August 20, 1960

**Obituary for William Shearon**

SHEARON WILLIAM. On Friday, August 19, 1960, William Shearon, at his home 8801 Jones Mill Road, Chevy Chase, Md., after a prolonged illness. For the past 13 years, Associate Editor, with his wife, of Challenge to Socialism. Aged 88. Beloved husband of Marjorie Shearon; father of Virginia S. Barker of Alhambra, California, grandfather of Betty and Fletcher Barker of Alhambra and of Virginia and Charles Shearon of South Pasadena, California. Also father of the late Roger Shearon of Webster Groves, Missouri. Son of the late Major Thomas Shearon of Troy, Tennessee, a former State Senator. Troy papers please copy. Services Saturday, August 20 at 10:00 a.m., private. In lieu of flowers, gifts may be made to American Cancer Society and American Heart Society.

Note: By September of 1960, she makes a veiled reference to Perky in one letter (not by name) and talks about how she fell in love with him after his Barney House letter.

9/27/1960 – Marjorie declares her love for Dr. Bob, even though she understands he will want a younger woman. She recalls their first passionate kiss in Miami, hotel room #917.

Note: In her 12/20/1960 letter, Marjorie refers to Dr. Bob as “Sphinxie” – an endearment she first used for Barnum Brown in 1920 when she was writing to him while he was in Egypt, on his way to Abyssinia. She has begun to sign her letters “Hedone.” According to Wikipedia: Hedone (Ancient Greek) was the personification and goddess of pleasure, enjoyment, and delight.  Hedone, also known as Voluptas in Roman mythology, is the daughter born from the union of the Greek gods Eros (Cupid) and Psyche in the realm of the immortals.

12/20/1960 – Maybe I should drop Hedone. I used it to indicate when I was feeling particularly happy. But I’m happy most of the time now and might well go back to my own name which, I’ll admit, pleases me very well. My one objection is that it is now so much like a trademark. Perfect strangers have accosted me on planes and said: “You’re Marjorie, aren’t you?” It would be some doctor who had heard me speak and who recognized me. Since you are so persistent about addressing me “Dear Marjorie” maybe I should assume that’s what you like – hey, Sphinxie? Such a silent Darling you are.

Note: Not really much else from 1960 except the usual stuff about her work, her finances, her love for him. By the time of the January 15, 1961 letter, Dr. Bob has told Marjorie about “Edna” and she is rethinking her role in his life.

January 15, 1961

Now I am going to tell you something I’ve never told another living soul. I told B. in part. He never forgave me, nor ceased to remind me of my past. But he was very much in love with me, and overlooked it at the time of our marriage.

I am telling you this for two reasons. One is that I don’t want you to think that I am speaking in the abstract about the spiritual damage that comes to you when you slink a round at night for sexual satisfaction. The other reason is that perhaps my solution may give you a hint as to how to proceed. Finally, I don’t want you to think that I speak to you from some lofty height of inexperience. I do not wish to appear to be better than I am when I speak to you.

I have spoken often of my scientist. I met him when I was 18, he was 38. He was a Protest (sic) married to a girl from a Polish ghetto. He was sorry for her. The marriage had not panned out at all and he had left her. You said what your father did with you at 16. I tell you that at 18 I was completely innocent. No one had taught me the facts of life and I had been too busy with other matters to find out. Truly I had not the slightest idea of the function of the penis other than for urination.

I met my scientist in the summer following my freshman yr. I was going to take a summer school course and talked to him about scientific work. I was already a brilliant student and he was attracted. He persuaded [me] to take my first course in geology – his specialty. I did, and walked off with an A. One day that summer I had an awfully hard time at home with mother, friction having developed over her drinking and the hard life I had. I was talking to the prof. after class and burst into tears. I told him why. He asked me to meet him after class outside somewhere. I did. I had had no social life, no boy friends, nothing but hard work running the home. Poverty, no clothes, nothing any young girl had. I was flattered at the attention of an older man. I was awfully green. I had never walked across a hotel lobby alone, knew no social graces, had no decent clothes. I was said to be good looking – unspoiled, innocent, bright.

Mind you, I had not been out with a boy. I was as innocent as the new mown hay. Trusting too. Oh my! I whizzed through my sophomore year with all, or nearly all, A’s. And honors. But on the side I was leading a double life in a big way. I had never told a lie. I hate a lie like poison. I was good – just real good. Sort of on the angelic side. Suddenly, I began to lie in one area. I lied to get time away with my scientist. We didn’t have a car. We walked. We would take a ferry boat or a train to get out into the country. He slowly introduced me to sex. Took some time. He said later he was entranced at my complete innocence and didn’t want any other man to introduce me to sex. When I realized what had happened my sense of guilt was overpowering. I went on with my college work like a streak of greased lightning. Sparked by love. Finished in 3 yrs., honors in math, geol., and general honors. Phi Beta Kappa. I was madly in love and so was he.

