



Used to be it was a man's world
and a woman's place was in
the home...

29 August 1984

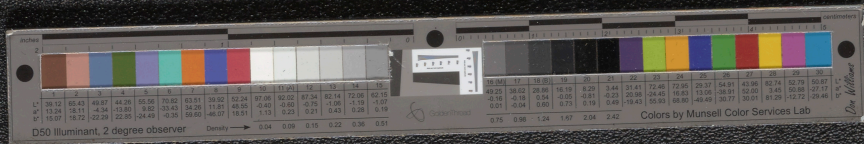
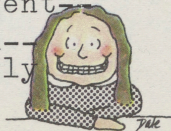
Dear Swan-lover,

Thank you for the lovely card, but I assume your comment ("my visualization of your home/sex life") was meant ironically. I sit here sneezing (with a cold, I hope not) having put out the garbage and waiting for the time to go see my doctor, for whom I have all sorts of questions, starting with "loss of memory" and ending with "trazodone". It is all very unromantic, from getting a lock put on the gate to Venetian blinds for the bedroom (allergy to dust).

You are so romantic about me that you say right out that I don't remember Mehitabel & archy--nonsense; I love the collected columns and use them in class. Also such a plethora of address labels maketh the head to spin; I admire them but--Tiptree, do you SAVE them all? I can't even remember what the old ones looked like.

About Camilla Decarnin, 512-B Cole St. San Francisco CA 94117--did I leave a page out? Oops. Camilla is collecting an anthology of Lesbian s.f. and fantasy stories. So would you write her & mention "With Delicate Mad Hands"? Say I made you do it (she knows me well). Or send her a copy thereof. No, no, no, Camilla is one person and Melody is another! Melody is the instructor (used to be grad. student), marvelous writer--who now has an agent--Marilyn Hackler's agent took her on--and is writing 3 books simultaneously.

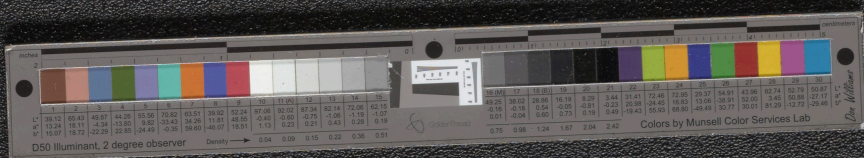
They can kiss that shit goodbye.



on a computer. She knows everything.

No, Carolyn wasn't too fat. I LIKED Carolyn fat--it made her hug a thing of beauty and joy. But Carolyn decided that I must be Made Over, since what I was most essentially she really didn't like. I tried--only to feel guilty and defensive more and more to the point that it was difficult to be with her. The ways she wanted me to change (like being on time) were crucial to her, but unfortunately to me also (i.e. never hurrying). We got along worse and worse until I couldn't take it and split. Carolyn was FURIOUS for about a week and then we met and decided to be civil.

I was always polite and tactful with Carolyn. I'm not with Tracy--who is 5'1", dark, with slanted eyebrows, a black cap of hair, and big beautiful dark-brown, eloquent eyes. Her two front teeth stick out from each other at an angle, very very cute. (a slight angle) She is pudgy like me (I weigh 200 lb. now) and hates it, but loves it in me (she calls it "womanly"!). She has suffered badly from depression, never been medicated properly before, and spent periods in a mental hospital, where they did almost nothing. They'd give her drugs until the drugs helped; then they'd withdraw them. She's much more stable now. She is bright, immensely funny & witty, with a lovely sense of the absurd. She's also at times very unhappy. I'm in love right down to my toenails. We spend weekends together, sleep together, make love, do nothing much, relax, talk, and glow at each other. I started out only knowing that I was very attracted to her (about two months ago) and quickly felt more and more--her presence makes me happy & her absence sad--the insides of my arms and my whole front miss her when she's gone as if something had been torn away from me and wasn't healed, just like Aristophanes theory of love in the Symposium.





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Anyway, I never thought myself capable of such feeling--the sex is at times unbelievable because somehow the intimacy of the other times gets transferred into it.

She's still not stabilized, really, and is often miserable--also from not believing that the drugs will continue to work (she's only been well for a few months). She's one of those unfortunate people with anomalous chemistries on whom lots of them don't work, or work unstably, or stop working.

WHAT stationery is terrible? This kind? AW, shucks, I like it.

