



EXECUTIVE CHAMBERS

HONOLULU

April 8, 1971

JOHN A. BURNS  
GOVERNOR

Dear Children:

I have just received word from Mrs. Marguerite A. Hart that you now have a new library in the City of Troy. What wonderful news for you, and indeed, for the world. A library is a treasure house. It is a garden. It is a forest of mysteries and delights. It is a castle of radiant light. A library is like a railroad station or an airport: you sit in a comfortable chair and you are carried swiftly to other lands, including beautiful Hawaii. A library is like a time machine, in which you travel back into history to meet pirates and kings, presidents and Indians, missionaries and wicked tyrants, happy Democrats and dour Whiggamores.

You should run up and kiss your Mayor--and your taxpaying mother and father--and thank them for making your library possible. They have given you a great gift. The distinguished writer Thomas Carlyle said that the founding of a library "is one of the quietest things we can do, but there is nothing that I know of at bottom more important. Everyone able to read a book becomes wiser. He becomes a center of light...". Cicero (and you certainly know who HE was) said, "To add a library to a house is to give that house a soul."

Did you know that you can sit in a library, all quiet and still, and suddenly become terribly frightened--when you read a ghost story? Or all of a sudden laugh out loud--scaring the librarian--when you read a funny story? Or wriggle with excitement with your hair on end as you read of the daring and dangerous adventures of great men and women who were brave and bold? And do you know that in reading about people who are kind and good, you become kind and good yourself?

Whatever you read feeds your mind and nourishes your soul. It is most important, therefore, that you choose your reading well. Read what delights you. Avoid reading--at least in your childhood--what may make you angry or ashamed or which puts you in a sour mood. But you can read things which make you sad, and even lonely or melancholy, because this is the way you learn what life is all about. Some books and poems will possibly make you cry. This is a good sign that you are a very normal child, and very sensitive and very good.

Never, NEVER slouch in your chair when you read. Your spine will become crooked that way. Never gab-gab-gab in a library to disturb others. Remember that people in a library may be far away--in Afghanistan or Botswana or walking along the Road to Mandalay or high in the sky in a silent, swift balloon over the Pyrenees.

Never eat candy or chew gum or bring your lunch into a library. It is not a restaurant. In Hawaii our children often come into libraries in their strong bare feet, but I suppose this is not done in Troy. And dogs should be told to wait outside until you have finished your reading or your book selecting. I think one of the reasons books become worn out is because children in the old days used to bring dogs into libraries and, without thinking, would bend down the corners of pages like dog's ears lying flat. Never do that.

Be very kind to all librarians. They are among the wisest people in the world. We could do without Governors if we had to, but we could not get along very well without librarians. They open up the windows of the world and let the fresh air and sunshine into our hearts.

If you are a child reading this, you should go home and make a Hawaiian flower lei--you get a needle and thread and sew the flowers together into a ring--and put it around the neck of the City of Troy librarian. It will tell here that you are grateful for the gift of books and of wisdom and of aloha found in the libraries of the world, and especially--for you--in Troy. And if she laughs and cries at the same time, pay no attention. That's the way librarians always act when they're very happy and grateful for the little kindnesses children show them.

Aloha, and may the Almighty be with you and yours always.

Sincerely,

*Sam A. Burns*

To the Children of the City of Troy, Michigan  
c/o The Troy Public Library  
5044 Rochester Road  
Troy, Michigan 48084