwire bucked out, bowling wickedly at his shins. Fenceposts clacketed against each other in the bed of the bounding vehicle like a dice factory in an earthquake. A five-pound nailbox tipped over, the Terraplane now laying a silver trail of staples.

At last, at a little coulee angling in from the left, Allen thought he saw his chance. Down the slope he thundered, desperately using his momentum to reach the coulee bottom before the car. Puffing, he set himself to pounce for the car door. But on its own trajectory down, the Terraplane jounced in a badger hole and veered straight at him. Frantically he scrambled up the other slope of the dip with the car chasing him. When he at last managed to dive out of the way, the car plowed on past, over the horizon.

Say for my father and mother that they managed not to laugh outright during Allen's recounting. "What have you got then," asked my father, all innocent seriousness except his eyes, "a car in the creek?"

Allen got out and considered. It was some miles back to his own ranch to fetch a tractor to pull the car free, and almost as far to hike to the Stewart place for help from my father. And the rear wheels were only barely off the ground, the slope of the cutbank awaiting right there below them; it appeared to Allen the Terraplane could walk itself down off the cutbank if he could give enough of a crowbar pry on the back bumper to get it started. Accordingly he put the car in gear, the rear wheels revolving slowly in air. Too slowly to furnish the wanted traction, it looked to him like, so he pulled the throttle out some, left the driver's side door open so he could jump in when the Terraplane liberated itself, and went behind to lend encouragement with his crowbar.

Allen's mighty pry broke the Terraplane loose but also flung him to his knees. By the time he could clamber back onto his feet the car was trundling away at a surprising pace.

Of course the Terraplane immediately sideswiped a large sagebrush and slammed its door closed. Of course, too, Battle Creek awaited ahead across the rapidly foreshortening flat, the car homing in on the waiting

No, said Allen in weary fashion. Before it could reach the water it had hung up on another cutbank.

How my parents felt about their ritzy cow-naming neighbors before this, I have a pretty good guess. But after seeing him with his dignity down they were permanently fond of Allen Prescott. Later, there in Wickenburg it must have been a sharp loss of companionship when the Prescotts went back north to Montana to begin spring on their Battle Creek ranch. But they left us with all they could. It was the Prescotts who gave us the desert.

# —————

The cabin in the cactus-patch foothills belonged to some Wickenburg acquaintance of theirs who was willing to let us cubbyhole ourselves out there while Dad recuperated. Not hot and cold water and so on, but more the ranch style--2 rooms, but we are just going to use one, my mother described to Wally the bargain castle in the sand. The nice part is it costs no rent.

*tie upon*  
Farewell to Phoenix, auf wiedersehen to Alzona Park and specters of escaped Germans. Out there where we <sup>at first</sup> didn't know Joshua from yucca from cholla from ocotillo, the trio of us got up each morning with nothing

It was the time at the Stewart ranch when Allen came trudging to our door, shaken and disheveled--this normally

the most heveled of men. "What 're ye doing afoot, Allen?" my father had asked before anything else, for Allen habitually pattered across the Battle Creek country in an old behemoth of a Hudson Terraplane that he had cut the back out of, hybridizing it into a kind of deluxe runabout and carryall. Allen and his Terra-jitney were never seen separately, until then. Allen always took God's own time to tell a story, and this one began back at noon when

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"What have ye got then," my father had asked, trying not to add to Allen's indignity by laughing outright, "a car in the creek?"

No, said Allen in weary fashion. Before it could get there it had hung up on another cutbank.

My parents were permanently fond of Allen Prescott after that, and that later day on the desert it must have hit them hard when, after supper, Allen at last angled around to what he had come to say. Which was goodbye.

As soon as Winnie's cold cleared up they were starting back north to Montana, to begin spring on their ranch at Battle Creek.

Neither my mother or father say anything for a moment. Other springs,

Stewart ranch springs when it was wonderful to have the winter behind them. Now they ritually ask Allen to say hello to everybody for us, to write us how their trip home was.

