

One of the things that bothers me so much about hindsight, is over and over he told me about the history of the people that lived out there and I forgot the names. At one time he wanted me to take the papers of a man -- sort of weirdo -- who wrote lots and lots of strange things. I have some of those papers around here somewhere that that man wrote. It was very funny. One time I took a young man out to see Bert -- that cat, Jimmy, is the one that started the whole process -- (How long have you been here Harriet?) George died in July 1966 and I moved up in Sept of 1967. We had gotten this house in 1965. We spent that summer up here and several other vacation weekends. (When did you meet Bert?) Jimmy came up missing in the summer of 1968 for several days. I'd go out and call and call and no Jimmy. Someone told me the hermit liked cats -- I think it was Pam -- did Bert ever talk to you about Pam and Wally? They're the couple that had the home out here facing the creek that sold it and went to Mexico. The ones that had all the dogs and Pam was probably about Bert's closest friend at that time. She was always looking out for him. I can't remember her last name.

The Goulds and Guitons would know. Pam said he had cats, I believe. This one day I went over there and tried to figure out exactly where he lived because I had seen the shack one time ~~and~~ when my husband and a friend from Los Angeles and I were walking on top of the sand dunes. We could see his wash flying out in the breeze. To find it down from that valley would have been another thing! Pam had a sweater for me to take out and she and Harold tried to tell me how to get there so I went trekking out this day ~~and~~ in the summer of '68 and I came upon this big thicket and I called and called and called. You see, I had never met him now. Yelling and screaming at the top of my lungs, Bert, Bert, Bert. And no answer. It was around noontime and I could hear dishes rattling. But I never could find the entrance and I never knew how to get in there. So I came back. The cat returned finally, after four days. I had been working for the county schools and my job terminated in July of '69. In Sept I decided to go to Salt Lake to visit my folks. Pam had told him I was anxious to meet him. So when I came back he had been here and he had met ~~George's Mother~~ *her mother?* (who was visiting) and he said

he would do this chart or something for me, so I went out to the mailbox. He had left this thing in the mailbox and it was all confusing. It was just numbers and symbols and all of this that didn't make any sense. He finally came then and he came to the door and he introduced himself and he said, "Did you get that?" and I said, "Yes, but I don't make any heads or tails out of it at all." He said, "Well, you must be some dumb, crazy woman," or some such thing. I was highly insulted at this point. But I invited him in and he came in. I showed him this thing he'd left in my mailbox. I can't even remember to tell you what it was, but when he saw it he realized I couldn't make sense of it. But he knew then and he said, "Oh, well, I can SEE why you couldn't figure it out." That would've been in the latter part of September. That was the beginning of our friendship.

(Was he in pretty good health?) Oh, he was in excellent health. Robust and all. Well, then, I used to go out frequently because I wasn't working and didn't get hired by Probation until March of 1970. So during those months I would make frequent trips out. And we chatted and he'd tell

off-color stories. This was always amusing to me. Then he'd

tell me -- he'd sometimes use some rather colorful language

and then he'd say, "Oh, I shouldn't say that. I shouldn't

say that. I'm a holy man." I'll never forget this. Everytime

I left he would stand out there and fold his hands in prayer

position and bow his head and say, "May the good Lord bless

you always," whenever I left. (He did this tongue-in-cheek,

right?) No. No. He was serious. See, Bert always told me

he was a follower of Buddha. I really believe he was sincere

about that. He didn't like organized religion. Well, he

didn't like any part of organized religion. However, I feel

Bert was very definitely a Christian and we oftentimes talked

about Christianity in its pure sense. And I didn't find he

disagreed with that at all. (He often did this was us, too,

but always tongue-in-cheek. Before his death, I was convinced

that some sort of spiritual quest was the major focus of his

life, but what ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ influenced him to choose the method

he did, or what the method was, I was unsure.) Well, of course

he came to the area because he was interested in religion and

he had heard about the colony here. Now he had no use for

(... of the president?)

who was head of the colony here. . . Chester Arthur III.

