

Thursday, May 28, 1992.

Dear family,

Here I go again! You are making your mother very happy with the prospects of "coming home" for visits. Jim, Teri (at very long last and the very last of you to see our new home) and Mary all talk of a coming with their families---well, Mary has not committed John but she and Margo plan to be if they can find cheap transportation. Worry not, Teri, about your dogs and a kennel. It would be much too expensive but you may have to tether them. We have a big yard but it is only half fenced in and they may take to the woods on their own. We do have lots of places for them to stretch their legs for walks. We abound in play areas and woods. You and they will like it. We do have lakes so maybe they may even get a swim. We have a wild area of trees right in our own back yard---not huge, but the dogs should like that as it will be cool most parts of the day. Come and see! We have extra beds to set up so we can put up 8 people without crowding. Thank goodness for 2 bathrooms. For me, this is like looking forward to Xmas! 'Ye all come!

You children are receptive about hearing of my past. Pen and I talked about those days and she has no interest at all sharing that with her offspring. My recall is that you wanted to hear about the past and encouraged me to write on. Say "Uncle" when you have had enough! Dad is working on his bio, too, and maybe before too long, you'll get his sharing. You know your dad; it is being gone over and over so that it meets his specifications and won't let it go before then. As you know, he can share only who he is and likewise for me. I tend to be impulsive and go "with the flow" and share who I am. Dad did say to me yesterday that he thought perhaps the way I go at it is not bad. Once I write and send it on, there is no revision and it's gone!

To resume my story: during the greatest part of the depression, I was in junior and senior high school. By now I was used to doing without and it did not seem that big a deal. It helped to know that a lot of others were in the same boat, but as I said before, it did not take the sting away. I rationalized that had I the proper clothes, ~~life would have been easier on me and that I would have been prettier.~~ I had a very poor self image. I told myself that I was a really nice person (was and am!) but with beauty, I would register 2 on a scale of 10. Remorsefully, I never heard from my parents or siblings that I was special. We were treated as a group instead of individuals. With that many kids I now know that it must of been hard for my parents to do for us the things that had to be done and not concentrate on individuals. My parents had no pets; we were all treated alike. We had our own ways dealing with the situation. Mine was to hide my feelings from others so I talked very little. I became a listener and people liked that. Actually, I felt that I had very little to contribute that would be of any value to anyone. I still have a lot of that within me. Having you children want to know more about ME has been an ego boost! My mind is filled with the many times you, my family, would sit around the table eating and discussing subjects that I never felt I was contributing to. You were all so eager and willing to take over and so my sharing came with listening. You may not have noticed, but I did treat you as a family---but I did listen to your needs. You all had the same rules but there were times when I had to listen your needs. But, I digress; I am good at that as you well know.

Junior high (8 and 9th grades) was in a special building about a mile and a half from home. We always had our dinner at noon so we hurried home to the meal. Walking with friends, the time passed pleasantly. I had some very good teachers and the subjects were interesting and I did well. I had a cooking class in the 8th grade that really turned me on to foods. I was making stuff that I had never heard of and brought my knowledge home with me. Mom, recognizing that I could cook, let me take over in the kitchen. Remember my telling you that I have been cooking since the 8th grade? This is how it all started. The noon meal (dinner) was prepared by Mom but suppers became my job. Most of the things that I made at school were not possible at home, but I did introduce new things. Es started with scalloped potatoes (prior to that it was always boiled---not even mashed) when she had the same class 7 years ahead of me. We even had a cake with frosting once in a while when Es baked. Al would bring home an egg or two when supplies were short as part of his salary. Ernie and Don worked summers in the beet fields and some of their reward came in eggs. These, in turn, were sold for cash so we did have real money---not a lot but cash to buy shoes for school and a few other things in need. Some summers the family was out in the beets fields---sort of, local migrant workers. We took the bus to the fields Monday morning carrying some food stuffs with us and stayed to Friday night when we would make the trip home. We lived in what to me was like a train caboose; bunk beds, a stove, outhouse, and a table with chairs. The oldest kids were home with Dad who sometimes found a weekend job at a meat market. Edith was then working at theknitting mill, Pinky was at radio school, and Al at the bakery. The rest of us were kept busy at the farm working the fields. Dick was probably the youngest at the time.

We each had our jobs and we did them without question. When the beets were harvested, we (the family) got paid. That was not until October, so we would begin school after it had already started and it was heck catching up. This went on just a few years as the pay for the work did not give the profit we hoped for so that idea was abandoned.

Music (singing) and cooking were my favorite subjects in junior high as I learned to cook and sing and that filled a void in my life. Es had a couple years of piano lessons from one of the nuns. We had an old piano in the dining room that provided us with lots of family fun. After Sunday Mass and dinner, we would gather around the piano and sing. Mom had a wonderful alto voice and I remember being very proud of her at Mass on Sundays when she would sing harmony with the church music. At home we would go over old favorites and enjoy each other. We never seemed to tire of this ritual.

High school was another walking experience. Bay City had no school buses and we were too poor to take the city buses---anyway, there was no direct route to school. We walked and even went home for lunch. Don and Ernie were in high school just ahead of me and they played football very well and became school heroes. They were known as "The Zielinski Brothers" and both made the All Michigan Team---Ernie Capt. of it one year. I tell you this because with my brothers being so popular, I was sought out by girls who wanted to meet them. They would come to the house to see me, ha/ha! with a chance to see Ernie or Don. Both Ernie and Don were good students and there was the "Oh, you're Ernie and Don's sister!" and then would expect me to do as well as they did. It was a hard role to fill!

It was in high school that Irene and I became good friends. She, too, was a walker and would come by my house everyday on the way to school. She had her earlier education at a catholic school so that I did not meet her until she started high school. Irene was almost as tall as I and we had rapport from the beginning. Her father worked at a Flint auto plant right through the depression so she had some spending money. When she bought a candy bar, she would share it with me! Hey listen, don't laugh! When you had no money to spend and someone shared like Irene did, you are grateful and impressed. Irene was a person that I could talk with and we enjoyed doing things together. After high school we went our separate ways but we remained friends and still have a bond seldom found between two females. Irene was always the person she is today---direct, opinionated, a bit rude at times, but she is also honest, caring and very giving. Her father was a drinker (weekend only) and I was afraid of him so Irene spent more time with us than I did at her place. She liked my Mom and Dad and we got along better than most people.

Every high school student has to have money, of course. There were class dues to be paid for activity tickets to get into all the games the school played. With my brothers on the team, you can bet that I was at every one. Don played basketball as well as football so I went to all those games. You no doubt remember my telling you how I used to scrub floors for 15 cents an hour. I had a couple of people that I scrubbed for and for the school dances I would spend my time in the rest room to keep the girls from smoking. For this I would get 50 cents for the evening. Well I remember going home in the dark running most of the way because being alone in the dark was not my choice but a necessity. If my brothers were at the dance, they usually had dates so I was left high and dry. For the games, there usually was someone who wanted to go among my friends so I felt safe then. When Roosevelt came into office, he started the NRA and I got a job in the school office for which I was paid. That was like money from heaven! It was not a lot, but I could stop the out of school jobs.

In high school I took subjects which would get me into nursing school but when I finished, I had no money. My first job was at a doctor's house where I cooked and cleaned. Al got sick and I came home to help Mom. When he got better, Es found me a job at the knitting mill as a clipper and I stayed there until I went in training---a fore mentioned fact with moneys from Es, Charlie and Pinky.

Much love,

*MOM*