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9-25-96

Dear Alice,

It was so nice to share the time in Chicago with you. What a wonderful celebration for ~~two~~ very special people! I'm so glad we got my Mom out there. Mike checked in with my Dad and said he seemed to be enjoying himself.

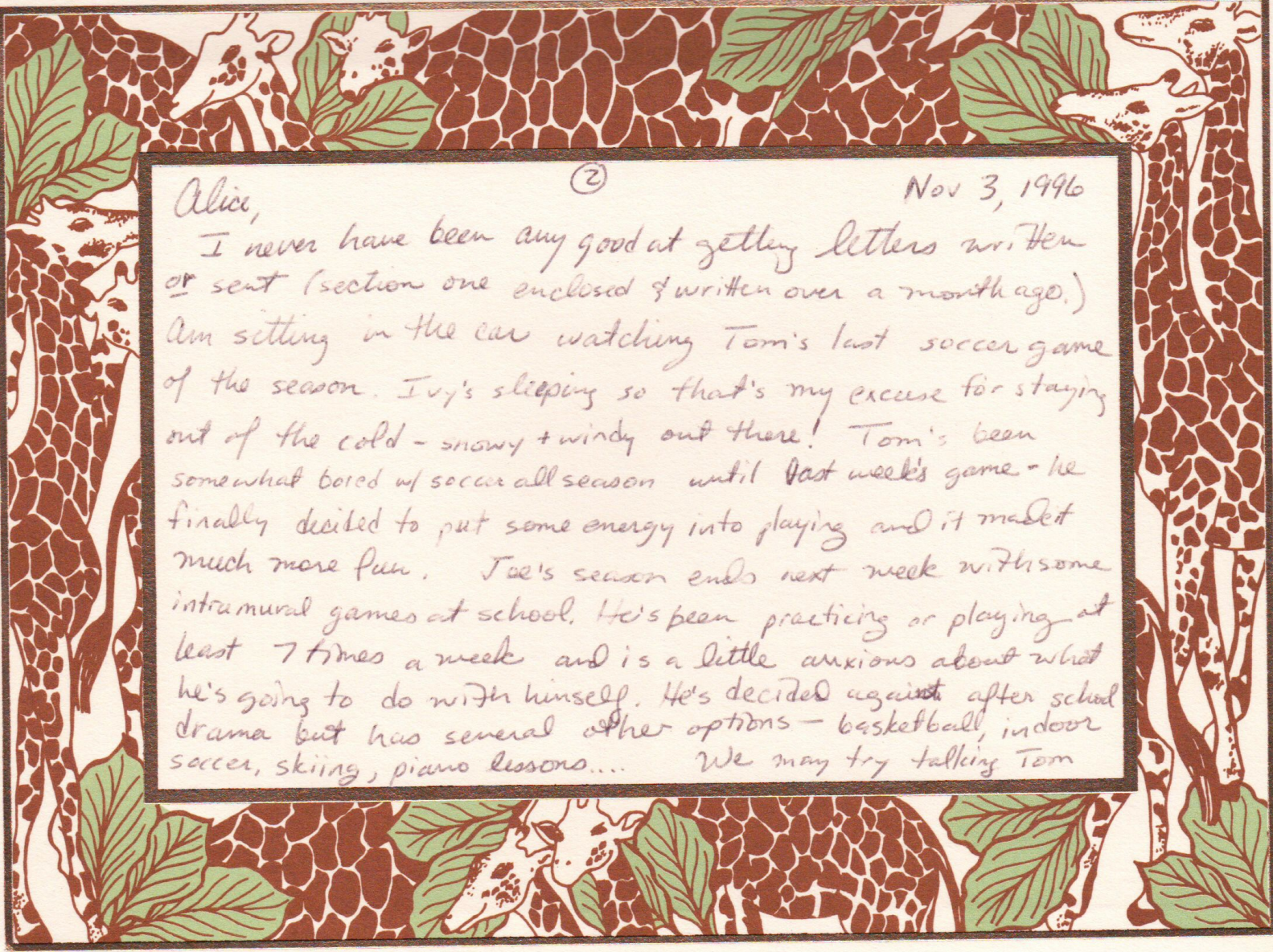
Am passing along some pumpkin facts from my mother.

