

Dear Jeffrey Loeb,

I'll be glad to give you what information I can about Stan. We were good friends, and I probably knew him better than anyone else ever did. Have you read the current biography of Max Perkins? At the moment I can't recall the author's name but it has had a great deal of publicity in recent months. In it Perkins gives his opinion of Stan's talent. It might make an interesting take-off point for the article you are contemplating. I have one or two of Stan's letters I can lend you, also. He didn't write letters often. He preferred to telephone. While he lived on the Pacific Coast he called me at night, some times talked an hour or more.

I think it would be a good idea for you to make a list of questions that I can answer. I'll try to be frank and unbiased. He had more than talent. He had the spark of genius and it drove him mercilessly. I think if Max Perkins had lived Stan's second book would not have been published. Perkins would have guided him through the shoals that seem to overpower such writers as he after an outstanding first book. The bitterness that made that second book an acrimonious hitting back at persons he thought had judged him unfairly was not a normal characteristic. I hope, if you carry out your project, that you can present the complex person he was, actually the mixture he was. One thing that has puzzled me often is that when he was writing he did not drink. I asked Max Perkins about that once and his only answer was that "all great writers drink." I can't accept that as fact but certainly it applies to all those Perkins shepherded.

I like the feeling you have for Junction City. The town was isolated by a bad reputation before W-W-I I have always thought that attitude on the part of other Kansas cities drew its residents together in an unusual way, gave them a sort of residential kinship that is unique. Your interest in Stan which stems partly from the fact that he is from J C is an instance of what I mean.

Do you mean the photograph of Capt. Henderson that Mr. Jeffries used in his Pictorial History? I looked again at the eyes after I read your comment. His whole countenance was a "wall against the world." I wonder if he found a nearer, kinder God before he left this life for the next. Stan's attitude toward God, by the way, was strangely ambivalent. He did not, for instance, believe in prayer. At least he thought he didn't, but when illness threatened him seriously he invariably phoned me to pray to St. Luke for him. It seemed to be Luke's knowledge of medicine that he trusted, but the spiritual connection always intrigued me. I was trying to explain something of my belief to him once and dipped into a metaphysical statement of the human entity in relation to Infinite Spirit. He didn't get what I was hoping to instil I'm sure, because he said, "Why, if I believed that I would be insufferably conceited about it. You couldn't abide me!"

I miss Stan. We were strangely close considering that we were in our separate ways inclined to be loners.

Happy writing to you,

Sincerely,

Bulah Sewell

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