

November 17, 2006

11th Earl of Sandwich, John Edward Hollister Montagu
Mapperton House
Mapperton
Beaminster
Dorset
DT8 3NR

SUBJECT: EARL VAN BEST, JR.

Dear Lord Sandwich:

My name is Gary L. Stewart. I was born Earl Van Dorne Best to Earl Van Best, Jr., and Judith Best. My father abandoned me at four-weeks of age and I was adopted by Lloyd and Leona Stewart. Four years ago, my birthmother decided to search for me and we have reunited. I began a search for my father and I was heartbroken to find that he had died in 1984 without my ever having the chance to meet him. However, I continued searching for family members and have found some relatives and a former high school friend of my father. They have shared the story of my father, being a member of the English Speaking Union, having befriended the 10th and 11th Earl of Sandwich, Alexander Victor Edward Paulette, and John Edward Hollister Montagu. The family says that Lord Sandwich invited my father for a visit to Hinchingsbrooke in the mid-1950's, a gift for high school graduation. My father's high school friend says that my father had my grandfather research our family roots back to a land grant from the Throne to Henry Best in the 1600's, and that my grandfather helped pay for my father's trip to Hinchingsbrooke to visit you. This visit would have been sometime between 1954 and 1960. During this time, my father volunteered as a worker in the de Young Museum in San Francisco's Golden Gate Park in the Ancient Arms Room where he learned how to clean and restore medieval arms. He gained a love for these antiques and the family remembers a bronze bull's head mace which he brought back from his trip to Hinchingsbrooke, possibly as a gift from you and your father. No one in the family remembers what ever happened to that mace after my father died, but it is no longer in the family. Dear Sir, having never met my father, I would love to hear your story on how you met my father, Van, and what you two did together as acquaintances and if you visited Her Majesty The Queen, as my father's high school friend has suggested. I would deeply appreciate any memory you have of your time with my father. I have enclosed several photo's of my father, along with a few others, that may help you remember his face.

With the utmost honor and respect, I thank you in advance for your response.

Yours sincerely,

Gary L. Stewart
(Formerly Earl Van Dorne Best)

Enclosures