I still can't believe the check you sent out -- Thank you! You'll have to visit the Berkshires so you can see it at work (or just visit for the sake of visiting!) We'd love to have you visit -- as I've spent most of my vacation, I wouldn't be able to take time off till Jan though.

Joe is at his new school and enjoying the work & the teachers. However, he misses his old teachers and especially his friends. I hope it's only a matter of time until he forms some new friendships. Tom is enjoying school although it's more like work this year, and he misses his Kindergarten teachers. His 1st grade teacher is wonderful - so loving and concerned about the kids. Both Joe + Tom are playing soccer so we're back in the routine of shuttling between practices + games.

Ivy is a ball of fire. She's in to everything! Loves to ride on the back of Mike's bike, climbing stairs ... Would you believe it - I tried to sing to her the other night and she stuck her pacifier in my mouth!?! I guess I'm not destined for Carnegie Hall!

Mike's looking for some part time evening work - he's going crazy being at home 100% of the time and it'd be nice



Alice,

②

Nov 3, 1996

I never have been any good at getting letters written or sent (section one enclosed & written over a month ago.) Am sitting in the car watching Tom's last soccer game of the season. Ivy's sleeping so that's my excuse for staying out of the cold - snowy + windy out there! Tom's been somewhat bored w/ soccer all season until last week's game - he finally decided to put some energy into playing and it made it much more fun. Joe's season ends next week with some intramural games at school. He's been practicing or playing at least 7 times a week and is a little anxious about what he's going to do with himself. He's decided against after school drama but has several other options - basketball, indoor soccer, skiing, piano lessons.... We may try talking Tom

to pay a few more bills.

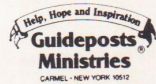
Ivy's had ear infections since the beginning of July. The doctor's ready to put tubes in her ears. After doing some reading, we think maybe it's all due to allergies. We may take her to another doctor (we sure don't like the idea of tubes!)

A Prayer of Welcome

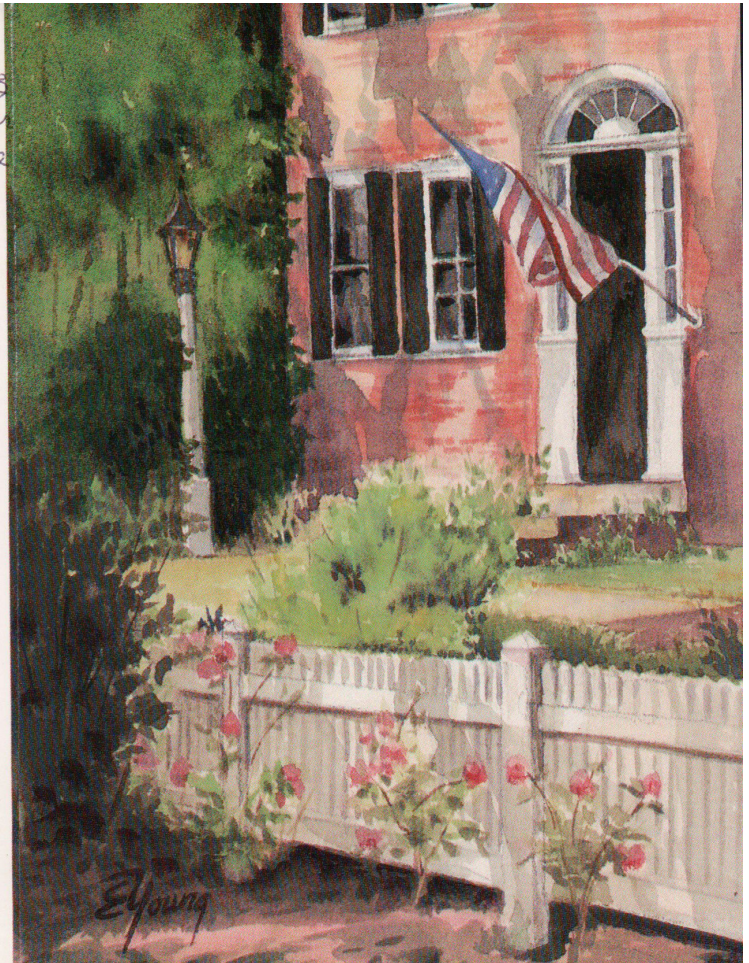
O God, make the door of this house wide enough to receive all who need human love and fellowship, narrow enough to shut out all envy, pride and strife. Make its threshold smooth enough to be no stumbling block, but rugged and strong enough to turn back the tempter's power. God, make the door of this house the gateway to Thine eternal Kingdom, through Jesus Christ, our Lord, Amen.

