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May 3 2004

Dear Brian,

I am quite nervous about writing to you but I have a couple of (good things) on my mind. Thank you for the mug it was a total surprise. A few weeks ago you interviewed Professor Capaldi for his book on John Stuart Mill. I was immediately interested in learning more about the man who was an intimate friend of Alexis de Tocqueville.

I was disappointed when the Professor brushed off your question about Alexis. "Not a Tocqueville man" I said to myself." It was Henry Reeve who introduced them to one another and one of the last letters Alexis wrote was to Mill. It is dated February 9 1859 and just weeks before he died. I can't prove it but I suspect they met one another more than once.

I leave September 3 – October 17 to retrace Mary Mottley's life from birth to death. I am taking a lap top, a tape recorder and black and white film for the book I am writing about her. Mary was born in Alverstoke; Hampshire and her family were prominent members of the bourgeois in Portsmouth, successful in business, and a good family with well above average income. Then I move on to Paris, Chamarande where her Aunt Mrs Belam lived, I will visit the church where Alexis and Mary were married. I will meet up with Francoise Melonio or at least talk with her, she is curious to hear what I have discovered about Mary. I will meet with the d'Herouville family in Paris, Alexis is married with two children, Pauline and Guillaume. He tells me that I know more about Mary than he does. Truth is at this point I do know more about the Mottley family than anyone. I want to follow Mary's footsteps to Baugy, and to the chateau at Verneuil in fact I plan to leave no stone unturned.

Then I will fly to my former home in Jersey. From there I will return to Normandy where Jersey friends keep a car on the dock at St Malo. I am too old to drive in France (June 1 will be # 77 for me) I am sort of an antique but only on paper. I am one of the few that remember every single moment of D-day. The planes filled the night sky and we thought we would be liberated within hours but we had another awful eleven months before that happened, a total of five years lost out of our lives.

My friends will drive me back to the Chateau in Tocqueville, Alexis has promised me that I will get inside this time. Finally to the archives at St Lo who gave me copies of Mary and Alexis wedding papers and to Hippolyte's chateau at Nacqueville.

I have rented an apartment in Jersey for four weeks and I plan to write the story of this part of the great adventure before flying back to the States.

I have copies of original documents, wills as far back as Mary's grandparents. I haven't solved all of the mysteries surrounding Mary, she wasn't perfect but she was an intelligent and interesting woman. Writing her story means the world to me. I have immersed myself into the 19th century in order to understand the lives of these two families. I dare to do this even though I am not a journalist or a historian and not much of a typist either as I am sure you have noticed! I am writing about what I know best, and that is people, we all have feelings, hopes and dreams and make mistakes. Those that lived in the 19th century were no different.

The "seventies" are a sweet time in my life, I see more clearly and I live every moment of every day at peace and with infinite gratitude. I have written too much, please forgive me.

Sincerely,
[REDACTED]