

Sam, Lena asked
you to write her a
letter about freedom
not
a
memoir
biography
She
suggested
shorten up
get to the
point



Maggie dear.
please tell Lena
that I discovered
freedom
ain't
easy
It's
elusive



*Illustrator Sam Fink wrote this letter to his publisher, Lena Tabori, nine months after the publication of his *The Constitution of the United States* and three months before the publication of his *Book of Exodus* and *The Gettysburg Address*.*

The subject is freedom. The opening illustration decorated the envelope in which the letter arrived. Maggie is Lena's dog. Sam just celebrated his ninety-first birthday.

Dear Lena Lena,

You requested a letter with my thoughts on freedom. Sam, you better look it up in the Oxford dictionary, said I to me. The explanation is long and covers lots of ground. I've selected seven:

1. RELEASE FROM SLAVERY
2. INDEPENDENCE, CIVIL RIGHTS
3. LIBERTY OF ACTION
4. BEING FREE FROM CONTROL
5. READINESS
6. FRANKNESS, OPENNESS
7. EASE, FACILITY (1916)

That's a mouthful of good that I think I've absorbed as I continue on my road to maturity. I still haven't grown up. I'm mystified as to how I've come this far because there are days and nights when I feel like the young boy I was when I was in my early teens. In my last years of elementary school I began to feel the idea of freedom. My father had a good job during the depression, we were not hurt during the depression. My parents were savers and spent their money wisely. During the Christmas season one of my most delightful freedoms was taking the 6th Ave elevated train to see the toys at Macy's. Carfare was a dime, a quarter bought a bowl of Horn and Hardart's baked beans, a cheese sandwich and a hot chocolate. The 6th floor was where the toys were displayed. It wasn't necessary to own any of them, the treat was just seeing them. I was accompanied by one or two friends and we spent morning and late into the afternoon with a lunch break. I think I was learning **freedom from envy**.

High school opened other doors. I was **free to choose** the subjects I wanted to take. Biology, English, American History and lots of math. In my last year I had all the subjects needed for college admittance. In my free time I elected to study touch typing. That freed me writing by hand so that I could get my thoughts down quickly, as though I am speaking to you right now. I was interested in sports and in back of my mind. . . maybe I can become a sports writer? That's **freedom to dream**. As a member of the track team we spent a weekend in Princeton at the university for a big interscholastic track meet. We were wined, dined to the nth degree. I dreamed of attending a place like Princeton.

My marks were sufficiently high to admit me to CCNY, the Harvard for students from not affluent homes. I continued the same as before, living at home, taking the subway to school, nothing changed except now I was on the road to a bachelor's degree. I did all that was necessary to finish the first semester with good grades, but unhappy. I was not free . . . lacked liberty of action number three. By the middle of April 1934, I revolted. I wanted to leave college and shared my wish with my parents. My mother rejected my proposal, my father listened. I became a pest and nagged Mom day by day. Finally, she asked, what will you do if you quit? Mom, I replied: I have saved \$50 in my bank account from elementary school days, I'll get five ten dollar traveler's checks, pack a duffle bag and take off and visit our country. How? Mom asked. Hitch hike to California and back. Mom and Dad gave permission, I quit and there I stood at one end of the George Washington Bridge in New Jersey with my thumb signaling. It was May 1934, the depth of the Depression, the drought in the Midwest, the dust bowl and John Steinbeck's novel. I hitched to Washington, DC first. No plan,

just caught a ride going that way and thought I ought to visit the Lincoln Memorial's introduction to my country.

Several weeks later I was back home, never to be the same boy. I had found the **liberty of action** No 3. The dean at CCNY invited me to return at any time I wished to resume my search for a degree. I tried to find a job, there were none. Discouraged I went back to reregister. The line was long, moved at a snail's pace. Sam, what are you doing here?

You don't really want this. **Frankness, openness** with myself No 6. Got off the line and went to my parent's sanctuary. I am 18 but not fully aware of freedom. My father to the rescue. Brilliant loving man! He presents a proposition: he will teach me his trade, his craft as a commercial artist at Wilbar Photo Engraving, 333 west 52nd St, and get me a job as a messenger boy in the afternoon, 20 hours delivering \$7.50 a week from 3pm to 7pm. Mornings commencing at 8:30 I shall be my father's apprentice. He was a benevolent teacher, never raised his voice or lost his patience. There it was that I found my path to be a layout man in an advertising agency. I studied the ads I liked best and when I made a list they were almost all from Young & Rubicam. To do such good work, there must be a good place. Sam, you get a job there someday. I did in 1948 and the place, its people, its leadership, its clients, all fit together like a jigsaw puzzle. There began or continued my **release from slavery** No 1.

In 1957 the company asked me to move to Chicago to head the art dept. There were about 10 guys and five assistants. Adelle agreed on the move with her wisdom. She said, We have an opportunity to grow. If we don't take it, years later in life we may kick ourselves for having passed up something good . . . and furthermore we're only forty years old, young enough to recover. Oh, such wisdom and love. We did grow, learn and being **free from control** which is Number 4.

Enough of memoir. I am long-winded. Let's get down to the *Book of Exodus*. Infinite skies, infinite interpretations from scholars, clergy, statesmen, teachers even baseball players. It is a story that tells us the difficulties of freedom. How to achieve it takes pain, disappointment and once gotten hold of continues to be a battle. No rest . . . chase chase chase, with no giving up. The difficulty is people have to be honest with themselves. Who wants to be honest with me. Once you decide what you wish to pursue there should be some kind of recognition of the difficulty, the politics. An honest perception of what has to be faced and then, the strength and dedication to stick at it no matter what. The story rolls along like a fairy tale. Some people swallow and digest

the miracles for real, others take them as mystical symbols without an ounce of truth. Yet, scholars keep looking for signs that the Sea parted and they continue to search for remains of Noah's ark which carried all the sets of animals.

Hanging on to the pants of freedom is some slavery. What do I mean? When I chased down the forty chapters of Exodus I was free. I had elected to it. I became a slave to my election. My idea overwhelmed me. I couldn't sleep, thinking, awaking in the wee hours to go and see what had captivated me. Tomorrow, Sam, fix that, enlarge on that . . . I was a captive and somewhat a slave. But . . . what a good time I was having . . . that's not a slave. I think freedom and honesty with oneself are cousins and feed on one another.

Cousin Maury Hart celebrating the Memorial Weekend in Palm Springs, and a most successful lawyer, called to wish me a Happy Birthday. He knows me and knew I would be home in quiet celebration. We discussed freedom at my insistence for some 15 minutes. In his lawyer phraseology, he said: Trying to describe freedom is like trying to put a nail through Jello and making it adhere to the wall.

Number 7 in the list of definitions of freedom talks of the word EASE. A good definition to finally end on. In my relationship with you and Welcome, the word ease and facility burst into view. I admire and love you, your daughters and the staff you gathered to publish books of quality and beauty. I've met many along my route who have comforted and aided me. That's one of the backbones of freedom. It takes magic for two eyes and minds to touch. That too is freedom. When I see my work in proof form, I truly believe I could not have done it alone. I was gripped by one of the explanations of freedom . . . maybe all . . .

But surely openness has played a big part in my freedom.

With love and appreciation for all you and your team have done for me,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be the name 'Sam', written in a cursive style.