Seen inside the doorway of the Old Rectory at Crowhurst, Sussex, England

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I still see Jupiter in the south. The last few days, the stars have been brilliant! The air is crisp and the moon rises late at night so the Milky Way has been visible even near well-lit houses (noticed it while trick-or-treating).

The pictures you sent are great - Ivy loves them. The picture of Tom on the sand shovel is really special - I have one of Joe at the same age on the same type shovel in Redding. I still haven't gotten my pictures developed since it jammed - we've got to open it in the dark + try to save the film. Anyway, haven't gotten to it yet.

New piano - one of my mom's teaching friends sold it to us for \$1. Said she doesn't like to sell things, just likes to get them to good homes. It's really nice to have it to play on. Piano lessons for the kids soon?

So - I want to let you know what we're planning to do with Ralph's money. First, I thought we'd put 10% aside for savings/investment - I thought Ralph would approve of that. Then, we'd sign Joe up for space camp next summer. When would you like to have visitors? With the rest, we're going to have work done on the house. We contacted someone to give us a quote

into gymnastics this winter. I think he'd really like it but we've never gotten him interested enough to try it.

Ivy understands everything but still isn't talking much. She finally got off antibiotics a couple of weeks ago (had been on them since the beginning of July). We went to a "holistic" doctor who had her tested for allergies. She's very allergic to wheat, dairy and eggs as well as tomato & peppers (has to completely avoid these!) She also has to stay away from tuna, ^{orange} and corn. I've got to follow the same diet since I'm still nursing her. Food purchasing + preparation has gotten to be very interesting! She still isn't completely healthy so I think we're going to have to find out what else she might be allergic to. I should have realized she had allergies long ago - when we visited in Milwaukee she cried + was so miserable until the last day after you mentioned to me the Helen had been advised to cut milk + eggs out of her diet to avoid colic. She quit being so miserable after I stopped eating them. Better late than never! Her allergies are similar to Mike's so I guess we can blame him!

Game's over - they had an exciting last game and Tom's really excited because his coach got them each trophies - Tom's says "Best Throw-ins."

I'm not sure who's bra you ended up bring home but it wasn't mine (Ivy doesn't claim it either). Guess I'll start another page of this
wodge wodge letter.

on putting radiators in upstairs (there's no heat there now).
Mike made a nice ^{floor} map but they never got back to us.
We finally had someone else come out this week so
hopefully we'll get some news back soon. After we get
the heat in upstairs, we can work on getting the
downstairs wall-boarded, downstairs floors refinished and
then think about molding. Yes, we really did get
a fixer-upper - sometimes I wonder about our sanity.

Mike says - when are you coming to visit?
We need a goal to get us to finish all these
projects!

Meanwhile, Mike's plumbing in the pizza oven
and we're painting the kitchen walls. After we
refinish the kitchen floor we can put the cabinets
back in (no cabinets, no kitchen sink for over a year...
doing without really makes you appreciate things).

Well, I'd better quit and finally get this in
the mail. Could you get this birthday card to Michael?
I never got it re-addressed. How is everyone? Is Helen
feeling any better? What are Michael + Elizabeth
up to?

Love you!

Diane