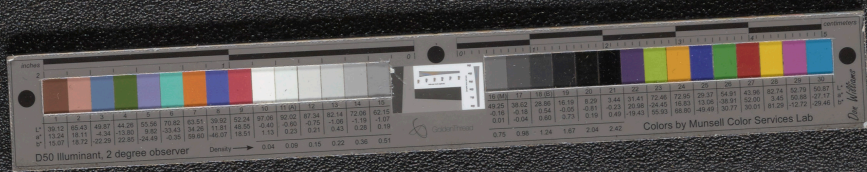
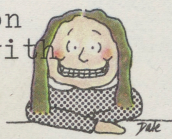
Actually, I must have left out a page of the last letter to you. Not surprising, considering the state my memory is in! We must, must, must do something about it.

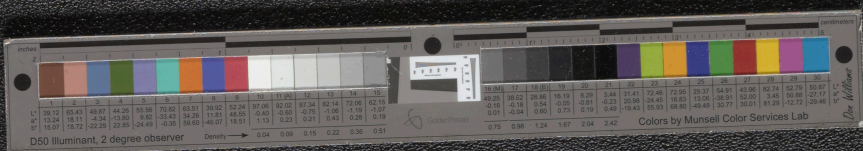
Do you have raccoons INSIDE the HOUSE? If so, don't they mess everything up? Or do they merely hang around the outside? Which is fun?

Sex--aw, never mind. I just grin a bashful grin. Two ladies have told me now how uninhibited I am. Apparently I learned the rules for men but not for women--so simply act as if there were no rules. There are advantages to NOT having been socialized properly, it seems.

I hardly respond to anything on some days except oatmeal cookies with

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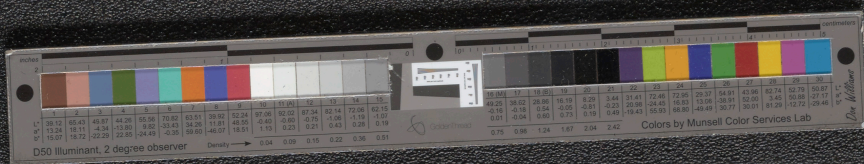
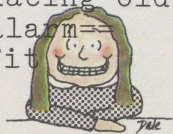
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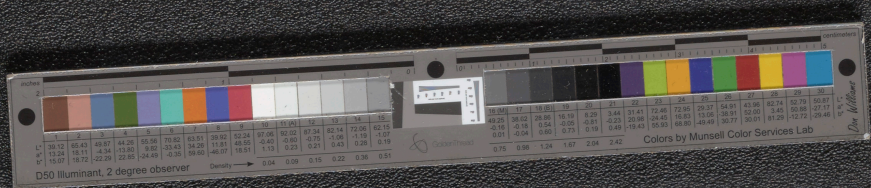
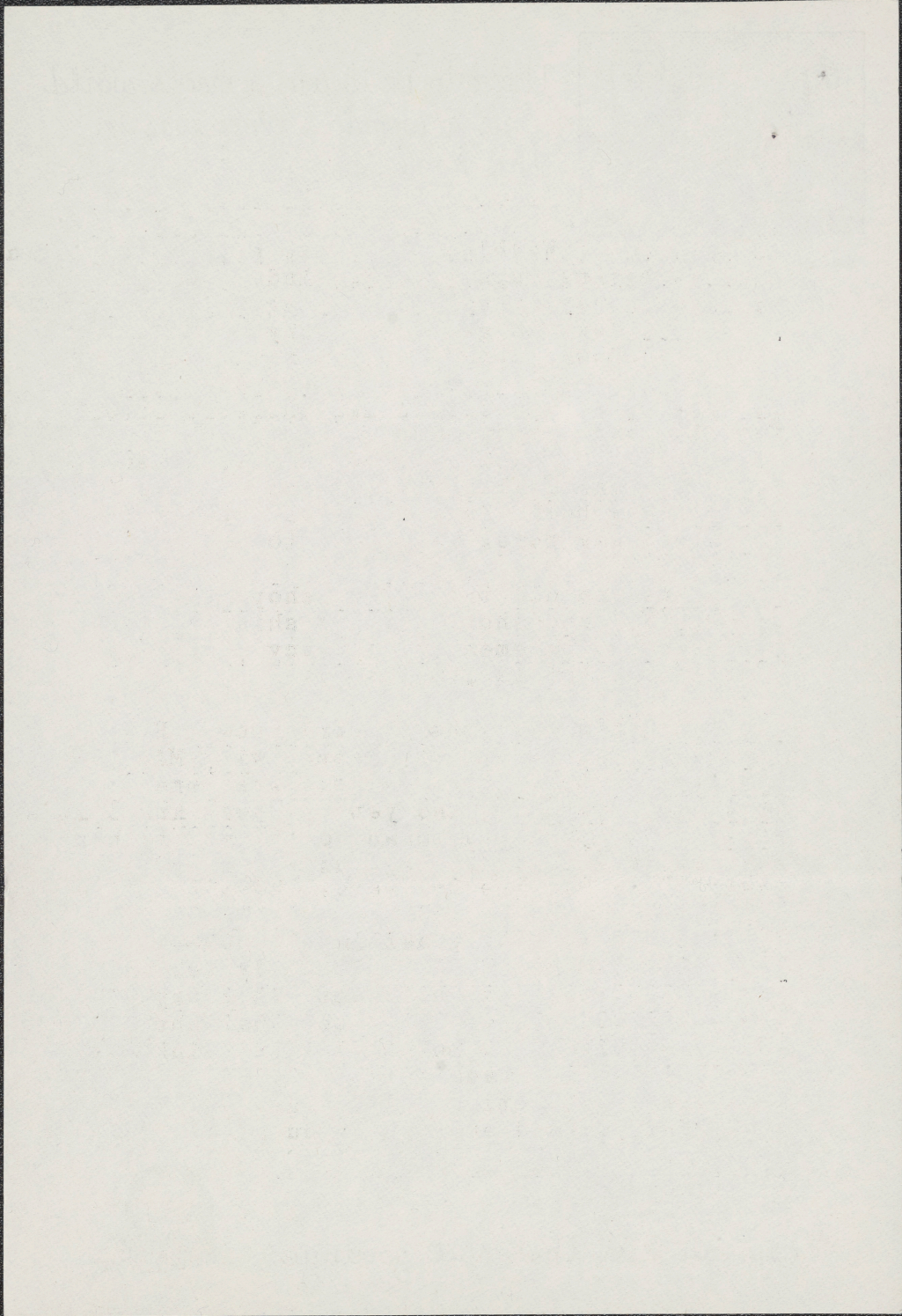
peanut butter on them, myself.
Just like your lady raccoon.

