

November 24, 1964

Mr. John Steinbeck
190 East 72nd Street
New York 22, New York

Dear John,

The weather in Florida, regardless of what the Chamber of Commerce and Madison Avenue would have you think, has once again turned bitchy cold and the mud flats are freezing. I just had the unique experience of trying to catch a burrowing sea anemone, Bunodactis with numb, frost bitten fingers and the beast was actually stronger than I. You can imagine my shock when the normally easily uprooted little animal broke free from my grasp and sucked down under the mud. Luck was with me anyway, I hit a brachiopod bed, animals much in demand, and was able to stock pile several hundred.

Since I've returned to the sunny South, I've had a rather enjoyable experience, teaching of all things. Last week I took several local college biology students out to the coast and gave them a lecture on collecting and mud flat ecology. I was surprised how much I knew and how much fun it was to tell it to someone else. Now if I can put some of my sea shore lore into a book on methods of collecting and preserving marine animals, I know I can make a valuable contribution.

I'm working on an outline for such a book on and off, how to recognize the Limulus trails, or where to look for the "sloppy guts" anemone or how to get a flatworm off a rock without tearing it shreds. If you remember, I told you about my method of chasing flatworms into plastic bags. There are some problems I've yet to solve. Spaghetti-like nemerteans, as you well know, like to break up into a hundred pieces as soon as you spade them up. Some are even more inconsiderate and wait until you start preserving them before they vomit their proboscis. The Malagasy have a good technique for getting sipunculoids that live in deep burrows in the sand: they poke a long wire down the burrow until they locate the animal, dig straight down and they've got him.

I think one of the best ways of portraying collecting is to use photographs. I took the immense wealth I collected from Natural History magazine, \$150 and bought a second hand Nikkorex F. camera and am learning the costly art of photography. But it looks like I'll have to sell another article to buy film and accessories. In this racket the best way to sell is to have showy pictures.

This year didn't bring me an expedition, but I'm still trying. Smithsonian has offered me a position as a specimen sorter with an attractive salary, but that sort of puts an end to things down here and I'm full of indecision about surrendering my independence. How is this Sea of Cortez television thing progressing with CBS? I'd very much like to go, and there is a lot more collecting that needs to be done in that area.

Please write soon, I enjoy your letters and I haven't heard from you in some time.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Jack".