

Wednesday, June 17, 1992.

Dear family,

Next week at this time, Teri, Tom and a couple of dogs should be headed our way. I'm excited. They have not seen our new home and its environs. We hope to have a lot of fun together. Shortly after their arrival, we expect Jim, Pattie and their darlings. In July we look forward to having Mary, Doris and their families. Looks like an exciting summer ahead for us. We'll put out a good word to the weather man to keep these perfect days and nights coming.

Prior to writing these letters to you, my mind is usually focused on what I will share with you. Three years elapsed between high school and training. My first job was as housekeeper at Dr. Mosiers. Then on to that boring job as a clipper at Wolverine Knitting Mills. The way I kept my sanity there was to engage my mind in pleasant thoughts. The job really did not require concentration. I used to plan plots of stories that I would share with my sister Gee. No wonder Gee and I are so close! I could get her to do just about anything if I would tell her a story. I was 18-21 and Gee 7 years younger then. Dick married at 18, right after he graduated, Don was working at Dow and Ernie was at the U of M. Al was at a CC Camp (one of Roosevelt's work programs to get the youth into jobs.) He worked in the UP in forestry and stayed there a couple years. This time in my life I became very close to my younger sisters and we still have that enviable relationship.

God bless Gee! I just have to take time here to tell you about her. Gee was a lot like my Dad. She had such patience, wouldn't say a bad word about anyone, worked like a dog, was cooperative, and yet was a heck of a lot of fun. My most mischievous days really developed along with Gee and Penny as they were growing up. We girls moved upstairs. I fixed the room above the kitchen real cute, (I thought so!) got a double and single bed, dressing table (which Essie skirted for me) and painted the room pink and white. I put in a few touches of glamour; spreads alike, cute curtains etc. We (Gee, Pen and I) had our little haven of security with the money I earned at the mill. Gee and I used to spend hours up there playing double solitaire and sharing stories, hopes, and dreams. Pen was like a child of mine. I had more influence upon than Mom did but Mom abdicated the roll gladly. She had her garden and her keno and seemed quite content for us to take over the house.

We were living in a different kind of world then. Roosevelt's recovery program gave my Dad a job and his dignity returned. He worked on reconstruction of the new 22nd St. bridge. It was hard work and the winter was tough. He would put socks over his shoes and then galoshes in an attempt to keep his feet from freezing. This was all outdoor work, of course. It was a mile and a half walk for him but he did it with dignity and happy to be a contributor again. Don and I were contributing to the family fund so we were a lot better off financially. Just before I went into nursing, Don left for the service and Ernie graduated from college. Ernie married right after that and spent a year teaching before he joined the navy. Edith, Pinky, Dick, and Essie were already married so that the house was less crowded. Al was around for a time and then he went into the merchant marines so we gals were left alone until years later when Al returned.

It was Essie and Charlie who pushed me into nursing school. They borrowed the 200 dollars I needed for tuition and Pinky saw to it that I got shoes and uniforms and I left to Grand Rapids. The Bay City nuns gave me a ride there. Sr. David had a business meeting to attend. I was about 2 weeks late in starting. That was difficult as I missed orientation and a lot more. Mercy Central had 3 units but we all went to Grand Rapids for the first year of theory and probie practice. The only spot left in the dorm was among the Grand Rapids girls so I was isolated from the Bay City unit. Most of the local girls went home weekends. I had the whole floor to myself and enjoyed that time. I could study better, have time to write letters, and not have to fight for the bathroom. There were 10 of us sharing it. We had to design a schedule to fit our needs. We had to keep the place clean and be ready for inspection. Since I was not running home all the time, I was left with a lot of the cleaning on the weekends. I got sneaky! If they didn't make their beds, I would short-sheet them and sometimes they didn't know that until it was lights out time and they were to have been in bed. There were a lot of really tough rules for us as students. Some made no sense at all.

