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May 15, 1972

Dear Odonna:-

I certainly was surprised to get your letter - couldn't imagine who it was from when I went to the mailbox this morning! Our mail comes right at noon dinner time so I had to wait until after our meal to look you up in what we call "Aunt Ella's Record" - Aunt Ella was my father's sister Ellen, she is long gone, but for a while she stayed with my sister Effie and I in St. Paul and I copied off the essentials from her "Record" - she went more into detail than I have, but it is still interesting to me. That was many, many years ago but even then I must've had a subconscious interest in old family lore.

I have copied off for you the part I thought you would be mostly interested in, using her exact wording. As you will note, she had an abiding interest in church affiliations.

Now let's see, your <sup>grand</sup> father was my first cousin, your <sup>great</sup> grandfather was my Uncle Charlie, and your <sup>grand</sup> grandmother my Aunt Aggie. So that would make you and I, as I figure it, third cousins, right? I remember as a young girl going by train to Blue Earth with my mother to visit them. Aunt Aggie was a favorite aunt. Uncle Charlie I can't remember so well, he was probably not around the house as much as Aunt Aggie was, but from what I do remember he was always very friendly and kind to me. About the only thing else I can recall about Uncle Charlie was that after they had moved to Delavan and were getting on in years, he took to going to bed at 6:30, much to Aunt Aggie's disgust.

I can't recall the faces of Alton or Bertha, tho' I think I would recognize him in a picture. I do recall that when I was still at home in Winnebago, either I got a letter that should've gone to Verle, or she got one of mine, I forget which - due of course to the similarity in our names. I don't remember any of those second cousins, except, of course, Dempsey - whatever happened to him? Seems to me I remember someone saying he had married - I hope he did, and had a happy and fruitful life in spite of his handicap.

As to my father's autobiography, it is not a book but just typewritten pages, nearly 100 pages in all, single-spaced. He took to writing it after my mother died, and used to keep it up to date, every year until his own death. He wrote it out in pencil, and I typed it up for him, making four copies, no, five - one for him and one for each of we four children. Recently my sister's four children began yammering for their own copies, so my nephew in Calif. had some extra copies Xeroxed, but I don't have any spare copy myself. The most interesting is the first part about his childhood and as a young man on the farm in Delavan. If I can ever get the time to do it, I will try and copy off for you some of that part, and any particular mention of his brother Charlie and his family, but don't hold your breath - I am notorious for not getting around to things! I have made the same promise to a cousin (on my mother's side) in Madison, so if I ever can get at it I'll make a copy in duplicate, one for each of you.

As near as I can figure out, this enclosure here will give you the names back as far as your great-great-great-great grandfather! This is pretty rare, as I don't think a lot of people have any idea what even their great-great-great grandfather's name was or where he came from. We're lucky. A matter of interest to me, incidentally, is that my father and mother were second cousins - mother's mother was a Keetch. I don't have much information about my mother's family tree, but am working on this with my cousin in Madison. If you have any interest in this sort of thing, I highly recommend "Searching For Your Ancestors" by Gilbert Doane - a highly readable book, entertaining, enlightening and a nice touch of humor.

(over)

It was nice to hear from you, and I would like to have you write me again when you have time to do so. Since my dad died we have pretty much lost touch with the Rendall relatives, really haven't made any special effort in that direction as, frankly, there are some of them I don't care much about, which is a sort of nasty thing to say, but true. I do keep in touch with Glade and Gladys Rendall, I guess you know who that is - his father was your grandfather's brother George. Glade lived for many years on the old homestead farm near Delavan, but sold it some years ago and now lives at Amboy, Minnesota. My husband and I have been there to see them a couple of times, and they have been here, but haven't seen them now for several years, but we correspond sporadically. I do everything sporadically - guess I'm like my mother more than a dyed-in-the-wool Rendall, except I sure am absent-minded, which is a real Rendall trait!

I have some family keepsakes, the most valued is my grandpa Rendall's old tailor's thimble, with a piece of material stuck through it (it's topless) with a needle still in it, and his tailor business card from Summit, Wisconsin. When I was a young girl and young woman, I paid little or no attention to this sort of thing, but as I grow older somehow or other it gets more and more interesting. My sister couldn't care less - she calls it "living in the past"! and I have to watch her like a hawk to see that she doesn't discard something that would really be of family interest, tho' there is nothing of any real value other than sentimental.

Well, I mustn't get to rambling along this way. Your letter came on a perfect day for me to sit right down and write, as the men are all working out in the field, today being one of our few (to date) decent Spring days, and I can be uninterrupted for a few hours this afternoon. Otherwise goodness only knows when I would get around to write you back.

I was in Milwaukee a few years ago for my Uncle Jim's (Enos James Rendall) 95th birthday and silver wedding celebration, and there I met a whole bunch of Rendalls, but I can't recall now just who they all were, there were so many, mostly from the Chicago and Zion, Ill. area. I had my picture taken with several others - we were the "Older Generation" - made me feel like Methuselah! Uncle Jim's daughter was one, her name is Edith but she is an Episcopalian sister and goes as Sister Clemence. We exchange Christmas cards. I also get a card every Christmas from Eva May Scaccia, who is Uncle Ben's (Joseph Benson Rendall) daughter, but I never reply as she is one of the group involved in that religious sect in Zion and I never did go for them, probably unfairly.

Well - you'll be tired of reading this. Do write me again.

Affectionately,

Vera

*(Rendall)*

Mrs. Dudley H. Smith, Sr.  
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*Daughter of Jim Rob*

Later P.S. Found I had time enough to copy a couple of pages of Dad's "story" for you. More another time.

I made extra copies of the excerpt from Aunt Ella's Record in case you would like to pass a copy on to someone else.