Oh yes, he founded this colony here. In fact he had a house out here. His father was Chester Arthur, Jr., his grandfather, Chester Arthur, President of the U.S. Did you ever see those

maps of Moy Mell? (Yes. I have one.) Anyway, he had no

use for Chester Arthur. He told me several things that had

happened. And that he was a demagogue. And he ruled with

an iron hand out there. He caused quite a bit of problems,

Bert felt. Chester Arthur, of course, died about two years

ago. (I know most of those people are gone now.) Yes.

Well, Harold took him to visit one that lived in Cayucos.

He could tell you about that. (Bert gave me a picture of

that fellow.) Bert thought Chester Arthur was ~~aphony~~ as far

as astrology was concerned. He was no real astrologer although

Chester Arthur was interested in astrology. In fact there

was a LIFE magazine some years back that had a picture of

Chester Arthur -- he lived in San Francisco -- and he was

ranked as one of the top astrologers in the country. But

Bert didn't like him. And then I'm sure you've seen some of

those pictures where that one swami had been out there and

pictures of them all together? (Yes. He showed me.) (How do you think he happened to come to this particular area, then? Was it because of the colony?) Yes. He was bumming around the country in the Sacramento area -- this is the part I wish I had written down -- he told me about his trip when he first came to this country from the Netherlands and he worked for Western Electric in Chicago. (Did you have the impression that Bert was a man without any means?) No. I did not. No. I know better. He was too interested in the stock market. I always felt that he had stocks because he was very interested. He always wanted ~~to~~ me to give him the quarterly reports and things I had from Xerox Control stock data sheets I got from stock of mine. We talked about the stock market and I also found out that he was going over to someone in Oceano that worked for Phelan and Taylor and they always saved him a Wall Street Journal. He was very interested in this. I assumed that back in the times when he worked for Western Electric they may have had some kind of stock profit sharing thing. I sort of assumed this. I never questioned Bert about it. I never ~~asked~~ asked him a thing ever, but this was

Because he knew too much about it. (I never would have dreamed. d We never discussed things like that.) (I DID try to get him to apply for Medical to get his teeth fixed and he got very indignant with me and said,d "You think I don't have anything, don't you? I told him I thought he had what was important, but I did believe he needed medical help. He wouldn't hear of it.) Bonnie Grimont is the one that took him to the dentist. (He mentioned her. But he wouldn't go through with the necessary treatment.) No. He wouldn't. I begged him, too. When he pulled those three teeth with the pliers I just couldn't believe it, It was unreal. As a matter of fact, THAT'S What caused the blood clot behind his eye. I'm convinced of that. They did get him to the eye doctor. Because I did take the bill in and pay it for him one rainy day. He did have Medicare. (Did he ever tell you anything about his childhood?) Oh, yes. Lots. He talked at length about his father. He was very -- his parents were VERY hard on him -- and they were extremely religious people. It was Dutch Reformed, I think. Something like that. Anyway, this I think it was, that soured him on

religion. (I know he wanted nothing to do with them. He always said he was the black sheep of the family and things like that.) Yeah. They treated him, I guess, quite badly and they didn't want him to come to this country and he never got to go very far through school because he had to work and he worked HARD. I think in street sweeping. So he was able to save enough money and then borrow some money and I can't remember what conflict arose between him and his parents when he first came to this country, but I know they didn't want him to come. I think he was finally able to borrow some money through another relative. And he made one trip back. (I know. The stowaway episode?) He stowed away on that ship (laughter) and made the trip for 14¢. Right. I think when he first came to this country he worked on a dairy ranch in Southern California. He mentioned Dairy Valley. Around Chino area. That's where he first worked. Then I guess after he made his first trip back was when, coming back, he stayed in Chicago then. To work. (What kind of work was he doing for Western Electric?) I don't know. I would assume Bert had some kind of nervous breakdown.

Because he couldn't stand noise and things like that.

Anyway, he started bumming his way around the country, made his way to Sacramento and stayed there for sometime. And I think it was from there he ran into people who knew about the colony. Then he found his way here to Pismo. He had been in touch with a brother. There was a brother in Canada.

I think he's the last one he had contact with and he's the one Angus was trying to reach. He had at least two sisters and two brothers, I believe. I don't think he ever married.