We sneaked around at a great rate, by day and by night. We went to out-of-the-way eating places – good ones, but secluded. We were especially afraid he would be recognized. Full professor. Then I myself, at the age of 20, became a faculty member in summer school. My danger. I lied to mother to find reasons for being out. Then mother fell in love with the professor and was my life Hell on earth! She didn’t suspect a thing about him and me. So she arranged for the three of us to do things. He went along to be with me, she thought he was in love with her. I found myself wound up in a web of deceit. I found one lie leads to another. Mother was just about his age and thought that was about right. She asked if I would mind if she divorced my father. Hell, what did I care? Well, one day she broke into my desk and found my diary. She saw the true picture. Hell hath no fury like a woman deceived. I was just starting graduate school in pure scientific research. I was doing marvelously, spurred on by love. Mother was beside herself with rage and threatened to expose me to the university authorities. I was in a continual state of fear – abject fear for myself and for my scientist. I saw his career wrecked. My mother and I fought so bitterly that I up and left home when I was 24. I took a little apartment – living room, bedroom, library, and kitchen. I furnished it. For the first time my scientist and I had a place to ourselves safely. He spent many nights there. Sometimes we would work on science straight through the night. No Sex. Other times it was all sex. Often I read aloud – Dumas, Victor Hugo, etc. We had fun.

This was the plan. He said when I was 18 that it would look silly for him to marry a girl of 18. So it was agreed I should get my Ph.D. degree and then he would get a divorce and we’d get married. By that time I’d be more mature and would have a scientific standing of my own. So, I sure went after that Ph.D. degree with a will. Boy! Did I eat up As, scholarships, fellowships, honors in world competition, everything in sight. I sure was going to amount to something in a hurry in a big way. And I did. I was elected fellow of national scientific organizations when I was 25 or 26. Elected to Sigma Xi when 24.

All the time I kept my apartment and we spent many nights there together. Quite by accident I discovered my scientist was seeing his estranged wife. I was astounded. I soon discovered he was lying to me about seeing her. They had had one little girl before I met him. He was crazy about the child – a darling little girl who loved me a great deal. He decided to buy a house in Westchester in a very ritzi (sic) neighborhood and to go through the motions of living with his wife for the sake of being with the child.

Well, believe it or not, I took that in stride. He said he would get the divorce after I had my Ph.D. I fear I was naïve. His wife took a shine to me and invited me to the house as house guest. I felt like a skunk. That was shortly after I had taken my apartment. I remember very well on Aug. 1, 1914, I was a house guest along with several foreign students. We were playing croquet as World War I was announced.

I took my Ph.D. degree in June 1916. I was 25 and had had 5 yrs. in graduate school. I already had a world reputation in scientific circles. My scientist and I were wonderfully well matched. I looked forward to marriage fast. His wife didn’t want any more children, but he did. And I wanted six. I sure didn’t want an independent career. I dreamed of collaborating with him on scientific research. It just seemed divine.

I had just taken my degree when some student told me about a world-wide competition for original research for women Ph.D.s. I was asked to compete. I said I didn’t give a damn about fellowships for postgraduate work. I had other plans. The professor urged me to compete. I did. And won! A year’s scientific research paid for wherever I chose. I didn’t choose. I remember going down to my lab, in the sub-basement of an enormous bldg. at Columbia, lying down on the floor and crying for hrs. when I learned the fellowship had been awarded to me in international competition with other women scientists. Well, I took the damned thing and went to the American Museum of Natural History as a woman research scientist. There was only one other woman research scientist there. About twice my age. She went stark, raving mad while I was there and had a profound effect on my leaving science.

My scientist was delighted with my honors. During these years I had been maturing. I had learned a bit about life. I began to think and to be suspicious. My scientist stayed nights at my apartment, my good dinners, my piano, my loving environment. There was no talk of marriage. Then it began to leak out. He was afraid of the scandal if he got a divorce. Columbia was most fussy at that time. Couldn’t we just let things ride as they were? I suddenly saw myself in my true light. His mistress. No chance at marriage. I was crazily in love with him, and he with me. I thought it out, clearly, coolly, with detachment.

Then I moved fast. I packed my duds and left my apartment. I took a furnished room near the Museum. I told my scientist I was through with him, that I wouldn’t marry him under any circumstances because he had lied to me and tricked me. He left his wife and rented my apartment, furnished. I lived in the furnished room. He courted me like nobody’s business. His wife said she would divorce him if I’d marry him. I told him I’d never trust him and wouldn’t marry him. I told her that, too. He haunted my furnished room and the Museum. He got down on his knees, time and again. I was adamant. I wept by the hour because my stand was breaking two hearts. I’ve since felt I made a major mistake. He adored me. We were well matched. I received an offer from the Chinese Govt. to go to Peking. I refused and recommended him. He got the job and left. I refused to kiss him goodbye. I was 28. Four years later I terminated my scientific career. I just couldn’t bear to go on alone. I met B. 5 yrs. after that I married him.

You are the only person who knows this. I told you to let you know that I know all about how one can fix up clandestine meetings right under people’s noses. Also because I want you to know that I have had my experience with lying, deceiving, scheming in order to get away for secret sex meetings.

Another reason I’ve told you this is that I had the courage to make a decision and to stick to it. Until the moment of my marriage my scientist begged me to come to China. I would have had a wonderful life back there in the 20’s and early 30’s. I would have had the family I wanted. I think I would have been happier than I later was. But who can say? He did not return to his wife. The walls of his room in Peking, I was told, were lined with pictures of me. I saw him once after I married – in about 1934. I refused to kiss him. I wish now I had. He died in 1946.

Dearest, I want you to know that I am very near to your experiences. I know something of what you go through. I am speaking as a woman of experience.

Perhaps happiness is elusive for all of us. So little is known about private lives.

What you told me seems like a bad dream. But I know it’s true. I don’t know where I fit into the picture – if at all. One thing I cannot understand. How could you enjoy a day such as we had – “heaven” – and then go to what you will go to tomorrow. I am not a child, I’m not naïve; I’m not inexperienced. Still, I do not understand you.

Note: The letter continues, with more of the usual – financial problems, love life advice, how much she loves him, etc.