Or buttered toast made from gourmet bread sold
here: orange rind bits, walnut bits, and whole
wheat. The best bread I've ever tasted. It's
my dessert.

Troople, a question. How on earth does one
stop being a workaholic? I have spent the first
six or seven weeks of this summer (June and
July and part of August) doing dozens and dozens
of little jobs: getting rid of other folks'
furniture which has been stored in my basement
for a year and a half, having the water pressure
in the house doubled (there's new copper pipe
everywhere), getting seven or eight shirts
(largely in thrift shops), men's shirts
mostly, because they fit, shortening their
sleeves, ordering (and sending back) 6 pr.
pants from a cottage industry in Maryland,
ordering three more from another, shortening
them, keeping up with bills, fan mail, &c.
designing a mimeographed form to use for all
sorts of requests and fan mail, doctors' visits,
getting a nail out of a tire, padlocking my
gate, arr. for pruning and weeding and replant-
ing of front & back yards, watering same
twice a week, getting headboard for bed,
vibrator at Love Pantry (useless), reading
12-14 books, cataloguing K/S, putting bookcases
on cinderblock so I don't have to bend, hang-
ing up kitchen utensils likewise, on nails,
getting: furnace filters, air cleaner filters,
elastic stockings, special stocking soap,
special soap, shampoo, and face lotion (non-
oily)--year's supply of each--replacing old
fire extinguisher, testing smoke alarm
and about 6 times to have arches fit

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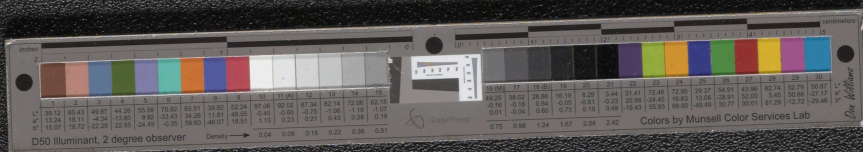
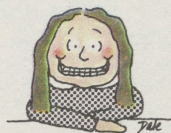
Washing curtains, getting Venetian
blinds, having rugs washed, windows washed (a
waste of money; they're dirty again), checking
through files, en garde, entropy!--checking
published books, throwing out reprints, errata
sheets on three new books, cataloguing K/S,
getting holes in xeroxed mss thereof, covers
for, &c. and I know not what else. Oh yes,
sewing. Getting all sorts of things altered.
Some writing. Culling books, and culling K/S
and selling both. Xeroxing ones I don't have.
There was more. There had to be.