My father hasn't yet had his prescribed walk--"This doctor of yours thinks shoe leather is a medicine," he informs Allen--so he decides to ride with Allen as far as the miner's cabin and hike back. "Ye want to keep me company, Ivan?" Naturally; ever since he came out of the hospital I have stayed as close next to him as a sidecar, because you never know.

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playmate compensation to me after the doctor's verdict that I was the only child my parents dared have. For the first four years of our lives Pup and I were a duo unto ourselves at the Stewart place.

Cowdogs, sheepdogs, dogs that were just dogs and barely even that, the ranch boiled with dogs. But Pup's idea of good company was, inexplicably, me and the bum lambs that my mother fed with a nipples bottle. In photographs we look like the nursery in Lollytoodum Land, lamb and pup and toddler deliriously butting each other flat, turn by turn. Then as Pup grew he became a kind of furry gendarme assigned to me, and on a place with a creek and irrigation ditches, that was no bad idea.

Pup lasted until the summer before we came to Arizona, when we were living in White Sulphur Springs while my father ran a haying crew.

White Sulphur Springs had a dog poisoner, some strychninic fiend, and after Pup died in crawling agony before our eyes, I was never the same about dogs again. Now I edged up and put in a minority share of petting, but this desert mutt was no Pup. My mother, though, all but pedigreed him on the spot.

"There you go, yes," as she scratched his mangy ears, "you just want to be petted and petted, don't you," proceeding to do so.

"Berneta," my father took his stand. "Ye're not having that dog with us. We don't need a dog in Arizona."

"I know," said my mother as if she didn't know any such thing. "But it's cold out there on that old desert tonight, isn't it, Mooch? Here, up on the chair, up, Mooch." Professional tramp that he was, the mutt obligingly scrabbled onto the seat of a straightback chair and sat with his head turned toward my mother, who immediately paid off in cookies.

"He gets put back out in the morning," my father ~~stated.~~ <sup>asserted.</sup> "For good."

pretty sure  
certain

My father had been eyeing the dog as if suspecting its next trick would be to pick our pockets, but now he cocked his head toward the kitchen wall. "Listen a bit."

Grutch.

The three of us ~~listened~~ and the dog listened, the very knots in the wall seemed to listen.

Grutch grutch.

The sound would stop, then furtively grutch again. A scraping on the desert gravel, whatever it was. Working at--getting under the cabin?

By now my father absolutely knew what--who--this invasion was. And as quick as he knew, my mother knew. Prisoners of war; those German submariners who'd tunneled out of the Papago Park camp through caliche that the U.S. Army figured was encasing them like vault steel. The SOBs were regular Teutonic badgers.

My father rose out of his chair into whispered action. "Berneta, other room get in the ~~bedroom~~ with Ivan and that--" The dog was already gone, scooted under the bed.

"No," she whispered back with utter firmness. "I'm coming with."

The time in the Battle Creek country when my father tangled with a bear that had been marauding nightly into the sheep, he looked up after having jammed the rifle in the bear's ribs for the desperate fatal shot and found my mother standing on the cutbank above, holding a lantern, watching the whole show. Now again, for better or worse, she was adding her ninety-five pounds against the submariners of the desert.

"Ivan then, go in the other room," my father directed.

"But I want to fight the Ger--"

"I-tell-ye, get-in-that-other-room!"

I compromised as far as the doorway to the other room. My father was grimly scanning the cabin walls, trying to conjure a gunrack and .30-06 rifle out of bare board. GRUTCH, the in-tunneling all but ground up through the floor.

My father grabbed the only weapon at hand, which was the broom, and eased to the door, my mother closer behind him than his shadow.

