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~~PHILLIPS STREET~~ Box 169
ANDOVER, MASSACHUSETTS

December 11, 1973

Dear Don:

Here's Christmas practically breathing down our backs and I haven't got off a letter to the Crabtrees. It's been another year of bad luck for us, and I'm afraid it rather piled things up.

Way back in May a 6-year old granddaughter was almost burned to death in a flammable nightgown. She had deep third-degree burns over a large proportion of the 79% of her body that was burned. She was rushed to the Shriners' Burns Institute in Boston and they pulled her through, but it was nip and tuck for a few days there. They could get enough skin from her lower legs and feet to start grafting right away--maybe the third day. They took some skin from her father which they knew would not be permanently accepted, but it lasted for maybe six or seven weeks before it sloughed off, but by that time she had grown enough skin so they were able to get more of her own. It was into August before she was all covered and out of danger of infection.

During all this time we had her mother with us, and other members of the family were scattered around with his family. Now she has recovered sufficiently to be allowed to come home for Thanksgiving and stay a week. Then she had more cosmetic surgery on her lower lip and chin and neck, and this has given her back her own nose and allowed her two eyes to close as they should for the first time since she was burned.

Sara's mother never broke, and why she didn't after finding her child a smoking heap on the floor, and burning, I don't know. But they seem to be doing well, all except the father, who can't seem to find work with the present fuel situation as it is.

They are only a half mile away from us, and that is nice but for the drawbacks of getting mixed up in all the children's wars. Sara will be in and out of the hospital for another ten years, but they say she will be as good as new when she's all through.

Then the man who helped me around here died in October, and so I've had to do all the cleanup and prepare for winter work that we would have done together, but do it on clear days, even in the middle of the week.

All in all, it hasn't been at all conducive to getting work done.

We trust you are both well, and that Evelyn has come through her bout with flying colors.

With our thermostat turned to 62 it's almost as cold as some of those snowy days in France.

With warmest Christmas greetings from us both,

Cordially,

Doug Byers

Cell 4.129