He was quite interested in a gal that lived in Canada.

She came here and visited him. He was periodically telling me about his Queen of Hearts, his Queen of Hearts. His Queen of Hearts would sometimes change. No. I know he never married. I think this one woman came to see him when there were still some other people around out here. Most of his contacts came to him originally because of their common interest in astrology. He kept in correspondence with her over the years.

The characters in THE FACE OF THE CLAM were drawn from the characters actually in the dunes. The one that thought

thought he was Abraham Lincoln was the one that wrote the strange things that I have copies of.

It was so funny. I took this one boy out one day to meet Bert. He was the brother of a sister I had on my case-load. We had more fun. We would read that aloud and we would laugh. . .one part, he envisioned himself in outer space and he was attacked by turkeys. Oh, Jane, it's funny. It's just wild and he told me at the time all those things were stored in that old shack (storage shed). He told me years and years ago that anything I wanted I should get out of there. I just never did. He told me about the one with the Irish name, Pat O'Hara, that hung himself. And the other one that had a shack way, waykdown near Oso Flaco Lake, he died and he laid in that shack for a long time. Some boys found him. They were the last two.

You know, Bert kept a very, very careful diary of these things. He'd always write down on a calendar when we were there and who came and so on, so I'm sure that in his notes that would all be there.

Bert was always a very, very delightful host anytime I took anyone out there to meet him. I sort of hesitated at first to do so. He claimed he wanted to be alone, but he was always delighted when you brought anyone out there. (Did he talk to you about being lonely?) Not really. Indirectly he did, because he kept wanting me to come out, come out, come out. As I explained to him, it was very difficult for me to get out as much as I would have liked to have gone. The last two or three years because of my work. It was so emotionally demanding and draining and he seemed to understand it.

I don't know. I hope so. I'm glad he stopped blaming me for all his trouble with his back and his leg, because he fell in the creek this one night. It wasn't funny, yet to hear him tell it, it was a riot. He had come over here and while he always claimed he never wanted anything to drink, I had given him some wine and he drank it, and he fell in the creek and his hat floated out to sea and he got all wet and it was really bad and he was so mad he was so mad at me for a long time. He told me when I saw him at the hospital, he said, "I can't blame you, Harriet, anymore

for the problem." I said, "Well, I'm glad that you don't
blame me anymore." (I've always been impressed with Bert's
incisive intellect. He was a very perceptive man.) Oh, yes.
(I never had a doubt in my mind of his clear thinking or that
he was a very balanced person, but I was talking to someone
at work whose husband was raised in Oceano. She said it was
her husband's understanding that Bert was very unstable and
they were even afraid to hike in that area . I said, we
can't be talking about the same man, but she said, yes, it
was the hermit.) There was a man that stayed out there
with him for sometime, and Harold could tell you who that
was. I had heard about this terrible fight that they got
into. about a haircut and clipping his ear or something.
(And Bert chased him through the dunes?) Yes. They did have
quite a set-to on that. Maybe it was that . . . (How long
ago was that?) It had to be not too long before I met him;
maybe a year or so. Harold could tell you, maybe '67 or '68,
or so. (That's exactly the episode she told me about.)
He had a fight with someone else and I was trying to think
who that was now. Somebody over in Oceano. I don't recall
the reasons. I'll tell you someone who may have spread some

bad words about him, because he despised him with a purple passion. In fact, he said he was really responsible for his losing this one job he had out there. He was the watchman for this water thing, irrigation (?). It was this doctor in Oceano. He sure didn't like him (Gerber?) He's still around. He said a lot of people respected him, but Bert had no use for him. There was this other man that knew him, some people came and they told some things about Bert that weren't true and I think he also had a kind of fight with this man, because this man went back to the doctor. Harold would know. He blamed him. He never missed a chance to throw darts at him whenever he could. During the past few years when he came here and I went out we were talking mostly about astrology and current events (those other things were years ago). He was very politically astute. Very. We talked mainly about that. Everytime I'd go out, he'd tell me what my aspects were. Oh, he made me the nicest chart. In fact, I was sorry I didn't take it back out to him and have him redo it. You know, he always made these charts on the dried milk boxes. (I know.)

