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## Letter from Joan H. Tannehill to Hubert Creekmore (01 October 1955)

Joan H. Tannehill

Hubert Creekmore

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October 1, 1955

Dear Huburt,

It was nice seeing you in Jackson, even though so briefly; and I was delighted with your letter. I'm sorry I haven't written sooner but I was more or less waiting until I settled my mind about the revisions on my novel.

I thought your criticisms were preceptive and clear. They have been of genuine help to me. By crystallizing my own muddled ideas as to what was wrong and by giving me new insight into the construction of the novel, you have provided the means and the impetus which I needed to begin some major revisions.

When I gave you the ms. I forgot that you knew nothing of the overall story; but nevertheless the criticisms which you gave were accurate and to the point.

During the first part of the novel the characters are supposed to be somewhat up in the air. Rather, they are people with no direction -- they have found out only what they don't want. (However, they are not intended to be vague as individuals. That is where my writing was at fault.) That is the situation during the first of the book -- where they do move rather aimlessly and undirected within the network of their group. The turning point comes with Howard's suicide, which occurs after the party -- the subsequent development and resolution of their problems through the effect of Howard's death. The realization of their personal loss and their realization (real or not) of their responsibility in his death and, even more, just the plain stark reality of death itself, is the screw which moves them forward (or backward, as the case may be).

I can see now that my having used a multiple character viewpoint has created confusion and a certain incoherency of purpose and meaning. But what to do about it has been a problem. I tried shifting to the first person but found it more of a change than I had the courage or conviction to undertake. The result, after a two weeks of mild torture, is that I am going to rewrite, keeping it within the framework of two, or at most three, points of view. I have also given much of Jane and Carol's background in action now, rather than in abstractions. This is a great improvement, I think. Makes them both much more alive and believable. I have also put more of Howard into the beginning. After all, if he isn't alive and developed by page 100 how can I convincingly kill him! Murray's dubious relationship to the group and the story was sheer carelessness on my part. Perhaps a better word would be laziness. That, I am trying to correct. But enough of this detail. I do send you many thanks. Your comments were genuinely helpful and very much appreciated.

I had a note from Bart yesterday. He is in Charleston, S.C., earning bread and butter by being an "engineer trainee". (something to do with testing minerals and things). Said that he was never again going to write anything for anyone else but himself -- that he thinks Charleston is magnificent -- and that he has written the best short story that he has done. He didn't say anything about coming back to Chatanooga,



so I'm afraid our littl~~le~~ get-together is temporarily cancelled. Of course we would love to have you come see us anyway. (Why don't you! we might work up something of an interesting party with a few odd people we know here). I'm afraid though, that Huntsville doesn't present much of a lure for anyone unless they just like to make long drives.

We will be coming to Jackson in November for two days. Wonder if you will have left for New York by then? I hope to have the ms. ready sometime in November and will let you know, as you suggested. I am more than delighted that you are willing to write the letter for me -- I think it will be of considerable help.

We had a post card from Michael and Henry. Seems they went to Mexico after all (though not with Chris, I believe). They didn't say much except that they were ill and unsettled and would write later. When they get into one of their transition periods there is no telling what is going on and one has to simply wait and be patient.

The greatest adventure so far in Huntsville has been our discovery of the public library, which looks like something Dickens might have designed had he been an architect. In it I found the Selected Letters of Chekhov, with an introduction by Lillian Hellman. The introduction is a bit boresome but the letters are wonderful -- the richest collection of letters since the two volumes of D. H. Lawrence were published!

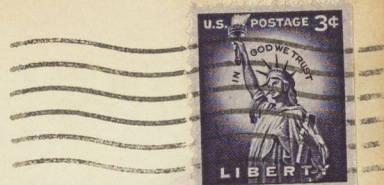
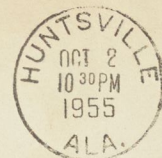
Thank you so much, again, for your time and consideration. I hope your own work is going well for you and I do hope we will get an opportunity of getting together again before you leave for New York. If you should feel like roaming this way, do let us know; really and truly we would be delighted. (we might even be able to dig up a lake and some woods, a bottle or two and one or two amusing people.)

Best regards from both Richard and I,

Joan H. Tannehill



Mrs. Joan Tannehill  
Apt. 311  
Redstone Park  
Huntsville  
Alabama



Hubert Creekmore  
1835 Devine Street  
Jackson  
Mississippi