

BEATRIX FARRAND
LANDSCAPE GARDENER

~~REEF POINT~~ Santa Barbara,
~~BAR HARBOR, MAINE~~ California

April 7, 1947
212/a

Mrs. Robert Woods Bliss
1537 28th Street
Washington, D. C.

Dearest Mildred:

The only way to answer your long letter of March 22-25 is to try to do it carefully and in detail and explain as the reply progresses.

For many years both Robert and Max have recognized that just because we care so deeply for each other and that we both love Dumbarton Oaks with the same intensity, we tire each other, because we want it all so right and we feel our happy debt to each to each and our duty to Oakdom.

A few weeks ago Dr. Koefod looked at me and said "You really are not giving yourself a fair chance to recover, after what you have gone through." It was direct and true and made me realize that in spite of the will to do and a strong frame, that the fact of my age cannot be overlooked and also long years of arrears of unpaid debts of overwork.

All my life I have owed its happiness to the understanding devotion of those closest to me, and often my propensity for overworking has made them anxious. Now I must face the issue and those who have given me so much in the past and are giving it today are being unjustly treated if I overdo.

There is strength returning, but it must not be overspent, and the sense of pressure and the feeling of duty and obligation to Dumbarton Oaks and the complexities and its variety, and the lovely warp and woof are now unwise for me to try to weave. This does not mean that my heart and thoughts and such strength as there is will not be for Dumbarton, as Mr. Patterson and I will continue to talk everything over. But a visit this spring would not be right to promise, and it will help me to go on getting stronger if I know you feel that the journey should not be undertaken until it seems an easy ascent and not a precipice to climb.

A letter of explanation of the situation was sent to Mr. Thacher saying it seemed both just and wise to ask to resign. A letter full of real feeling and understanding came from him in answer, and he and I both hope that Mr. Patterson will accept the duty and pleasure of becoming consulting landscape gardener to Dumbarton Oaks. But my sense of humour is tickled, because when I become emerita on June 30 of this year, he nevertheless would like me to continue to counsel and aid from the position of "remote control" of emerita. What particularly amuses me is that in twenty years of academic life it became clear that emeriti were joyously and politely got out of the way, with the hope that there would be no "remote control". So apparently those whom I love at Dumbarton Oaks still want my elderly finger in the pie. It will be a much more

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useful and less worried finger if Mr. Patterson is my leader and he and I go over everything to be decided that the rulers of Dumbarton Oaks would like me to consider.

As I see Dumbarton Oaks and the future it will not only be an institution to foster learning in history of past days, but its lovely frame must be as much a part of it as it has been from the start. Those who cannot be fed by the library and collections will gain from the gardens: some, the pleasant casual joy of the passerby, and others will glean from the gardens, the records and the accompanying books a little deeper realization of what a lovely growing picture can mean, as a part of learning and the appreciation of the value of beauty. It means so much in the way not only of plants and planting, but of principles of design and the fitness of a design to its surroundings that it seems as important to me as it does to you to carry it forward in step and cadence with the indoor collections.

The record notes will be continued as they seem to me really needed as a guiding hand leading to the future. As I am not naturally an easy writer, it "comes hard" so the notes will be produced slowly and as well as lies in my power.

The Cathedral had magnificent opportunities and Bishop Satterlee saw many of them. Did I ever tell you he asked me to try and get stones from Glastonburg to build into the new structure and sent me on this errand, which was successfully carried out, thanks to the kindness of the authorities at Wells.

The best Easter present in the giving of anyone was sent me on Saturday by Mr. Patterson who has nursed and cajoled the House and Senate at Augusta into passing the Reef Point Gardens bill. It now awaits the Governor's signature. This means that Max's dream and thought will be possible to carry forward, and will in some way help to pay the debt to the arts of horticulture and landscape composition that have given me nearly sixty years of happiness. Max had the resource and joy of half that length of time in observation and collaboration. He firmly believed in the usefulness of Reef Point Gardens from many different angles, and now with Mr. Patterson's help, we can go on. It is a great relief and will do much toward rebuilding my aged frame.

There is also more than a possibility that Max's Franklin may be published and fairly soon, it is too early yet to speak of it definitely. If the Franklin can be well presented and Reef Point continue, my two greatest responsibilities to Max will have been carried out.

You see so clearly that this has not been easy to decide on nor to discuss but it seems a wise move and if it be wise, you and Robert and good John Thacher will approve.

Yours with unchanging devotion and loyalty,

Lix
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Thank you for so many hours of common work, and common delight, the spring days and summer evenings full of thrush song and moonlight, and the autumn days of colour and blue skies.

Dear Clementine is well and a buffer against all the ills of life. She sends her thanks and respectful regards.

Lily
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