It was a wheel and you could turn it and it had a little wooden indicator. I have it somewhere. It would really be great if I knew anything about it. You could just turn that wheel and figure out anything. . . Really marvelous.

Anyway, he did mine for me and he'd always pull out those charts and anyone I took out there -- almost anyone -- he'd do their chart. So he would always tell me what my aspects were and what the future might hold and then with a twinkle in his eye he would say, "You really don't believe that, do you?" "No, I really don't." "Oh, I wish I could get you

interested in astrology. You're too lazy. You're too lazy."

(What do you think his basic philosophy of life was?)

Much more sober tone:

UUUuuuummmm. That's a very good question./ "I would say that

he was very basically, very deeply religious. I think he

primarily wanted to live as he lived and get closer and

closer to his creator, because he always used to tell me

"The man upstairs is talking to me, the man upstairs is. . ."

-- he kept telling me, Jane, for ~~XXXX~~ maybe the last two

years that it wouldn't be long before he'd be going upstairs

and I think that really he just wanted to live and let live

and commune with his creator and live the simple life.

(Here I recounted Bert's encounter with the doctor and his final comment that he had no need to make things right with his master, because he had spent his whole life doing this.)

That's what I mean. I'm glad to know that because it just confirms my belief in his philosophy. (Recounting about the will. What could have been his purpose in living this life, but at the same time building up some kind of estate?)

Well, I think, Jane, that you will find that basically he wanted to live there because ~~he wanted to live away from~~ civilization. The last time I was out there he became very, very adamant when I said, "Bert, now you have to. . .you really should consider. . ." He said, "Now I know what you're going to say. Don't say it, Harriet. Don't say it."

"I won't go into any rest home." I said, "Well, all right.

That's up to you, but I think you should consider leaving here and getting yourself a little place in town. Something.

And somebody that can look after you." And so he sort of calmed down then, but he said, no, he did not want to.

He loved it out there and that was his life. He didn't CARE

about the possessions. I don't know WHY he amassed anything.

Of course I don't really know, because I don't know anything about the will. But, I'm not surprised. I'm SURE there are stocks involved in it. One of the things that's interesting when he was in the hospital, when I took sick -- I had gone over there to see him everyday. In fact, when I got over there, I had to go down to south county for something, I stopped over at the hospital and he hadn't been eating.

He was just about ready to start lunch and he was moaning and groaning and he didn't want to eat. So I fed him his whole lunch. He even said something to the nurse, you know, "See, I got fed my lunch." So I had taken Tina Nelson out.

I want to show you some pictures I have of Tina and Bert and me if I can find them in that pile of junk over there.

Anyway, Tina was seeing him frequently. When. See, I got very, very sick on August 16th and I was in bed from then until the time my friends took me over there. And Tina was going and she told Bert, "Harriet's awfully sick and she just can't come." And I can't remember whether it was Sunday or Monday, maybe Tuesday, but he made the statement to her,

"Harriet's going into the hospital." It has to have been Monday, because I hadn't even seen the doctor at that point. Mother went over to see him and that time, she said he was more worried about me than he was himself. (He was. He was very, very concerned about you.) So I don't know, you know. It was interesting that he would make that statement. (He must have had ESP.) Oh, definitely. No question about it. One of the funniest things I ever remember. Oh, it was great. Tina had met him. Then we decided that we were going to go out and we were going to cook a dinner and he got her interested in astrology to the point that she bought an \$8 ephemeris and they were working away on it, so we got a pot roast and we took ALL the trimmings of the dinner out there; we even took wine. Well, I was cooking the pot roast on the stove and I had really never cooked the pot roast before, but I must say, it was the BEST pot roast I've ever cooked. They were working away on the astrology and I was having to fire up the stove and keep everything from burning and cooking. We went outside then and had our dinner there on that table. We just had a marvelous time. When was

that? She left in March, 1972. (Showing pictures) Here's Tina and Bert. I had the film in the camera so long they didn't turn out well. You can see how hefty he was. Just

like Bert. It was shortly after that fall in the creek that

he began to lose weight. That's why he blamed me. (From

what the doctor said, the cancer had already been at work

for a long time.) THIS one he took of us. (Giggling)

You know, it's interesting, Jane. I'd just as soon you

turned the tape recorder off here for a second. . .