Nursing school gave me a new life! Other than when I worked for Dr. Mosier, I never was on my own. It was nice to have family support around me, but it could be (and often was) stifling to develop a personality uniquely my own. Mom had her way of handling girls (strict!) but relaxed with the boys. Guess I had some of Doris's "do it self"ness in me which I passed on to her. Also, I had to assume a lot of responsibility at home when I was not ready for it. I told you how Mom about abdicated her roles as housekeeper and tenderer of the "sheep" so I was left to guide Gee and Pen. The three of us kept the house together. As the oldest I

had more responsibility than I should have had. In nursing school I looked only to my needs and found studying interesting but very taxing as well. Fortunately it was also my forte and I thought less of home and more of me. I wasn't in nursing school more than a few weeks when my family was asking me a lot of medical questions (by letter as I did not get home until Xmas) which were irritating. I did stay close to my family but I did get a good start on having a life of my own, too.

Again I must digress. The power went out and stayed off for 30 hours! We had a tornado! Dad was a lot more frightened than I, but it was scary. Most of Midland blanked out. High winds prior to the tornado took our power. Pen still had hers. Essie's was out 2 hours before. We ate out and then I decided to take my frozen food to Pen's freezer. We delivered the stuff and were just getting back into the car when the sirens started! We continued on home but we hardly got 2 blocks north when a huge tree blocked our path on Swede Av. Fortunately we know the city and were able to wend our way back home. The winds didn't last long but mighty trees fell, wires came down, and the temperature went down from 93 to 63 in about a half hour. There was not the down pour of rain that I would have expected but we did get some that we needed badly. Ashman, the street our church fronts on, was one of the hardest hit. Seems every yard had trees felled by the storm. What a mess!! Our neighbor just north of us had 2 fall in his yard but we escaped real damage---- just dead branches that needed pruning anyway. Midland lost a lot of its beautiful trees. The power company has been working around the clock and we got ours back last night at 10:15 pm. We just got our foods into Pen's freezer when her power went off too. Hers came on 8 a m the next day.

Our morning walk took us past a lot of damage. Many people are still without power---Es included. The stuff left in my freezer I did not trust and I dumped it. I expect 40 or 50 dollars worth of food went into the garbage. We have yet to find out how Jim and Pattie made out as they had the storm before us, We heard there was a lot of damage in that area. As we walked we saw many people cleaning up after the big mess. Everyone is sharing his experience and lamenting in some cases. But the one thing you see most is the cooperation among the Midlanders. All the utility companies are working around the clock and some helpers have been brought in from unaffected areas. There is still a lot of yellow tape around where wires are hanging down. People are very respectful of these warnings and are not adding to an already too busy community. Essie's son Jack works for the city sewer system and he worked through the night. Tom should have been here. One TV station camera got a funnel cloud and tornado on film and it was awesome---the sort of thing that makes Tom a chaser, I suppose. We saw some big storms in Florida. One hurricane that came close to us was a like experience. It will takes weeks for the debris to be cleared away. Our weather is very cool---in the low 60's today. Should be great for my peas as they enjoy growing in cool weather. We should have some ready when Teri and Tom get here.

Back to nursing and its effect upon my life. It amazes me when I reflect upon the learning of that first year. I didn't think it possible for the cranium to absorb so much material in such a short time. We had all the sciences, a course in foods and cooking, a lot of anatomy and physiology, professional ethics, nursing art classes and floor experience, and studies of drugs (dosage and reactions). Whew! Now my family could ask questions and I might find some answers for them. Going back to the unit school, we put our knowledge into more practical experience. The real big plus in Bay City was in having my very own room! Privacy at last for the very first time! There were plenty of shower stalls and tubs if you preferred a bath. Being close to home was nice, too. We got a day and a half off (not necessarily together) each week and it was nice to get away from institutional food. I know how much you kids like my dressing. You may have noticed I seldom eat it. Every (and mean every) Sunday we had roast beef and dressing for the main meal. They were teaching us to vary our diets for the patients. Wish they had practiced what they preached! I got very tired of that menu.

Guess I had better stop here. Es and Unk Chaz are coming to dinner. They are still without power. Yesterday Pen had us; she was the lucky one who had power. Today she is working---did I tell you she is back working one day each week?--and I'm cooking. Would you believe it will stuffed pork chops? These are an inch thick and most desireable for stuffing. It is a bummer to be without electricity.

Much love,

*Mom*

*any vacation plans? You're welcome here.*