In the lantern light the <sup>love</sup>attacker blinked, as startled to see my father and mother as they were ~~in~~ by its incursion. Then the wandering cow gave a chew, put its head back down into the garbage box where my mother had dumped the potato peelings, and...

more  
lower a  
chew

Abruptly the miner declared he had to get back to his claim, as if he had to <sup>gather</sup> ~~collect~~ the nuggets it had laid that afternoon. Dad said he'd go with him a little way down the road for the walking the doctor wanted him to do every day, and I tagged along as if fastened to Dad's shirt tail. When the two men and I had trudged over the first little rise beyond the cabin, out of nowhere the miner broke in on himself and asked what brought us to Arizona.

Automatic from answering this all the times he had since last Thanksgiving, Dad began: "My wife's health--"

"Figured so. Could hear it in her." The miner knocked on his own chest. "Got a chuteful of rocks, don't she, there in her lungs. She's young to have it like that."

My father looked as though he had been hit from a blind side. To him, my mother's breathing was not nearly the alarming wheezes of her Montana seizures, or for that matter of our first harrowing night in Arizona, four months ago. There in the auto court at Williams, high on the Coconino Plateau, she had put in a terrible night of gasping spasms. My father would swear on a stack of Bibles that she had improved

By now  
Dad  
cd  
own  
mo in  
his sleep

at once

Soon after I was big enough to walk, I possessed a dog of my own.  
Perhaps he was <sup>intentional</sup> deliberate, playmate compensation for [the doctor's verdict  
that I was going to be sisterless and brotherless... Or maybe he <sup>simply</sup> just  
happened, whim...

*more  
or  
change*

just dogs, the ranch boild with dogs.  
Cowdogs, sheepdogs, dogs that were ~~the canine equivalent~~  
and barely even that.  
But Pup existed as a kind of furry envelope <sup>gendarme</sup> around me, and on a place with  
a creek and irrigation ditches, that was not a bad idea.

My father got along fine with dogs in their place, which was anywhere  
but in the house. Or as he put it, not-in-the-damn-house-Berneta.

In the photographs we look like the nursery on the ark, lamb and pup  
and toddler happily butting each other flat, turn by turn.

Prospector doesn't look at my mother.

probably don't use

found it  
@  
cabin

The puzzle had to be packed up when we left Phoenix and again when we left the Wickenburg boarding house, and despite my mother's efforts to lay the completed portions carefully in the box, each time some crumbles away. One more move of this erosive sort and we are going to have more pieces to fit together than we started with on Christmas. My father decides we are through losing ground to a damned puzzle, we will finish the thing or know-the-reason-why. it or he-will-know-the-reason-why.

Some part of everyone's upbringing is at least one U-turn from how

their parents were brought up. My mother's reversal-of-behavior, from

the coddled concern she'd had from her mother, was to turn me loose,

*in a perpetual space*

insofar as she could get me loose. A child is an instinctive test-pilot

*such parental ~~cautions~~ <sup>cautions</sup> ~~cautions~~ <sup>cautions</sup>, learned to try out*

of these things, and at the Stewart ranch I had ~~tried~~ <sup>tried</sup> my mother's durability

*treacherously* ~~habitually~~ <sup>habitually</sup>, roaring drunk on momentum,

by running headlong down the steep ridge next to the ~~the~~ ranchhouse.

Here in Arizona, she set me free into the cactus jungle.

*apprising  
on, directly  
- gravity -  
acceleration*

*(Phoenix  
cd - i get  
me,*

*his  
CANNONBALL'S-eye view ~~of me~~ <sup>from having</sup>  
by eye*

Even my father, who had been ~~banged~~ <sup>banged</sup> up most of the ways there were,

was given pause by <sup>those upstartings of mine, on hill</sup> ~~my~~ <sup>with plunges</sup> hill-plunging performances. But my mother let

me risk.

*even he*

*hellion downhill plunges of mine*

*Did she know? cd she have?*

*way I wd grow up (us) contained b that*

*moment.*

*free/all*

*plummet*

*momentum*

*after, w*

The only thing about Montana he wants information on is Butte, and when it's plain that we know next to nothing about that copperopolis, he stories on.