(Tape back on:) Oftentimes, the four letter words he would

use in these off-colored stories, and yet he was very prude-y.

(I noticed that too. I wondered if it wasn't his means of

sort of asserting his religious independence. His way of

thumbing his nose at the prescribed, dogmatic facets of

religion.) Right. Right. (Was he temperamental, in your

experience?) Yes. Quite. He could flare up, but his nasty

cracks were more in jest than they were serious. (This is

how I always read him.) (When I took my sister out there,

she was taking literally everything he said, and of course I

knew where he was coming from and I didn't.) (I didn't HEAR

him like she heard him and I could see the astonishment on her face.)

One thing that amazed me, never ceased to amaze me, that man had very little formal education, yet he had one of the most marvelous commands of the English language for a foreigner that I've ever known. I've often wondered WHERE he got his education. It must have been through reading. I'm sure that must have been it, because it was quite astounding.

(~~XXX~~ My husband, with his theological background, was steeped

in the philosophers and theologians, and Bert was RIGHT THERE.)

Oh, yes. Oh, yes. (He could bring up people Gene didn't know.)

Niche, he was very familiar with. And, in fact, he would quote to me from Niche quite frequently. (He couldn't seem to

get it through his head that I wasn't really interested in

hearing from him second hand tales of the dunites, but that

I wanted to know where he was at. But why would you be

interested in me, he would ask. Because you're a very

interesting person, to have chosen the way of life you

have. . .) (When he really realized it was too late, he

was really sorry. . .and I promised him that I WOULD do it.)

I think the format you project would be very good, it would

be an excellent tribute and it WOULD capture the man.

I just wish that we had more background. Some of his own observations of the dunites would have been interesting.

Now I wish I could remember some of these things. Now he had quite a run in with, I think, Pat O'Hara. He didn't like him, and I don, again, recall why. (He did feel that a lot of those people were phonies.) OH YES. And the one that married the wealthy woman. Oh, he really didn't like him.

He was supposed to be the master, and oh, after that, Bert said he forgot all his high yoga ideals. (Discussed picture

of Bert meditating) Did you see the one with the crystal ball he was looking in? (Yes.) Here's one thing I thought

interesting. It was Christmas, 1969, this friend of his came over from Bakersfield and he had a little trailer and

it was over in the county park. He had this little tiny

chihuahua and the poor little thing was half dead. She

had halitosis so bad she sat on my lap and I thought I was going to die. I drove Bert over to the trailer to visit

him and we came back. He was here through the Christmas

and New Year's. So it was New Year's Day, he and Bert came

to the door and they brought me two bottles of wine. I

don't know whether Bert bought one, or what, but

Was this man's name Charlie? I just don't remember. I may have it written on the back of the picture. Anyway, I took pictures of them that day. And I remember them standing out there and it was a beautiful, sunny New Year's morning. And bowing and bowing and saying, Happy New Year, Happy New Decade. And I brought them in the house and I fixed coffee and cake or something like that. This friend passed away about two years or so ago. He was not a dunite. I don't know where he met him. I think probably just when he came to the area to visit they got acquainted. But I know he liked him very well. I don't believe Bert ever went over to visit him, although he might have. One person I think you ought to get acquainted with and talk to is Eileen Ekstrom. Bert and Eileen became very friendly. She lives in that first triplex on this side of Utah. The downstairs apartment. She and Bert had a falling out. Bert got very upset with Eileen because she was extremely opinionated. (But Bert wasn't, was he? laughing) No. No way. That was the reason
It was funny.
that they clashed./ But he used to go over and visit with her several times a week -- oh, this was about two years

