

## WESTERN KENTUCKY STATE COLLEGE

Bowling Green, Kentucky

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Dear Lancaster,

A little later this month will come the fiftieth anniversary of our first meeting, back in January, 1916. Enough has happened in that half century to fill volumes of history and science and poetry and every phase of writing. Two World Wars and a whole litter of small ones; a few rattling cars to jet planes; a population explosion that has caused the whole world to shiver; early manhood (you a mere twenty-two, I only twenty-seven) through middle age to what the world calls old age; you still years to remain single, I still with two years before being a father--on to my being a great-grandfather! And on and on I could go, with general and personal data until I would bore you. And through it all, there has been some sort of underlying kinship of purpose and philosophy that has kept us friends. In dozens of ways we have gone different ways, but in the ways that seem to count most for both of us we have seldom been very far apart. In no sense have we ever been bosom friends after the Greek or Medieval pattern; it would have been a poetic lie if either had said, translating an oft-quoted Latin phrase, that either is the half of life to the other. We have lived our individual lives, with our individual interests, and have avoided stressing the unlikenesses that are normal in all of humanity. We are of such different physical patterns that there has never been a temptation to wear each other's clothes; our voices are so unlike that neither one has ever been mistaken for the other; and there certainly has been no effort, on the part of either of us, to form the other's opinions. Frankly, I am not sure whether you vote for the Democratic or Republican party; I really don't care. Anyway, that seems such a small thing to bring up when friends are around. And certainly neither has ever tried to shape the other's religious views. I could not respect a person enough to call him my friend if I knew he had made his philosophy to suit me, and I know that you share this point of view.

When I used to read about great friendships, I somehow felt that I was hardly the type to have friends. I never could see why a real friend should be always trying to immolate himself on the altar of friendship, with an ancient belief that only by sacrificing one's dearest ideas could real friendship be attained. When I have read several of the Greek dialogues in which friendship is discussed, I have felt that those ancients needed some more healthy thoughts; there seems to be plain morbidness in their conception of friendship. One of my earliest acquaintances who might have been a friend with some more association indicated one day that if I liked Corbett McKenney, I could not be friends with the speaker. Gradually I dropped that sort of prospect for friendship, for I wanted and expected perfect freedom in choosing my friends.

As we have so often said, we have maintained through all the years our individuality, though all the time conscious of the value of the other partner in the friendship. And that makes my own conception of our half a century of acquaintance one of the great experiences of a very busy and many-sided life. I can think of nothing finer that has come to me.

Sincerely,

*Gordon*