Nov. 11, 1959

Dear Bob,

No hearings today. Yesterday I went into the Ways and Means office for stuff (which I am sending you under separate cover) and I noticed a tall stack of incoming mail. Just then it toppled over and fell to the floor. I stooped to pick it up and noticed that most of it is addressed to Wilbur Mail. That meant he did not read it. The office clerks opened it and read it.

Mulling over that fact later yesterday I suddenly had a horrible thought. Perfectly horrible. I’ve been in a blue funk ever since. Badly upset. Petrified, really. Bob, it suddenly dawned on me that maybe you don’t open your own mail. Maybe a secretary does. That’s the way doctors do. I don’t know why I didn’t think about that before. Bob, I’d just die if a secretary had read my confidential chapters. Don’t I do the darnedest things? I’m beginning to think I should have a guardian to keep me from making a fool of myself.

I’ve been trying to think back to see why I felt so safe with you. I guess it was two or three things that rather threw me off guard. First, you have a P.O. box, so I assumed you collected and opened your own mail instead of having it go to the clinic. Then, I felt sure you typed your own letters because they don’t show a typist’s initials in the lower left corner. Also, you make occasional typing errors, in the way you strike the keys – same as I do. So, all told, I felt that when I wrote to you I had a direct line to you. But supposing I don’t! That’s the thought that has petrified me. After all, you are a busy man. You must receive great quantities of mail from all over the country. You are away for weeks at a time. The mail must accumulate. Stacks of it. So, it would be only natural to have a secretary get it and read it. Oh, my!

The year I looked after Edna I was working on the identification of Selassie’s fabulous oil-bearing formations in Abyssinia. (handwritten marginal note)

My fellow students were awfully nice chaps. They were prospective mining engineers, State geologists, oil geologists, museum directors, etc. Fine fellows. All were real poor, like me. Having a hard time to get a Ph.D. degree. We averaged about $600 a year income from scholarships and junior teaching jobs in the university and odds and ends of professional jobs. They were serious, hard-working, decent boys and men. I was the youngest of the group. I was such a smartie I even beat the engineers in their pet courses. I just did it for fun. I didn’t plan to go in for economic geology and oil geology, though I was qualified. That’s where the money lay. I chose pure research which didn’t pay at all. Once, after I had my Ph.D. degree, I had a magnificent opportunity to work on a fossil fauna from Cuba in the oil horizon that correlated with South American oil. Well, I did a beautiful research job on the fossils, identifying them, describing new species, correlating the strata with the S. American oil-bearing strata, and drawing a paleogeographic map of conditions as they were in Cuba millions of years ago. I refused to apply my scientific work to oil geology. A geologist friend of mine, using my work, went into the field and copped the oil geologist’s fees. My thought at the time was that I wouldn’t debase pure research by employing my knowledge for profit. I never did. On another occasion, I identified a fossil fauna from Abyssinia in the oil-rich fields. My same geologist friend, using my scientific discoveries, sold the knowledge to Haile Selassie. My friend furnished an entire ship with gifts for Haile and even included an installation of electric equipment for Haile’s palace – all to get an oil concession for one of the big oil companies – a British firm, as I recall. I could have made a small fortune had I been willing to use my scientific knowledge in the field of applied science. But my training was in pure science. My only desire was to make new discoveries, to advance the outer boundaries of knowledge. I felt that I would debase myself and my knowledge if I south to capitalize on my research findings. I furnished the basic scientific data that made it possible for economic geologists to reap large fees.

NOTE: The rest of the letter is the usual stuff of her early letters to Bob. Hearings, her need to talk/write to someone, etc.