ago. He would watch television at her house. And she'd have him for dinner. She's a spinster and they enjoyed each other's company there for awhile, I'm sure. Then, oh my. -- very little -- but He was still going over to Criteses/ And she'd see him, but he'd just wave and march on because something had happened. They were both very, very strong in their opinions. I think Eileen would talk to you about it. You might see another side of Bert. (During the years you knew Bert, was he reading very much?) Oh, yes. Up until he had the trouble with his eye. Oh, yes. Certainly he was reading the papers and periodicals. I think he probably got books quite often from the library. (Until he was ill, did he go into town very often?) Oh, yes. In fact, he would go over to; Montgomery's Market all the time. He used to come over here to visit me after he had been to the market. He'd have his back pack with his groceries and he'd frequently go over, I think, to the produce shed over there and get vegetables. (Often, I've wondered if he fished. . .) I don't think so. No. I certainly never heard him mention that he did. And I don't think he ever dug clams. (He told me several times about a lady in Helvonen that had taken him to her church over there.)

Oh, yes. The Temple of the People. (And there was another lady that used to bring him vitamin pills.) Oh, yes. There was this couple, this lady, my mother met them, too, not through Bert, Bert knew them, and then my mother met them somehow. Her husband passed away sometime ago and then she was getting herself interested in some old man, and Bert was very much opposed to that, and we'd talk about it. I can't remember her name now. (She went off and married him and moved to Arizona?) Oh, no. Now that's a different one. That's the woman from Shell Beach. He told her, too, he thought it was very ill-advised, what she was doing. No. This other lady -- my mother would know their names. Anyway, when her husband passed away, I don't know how she met this man -- he came out from the east somewhere -- Bert was quite opposed to that and warned her, too, and I don't know whether she finally married him or not. I don't think so. I think she decided not to and I think that pleased Bert quite a bit. He felt she was taking on something she could be very sorry about. But the woman that CAME to visit him and was going to come again, did he ever tell you about

← the one that was his real Queen of Hearts?

She was a buyer for Thrifty's? Oh, well, he was so enamoured.

This was his real Queen of Hearts. I think she was a divorcee or a widow, I don't remember which. He was just sure. . .

He would ask me what I thought about his getting married and I said, "I think you're being unrealistic about this.

THAT woman from the way you describe her and everything isn't going to come out there and live in the dunes." Then he told

me later that he realized she wasn't his Queen of Hearts.

Wouldn't work. But, I think at one point he was very serious about the woman in Canada. She did come and stay with him

out there. And if I'm not badly mistaken, Jane, I think it

was she who very possibly had met his brother. In fact, I'm

not so sure but what it was his brother had told her about

Bert. (Harriet asked to see copy of will.) Bonnie called

him from Los Angeles. She had heard he was in the hospital

and she said she said was coming up and he said, "Don't

come, Bonnie. I will not be here." Well, she came and

she got in, I guess, late that afternoon. And he was gone.

(As weak as he was he would hold my hand so tightly. He

just didn't want me to go.) The last day I saw him in

the hospital -- well, it was Thursday -- I just went in and he was asleep and he sort of woke up and saw him and he

and held my hand/he said, "Harriet, I can't talk. I just can't talk. You understand." And I said, "Of course, I do."

He said, "Please come some other time." That was the last

I saw him. (I told Harriet about my promise to get Bert

the book ^{by} ~~about~~ Chairman Mao. He said, "I won't be able

to read it. I won't be able to see the fine print," so I

had promised him I would read to him from it. Despite his

agony that last night, he insisted that I read, more, I am

sure, that I could have kept the promise than from any

desire on his part to hear it.) (I took a nurse with me

into the dunes, then took her later to the hospital. He

said to her, "It's quicker if I don't eat, isn't it?" Except

for the time you fed him and for the juice Harold and I gave

him, he chose NOT to eat, in order to hasten his death.)

Oh, yes. He made a conscious decision. (He told me the

reason he didn't want to go to the doctor was that he knew

if he ever left his castle he wouldn't ever come back.)

Oh, yes. That's one thing I wanted to tell you. An interesting

thing happened and I must show it to you. I had an interesting experience the last time I went out. You know, I was trying to think when it was. I think it was approximately two weeks before he went into the hospital. Or a week. I really don't remember. But I went out on either a Saturday or Sunday.