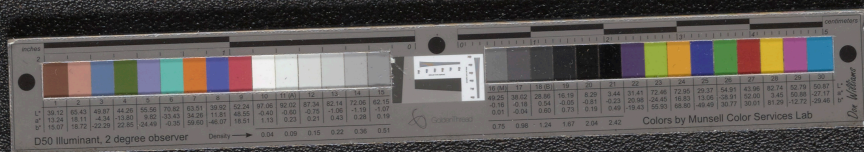
Of course all the thrift shops and men's
shirts (XL) and short-sleeved shirts. Also
the discount basement of a fancy store down-
town (\$35 shirt at \$10.)

So that's what the summer's been. How
has yours been? Real experience with MAO in-
hibitors, I take it....The doctors somehow
never tell you this and yet goodness knows it's
important. My friend Susan complained to her
M.D. and was asked if her husband minded--
then it was OK, the Dr. said. Imagine!

Yes, if we'd only met in our 30s--
but one is stuck in time as nobody is, in
place, necessarily. That fact has always both-
ered me. Does it you? Even so, what shenanigans
you have pulled, to be sure!--but think, Allie/
James, if we met face to face--I might be so
overcome by affection and desire I would FLING
myself at you and embarrass you greatly, as

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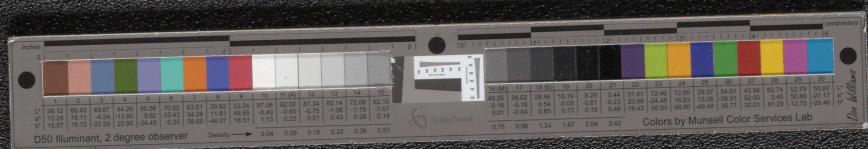
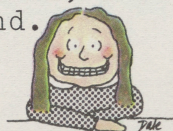
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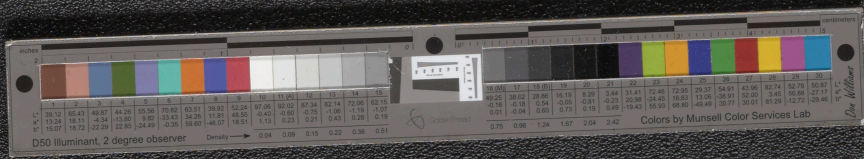
well as knocking both of us down,
which could be catastrophic in two ancient lad-
ies (well, getting there, both of us) or at
least shall we say fragile me?

Estrogen deficit makes for depression al-
so; did you get this? For two months now, when
I don't take my estrogen (5 days out of 30)
I get depressed, vulnerable, risky. I went to
a wedding last week, out of a sense of obli-
gation, was horrified at the flower girls
(you have to teach them early--3 and 6--the
tremendous importance of being dressed up and
pretty and hair-curled, like Jr. Miss Americas)
really pissed at the maids of honor and the
bride (a second marriage and she was in white!),
and then the minister declared that "The
home was the foundation of society"--at which
point I went out into the lobby, seeing blue,
and SCREAMED. Also cried. A day later the
vulnerability suddenly turned into anger and
I knew I had been depressed. What would have
happened in your 30s or mine? I will admit
that our meeting then would have been wonderful
if only it had occurred during MY thirties--
that is, the 1970s. Damn it, I won't settle for
any other time, so there.

If a program called "Before Stonewall" or
such a movie gets to your area, either on TV
or in a theatre or benefit or whatever, SEE
IT. It's first-rate. We saw it a few weeks
ago here in Seattle. It's about the old gay
life in the U.S. between the ~~teens and the~~
1940s and that memorable day in--well, I forget.
1969 is the date that comes to mind.
It's memorable, all right, but my

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memory is made of cheesecloth.

Must go. There's a doctor's visit, getting
the mail at school while my cleaners clean
the house, buying some few things (a pad,
&c.) in drugstore, then home & try to write.

You know, you have a wonderful way of
evading questions. Look here, Alice-person,
HOW ARE YOU?

I mean that. Don't you answer me by saying
it's a boring topic. It's not, for folks who
love you. So tell, please.

Did I send you my picture? SEe, I can
't even remember. The doctor's visit is coming
up, my typing is deteriorating, and there
are something like 300 pages of The Zanzibar
Cat to search for errors. Also I must alter
three pairs of pants (the sewing place refused
to do it my way), brush my teeth, two pairs of
jeans, and the sleeves on a shirt. No vacation
yet, dammit.

Are you well? If you don't tell me (I
KNOW you have a broken ankle or sprained
heart, or arthritic hands or something)
I'll get very unhappy & refuse to write letters
ever again.

And think what a loss that would be.

Love,
Joanna

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