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R. D. # 1  
Kalvern, Pa.  
June 18, 1958 9

Dear Mom,

I got your letter in this noon's mail -just after taking the one I wrote this morning to the post office. That is just as well, as your letter deserves a letter given over fully to the subject you raise.

First let me say that your letter was a very welcome one...it made me feel very fortunate that I have a mother who can -and will -write as you did.

I have, of course, felt that you, -and I gather Dad, too, disapproved of the idea of my going to Middlebury. It is very helpful to have this disapproval stated -with the reasons and feelings behind it. Not only is it useful in clarifying the view each of us has of my going to Middlebury, but also -in a broader way- of helping me to see how a good parent-child relationship can operate -particularly that difficult relationship of the parent to the adult child. I agree with you that it is much the best course for the parent to say when he thinks the child is about to make a mistake. I could, as you observed in your letter, have profited earlier in my life from clear statements from you when you disapproved an action I proposed or undertook. I know it must have been very hard for you to write as you did. Thank you very much for doing it - and I know you realize I mean that with all my heart (although I feel it would be easier to express in person.) Your criticisms, your concern, your stated recognition that as an adult I must do what I think best -- all made me feel very much loved.

Being specific and open in your disapproval makes me feel like answering to the questions you raise -while the nebulous disapproval I felt on your end of the wire before made me feel like saying as little as possible. An in-person dialogue would be far more preferable to a letter -but much can be said here also.

I plan to go up to Middlebury a week from today, and will go expecting, and equipped, to stay for the duration of the 7-week session. I feel it is the appropriate thing for me to do. I may find it difficult to get a room, -or I may find that I don't get from the school what I hope for -I may find I can't bear being away from Michael -I may, in other words, turn around and come back.

The urge to go however (and the many things that urge represents) is so strong that it needs direct expression -I need very much to respect its intensity -and to find out what being there would really mean. I need to replace my pictures about it (pictures I have been formulating, as you know, ever since high school when I first learned of the Middlebury program) with real experiences in the real situation.

I feel Michael's support for my going -and feel that going will not injure what we have in our marriage that we want to keep. -Support from

the culture, so to speak, is as you would expect -negative. -Expressed by acquaintances by a "Is Michael going too?" or "How does Michael feel about that?" or "I wouldn't feel right being away from my husband that long." But to Michael and to me -the people closest to our marriage it seems right. -I can't say I expect you to understand or agree with this (or any of the views I'm putting forth here) -but I simply want to say how I feel -as clearly as I can -so you will know.

For a year or more I have questioned my motivations in wanting to go to Middlebury, tho' married. -For as long as I have been studying Russian I have wondered occasionally and discussed with myself the question of whether it is trying to prove something to myself in the academic area -something I didn't complete in high school and college -something motivated from revolt rather than freedom..

But my dominant feeling, as I have tested it in this regard over 2 years is that Russian interests me, and the study of it excites and enlivens me. I have pages of notes to myself on how Russian might be taught to a high school class. -I deal constantly with the Young Friends efforts to get correspondence going between the U.S. and Russia -and the frustrations of it that might in some part be eased if we offered to do some of the necessary translating, instead of requiring it all of them. I look forward to subscribing to Ivestia -when my skill warrants it- and reading the Russian view of the news. This last would be very exciting to Michael too, and he would be much interested in hearing the translations of Ivestia news. There is also, as you suggest, Mos, an interest in applying myself to a rigorous intellectual discipline -to working hard to get something that can be had only by working hard -and that will not allow me to slough through on an I.Q. and verbal bluff.

On this matter of getting into things when I don't meet the usual requirements. True, this has been done in the past -not to my harm, however, except in the expectation that did to some extent follow (as you correctly suggest) that having special privileges is a right. -A dangerous and unreal expectation, true. But it is not true in this case that I need another year of study in order to meet the requirements of Middlebury as you (and the director of the school in our first talk) have implied. I can handle myself in the language better than I could in German after 2 college years of study and better than any of the other students I have met (3 of them) who have had 2 or 3 years of college study in Russian. I was scared over the phone when I first talked to Fayer. I was not able to command and demand the knowledge of Russian which I do have. I forgot the word for "Saturday" the word for "come" -words I know perfectly well. I was thrown off balance because he didn't want me to speak, listen and respond in Russian (as would be required at the school) but simply to translate English sentences into Russian. I panicked -and did very poorly. I realize now what panic means to the person who is afraid of written tests -and forgets what he knows perfectly well.

There is the further point that there is no course I can take here that will take me on from where I am. What is offered is too elementary for me. Further, I cannot expect to study more here and apply another year. How could I expect to take a 7-month-old along with me? Conceivably it might be possible. But this is not something I could count on. -Especially knowing as little of the school and town set up as I do. I hope

to find out when I go to Middlebury, and when I have a baby and see how much work it is -whether I might even think of going to Middlebury with a child. But certainly it can be said I'm in no position now to be able to expect to go.

One side point. Perhaps I didn't say that in the second conversation with Fayer he said admission requirements for auditors were as strict as for regular students. He said the auditors were very much a part of the school -participated in all social functions and talked to the ~~the~~ other students between classes -and they didn't want anyone around who would garble the language too badly, or lapse into English. He said he would speak with me again over the phone in Russian, however. This he did -and this time he spoke in Russian, asking no questions which I answered in Russian. I answered this time without hesitation, and with considerable ease. He commented that I must have been studying hard and said I spoke very well. (Although thinking about it later I realized I had made a mistake.) I had not been studying -rather was in a discouraged slump and hadn't done anything for a week and a half. He said if an opening should occur at the school it might be possible for me to switch over and become a regular student. They a re packed full, however, and there is not too much likelihood of this.

About the money. I meant for you to take me at face value and go ahead and use the \$200.00. I had in my own mind that we could swing the cost of auditing if I decided to do that -and that it would be best to give you a go ahead since my expectation was that I would probably stay home -and you wanted to know then. The \$50.00 is much appreciated, though, and will be used -but don't send the \$150.00. And don't raise the ridiculous question of interest on the \$200.00 again, please. I couldn't be less interested in interest. I appreciate your recognition that money can be used coercively, tho' and your desire not to use it so. I'm sorry to have seemed suddenly to have reversed position on wanting the \$200.00. I didn't mean to imply it was all wanted now. Along about baby-coming time the need will be more pressing for us. Further -I did say we wouldn't want the \$200.00 in full for several months, and I don't mean to go back on that.

How do you feel about a suddenly depleted bank account Mom? Especially as it is representative of your no longer being or feeling in an "airtight box" as you so descriptively put it. I care how you feel -very much -and would rather you kept the \$50.00 for a time if not having it is going to make you feel boxed again. Do you have a means of income, so to speak, to replenish your account?

Thanks again for your letter. I find I am all talked out. But another time -or when we next see each other I might say more on the subject of undercover motivation in my interest in Russian. There is some, although it is not very undercover. It is more in the area of wanting SOME expression of myself that is larger than the duties of being a wife and housekeeper, than it is in the area of old academic revolt still going on in me.

Love,

Ruth