That's when I took him the bread. And when we had this nice visit. And I left. He told me, you know, well, this was the time I told him he should go -- leave the shack --

and he didn't want to hear anything of that. It was the last part of July or the first part of August. Two weeks. Three

weeks at the most. Why I know this: I came in and I called Harold. I said, "Harold, He's GOT to be taken to the doctor;

he's just got to be taken to the doctor." Harold said he

hadn't been out for a day or so. See, the rangers were coming out also. He said he would go out and see, so I believe it

was then, a Monday or a Tuesday, that Harold took him to the

doctor. I guess it was at that point that the doctor insisted

he be hospitalized. Do you know when that was, Jane? (Yes.

They took him to the doctor and the doctor said he could go

home for a couple of days to recoup, he made another appt for

... it was then they put him in the

put him in the hospital.) (He entered the hospital the 12th.)

Then it was probably the last weekend in July or the first

weekend in August that I was out there. Well, as I left

there, it was the strangest thing. It was just like I KNEW

it was the last time I would ever see him out there. I just

knew it. It was just as clear as anything. It was just

like the voice I heard when George and I left Sequoia for

the last time. In 1964. We had our little trailer and we

camped up there. That was always our favorite camping spot.

We had probably the nicest campsite we'd ever had. As we

were leaving the weather got very bad. It was raining and

it even started to snow. As we were going down toward Three

Rivers pulling the trailer -- the way we always went in and

out -- there was a voice -- I mean it was just as clear as

if someone had spoken. This is the last time you will ever

be in Sequoia. And of course the following year we got this

house and we didn't take the trailer out after that. Then

the following year George was gone. But anyway, leaving

out there--this is interesting--I had this same feeling. I

KNEW it was going to be the last time. And I thought at the

time. the sun is so strange. It was the middle of the

summer and it seemed like autumn. It was late afternoon.

The sun was still up, but it was a strange light and I thought,

It's the light of autumn. And coming through that area of

shells that you walk through over there, you know, I picked

up this -- a full shell. In all the years I've been in and

out over there I've never found a scallop shell and I always

wanted one. I just looked down and there it was. And that

convinced me all the more I would never see him again out

there. So I stuck it in my jacket pocket. . .and I have it.

I've WANTED to go back out there several times -- to just go

out there and sit. . .I wanted to know if that little bird

still came. . .it was the most unusually marked bird I had

ever seen. . .and he was out there when Tina and I were

out. She looked it up in her ornithology book and it's a

Rufus-sided towie. And Bert kept repeating it and repeating

it and repeating it so he could remember how to say it.

But I had never seen a bird like it. (Was it the one he

called the thresh?) It might be. I don't know where they

get the Rufus, the red, because there wasn't very much red on

it, but it had orangey-sort of yellow and black markings and

and it would come down there and eat. In fact, when he was in the hospital, he repeated it again. He wanted to know what the name of that bird was. Then Harold told me the shack had been so devastated. Then I saw Roger Kellogg in the court the other day and I asked him what was going to happen. He said they were going to have to tear it down. Any historical value it would have had is lost because of the vandalism. Harold told me two or three times he's been out there, there's been more devastation. (I just can't accept that.) I don't know, Jane. There may be some people . . . there was someone that -- I don't know the details about it, but -- they had a book and they were trying to sell it. They said the book was worth about \$400 or \$500. That Bert had loaned it to them. I don't know who this was. They were down in the liquor store down here. I had heard about this. Then somebody was getting very enterprising and was taking people out on tours FOR MONEY. Did you hear about that? (No.) Sp, you see it's very possible that somebody had the idea that, so many times as hermits do, something might be valuable out there and they were tearing things to pieces. That's the thought that crossed my mind.

This might be what they had in mind. (Harold thought the first vandals -- the only ones I knew about -- might be looking for the book of poetry written by the poet in the dunes that was described in THE FACE OF THE CLAM. Bert gave me that book almost a year ago. I have that book at home.) Who was the writer? (The covers are off and I'd have to look at the book.) Hermits are known sometimes to have a lot of money. So this may have been the train of thought. . . (That very element in people was part of what Bert was escaping from by moving to the dunes. . .) Exactly. Exactly.