

Aug. 2, 1966

Dearest Wallace

If time will permit, I should tell you about the day of the dead cat. It was quite an experience. I don't know if you noticed a rather undesirable odor around the car port while you were here or not. I know I noticed it soon after our arrival. Of course, I tried to put it out of mind as only some of the fertilizer stored out there. But, it just seemed to be getting worse and worse. It got so bad that Arn even broke down and washed out all the garbage cans after the garbage was collected, thinking that might improve matters. The night of the ward dinner (the night Arn got back from fishing), One of the older kids would not even ride over there in the car- -said it smelled too horribly. I suppose it was on the way into the house that night that I just couldn't resist saying something about the odor to Mother. It seemed strongest to me around the pyracantha bush. I told her I had smelled all the garbage cans, and it wasn't those that were sending up the odors. So, she decided that a search should be made under the pyracantha bush the next day, to see if there was something dead under there. And the next day, even Hattie Steed told Mother she'd have to get that "dead cat" taken care of, or she would report her, because she couldn't even open her window for the stench. Of course there was a discussion, I'm told, about a "dead cat"- -how did Hattie know that was what it was. We hadn't been able to find anything.

Well, while I was at Hill Field for the second time with Cloyd, Garth tried in vain to find anything dead under the pyracantha. However, he did find a dart, which the neighbor who had rented Hattie's place last year had lost. It was one fired from a gun, and of course Garth was intrigued with it. He tried to throw it into the chopping block- -and missed. He didn't want to lose that dart, so he tried to retrieve it from behind the block. And thus he made his discovery. When he raised his little head, the stench was more powerful, so he went looking for the source. And, he found it! There, draped over and down between the kindling boxes on top of and back of the green cupboard, was indeed a dead cat!

By the time I got home, Arn had dug a hole near at the east end of Mother's place, north of the row of currents and raspberries- -but not without a few words from Arn. He thought it should not have been so close to Bowen's, so that they would get the smell, and Mother thought his concern for Bowen's was partly influenced by his interest in Karen, which in turn is a rather hotly contended idea to Arn- -he may spend hours at Bowen's, with or without Gary- -and Karen is around and interested, but to suggest that he is interested in Karen is like pouring gasoline on a fire. At my arrival the main question was over the depth of the hole. Mother had tried unsuccessful to locate some quick-lime which could be sprinkled over the cat at the time of its interment, and the men she had talked to in the process of hunting gave various depths for 2½ to 3½ ft.

Arn thought it would have been easier to dig through the concrete road than that bit of ground, and he wasn't interested in competing with a post-hole digger- -and he figured the hole was deep and big enough. Of course, Mother could not walk to where the hole was, so she just naturally assumed that it wasn't deep or big enough. So, it had to have my inspection and approval. The 2 ft depth had been mentioned, and so had the 2½ ft depth. With a yardstick, the deepest part of the hole was close to 30 inches, so I figured it was deep enough. Cloyd had done his bit of inspecting, too. So we all headed back to the front of the house to get the cat. Cloyd took the shovel, and told Arn he'd better take the other one, too. Cloyd said if Arn thought he was going touch that cat, he was out of his mind. Arn was talking about just using a hook, which Cloyd thought was out of his mind, too- -and I heartily agreed. Arn had better go back and get the other shovel.

I picked up an open box just a little higher than the box trays we used to get in Heilbronn, and this was going to my contribution to the collection of said cat. Well, with quite an audience Cloyd got the spade under one corner of the large box on which the cat was resting primarily. But the box was too big and too heavy to move that

way. So he was trying to get Arn to help from the rear and side. Arn was prying with a pitchfork, and they finally got the box edged near the front of the cupboard. But at this point Cloyd decided he was going to BE SICK. I had been holding the box up next to the edge of the cupboard- -and he began, believe me. So Arn finished scraping the remains off into the box while I held it at arm's length, still. I dumped the box upside down into the hole- -or rather the contents of the box into the hole, and Arn started shoveling dirt in. Cloyd was not far from the scene at this point, and most of the rest of the kids were around, too.

That cat was so far gone that there really was very little left but black, fur, and maggots. All the muscles or skin, or whatever it was, was black, and the maggots were so abundant that they covered the boxes nearby and the ground below, and had wriggled out onto the flower bed- -they were just everywhere. It was just seething with maggots.

Too bad you missed out on the cat episode- -but we all love you anyway. Write soon, won't you?

Love,

Ruth