

10-6-75

Dear Mrs. Voorthuyzen:

Angus Crites II took the liberty of forwarding to me a copy of your letter to Bert of June, 1975. He did this because Bert was a very dear friend of mine and, indeed, I am presently doing research for a book that I plan to write about him. In fact, I have tape recorded interviews with many of Bert's friends over the past year and have a couple of tape recordings of him, one done only a week before his death. I promised him before he died that I would write this book and it is a promise I must keep because he was a very special person to me, a unique and marvelous human being.

One of the gaps in my knowledge of Bert was regarding his family. He did tell me once that he was "the black sheep of the family," but little else. Any information that you could give me about your relationship to Bert, about his early years, his childhood, his family, what he was like at that time of his life, would be most gratefully received. Your letter implies that perhaps you visited him at sometime in Oceano. Could you tell me about that visit and when it occurred?

Bert drew people to him like a magnet draws steel filings. Many people of all ages and from all walks of life trekked through the dunes to see him and share his wisdom. Perhaps in this complex age in which we live it was his simplicity that drew them. Certainly he had keen intelligence, a ready wit and insight into why society is the way it is. Few that I have interviewed can pinpoint why he was important to them, but only that they did as they value few other people in their lives. I am enclosing a list of questions that I have sent to many people I have written to about Bert. If you can and are willing to supply the answers to any of the questions I have posed I am sure that my portrayal of him will be more multi-dimensional, more true. And for that I would be ever so grateful. Less than the truth would be totally unacceptable to Bert. If in return, I can answer any questions you may have about him, I would be more than willing to do.

In case you have ever seen it, the book I project about Bert is along the lines of the format of the Sierra Club book, ON THE LOOSE, a book of photographs and vignettes of his life, his philosophy, his marvelous sense of humor, and his astute intelligence, along with his enviable simplicity in a very complex world. I envision it as a positive book, one that will make one feel richer for having glimpsed this fine human being when one closes the book. I hope for it to be a tribute to Bert, but true to his reality. I want it to portray his humor as well as his pathos, his simplicity as well as his complexity, his humility as well as his arrogance. If you could supply photographs from his early years I would be glad to reimburse you for their reproduction. In case you are interested, I own an artist's reproduction of a sketch of the shack in which he lived for the last 34 years of his life. I eagerly anticipate a reply to this letter. Thank you for cooperating.

Most Sincerely,