

July 8, 1992.

Dear family,

It's been more than 2 weeks since my last letter and I'm not sure how much I retained about using the computer. Here's how anyway! I know Dad has written so that you are well informed as to what went on in this household. I will not be redundant.

As the old serial format goes, "In the last episode, Lee was entering her second year of nursing school. She had just returned to her home unit in Bay City.---" The second world war was in full gear and we Americans at home were doing our level best to be supportive, understanding, and caring. With 2 brothers in the service, I was concerned for their safety. The news from overseas was anything but rosy. The government had a push on to recruit more nurses. They offered scholarships to nursing schools to replenish the supply. This was a salvation to me. I knew not where the second year of tuition would come from. Now I had found the way to continue. We were given street uniforms (what a waste of money!) and continued with business as usual. The uniforms did come in handy in Detroit as we were able to ride the busses, get into the Tiger games, and see concerts free. I spent 3 months in Detroit doing communicable disease nursing to meet graduation requirements.

Just have to digress (a pattern I seem to use a lot) and tell you of an experience I had which concerned the government and had me branded as a Communist! ME! We were required in 12th grade Civics class to write a paper on some form of government. Since I knew very little about Communism, I research it, documented my findings with a bibliography, and drew my own conclusions. I must have implied for some people making this form of government their own free choice, there should be no interference into that county's politics by any other nation. We were fighting along side the Russians in the war. My teacher was appalled! I was called into a secret office and was interrogated by an agent and my teacher as to my leanings as an American citizen. To say that I was amazed was putting it mildly. I explained it was an assignment that I took on with some interest and drew my own conclusions. I was given a C on the paper (it deserved an A) and things were never the same in Civics class with that teacher. I chalked it up to experience and thought not much of it for maybe 2 or 3 years when it came back to haunt me. There was an appeal in the newspaper for citizens to write letters to men in the service. Irene and I decided to send for a list so that we could do our patriotic duty. The list came and we started letters to the guys. Lo and behold! an agent appears at my door again and quizzed me about the whys and wherefore! Irene had no one come to her but my loyalty was questioned and it was recommended that I discontinue the practice! I was mad as a wet hen and felt like defying the agent. Letters were censored and if there was anything in those letters which were dangerous to America, they surely would have reason to question me. Heck they were nothing more than friendly letters to cheer the guys and wish them well. To heck with it, I decided. I would write my bothers more often and I had plenty to do anyway. When I joined the Cadet Nurses Corps I thought that experience would bar me from being a member but fortunately all was forgiven and no more questions have been asked of me. I have had no problems since I am happy to report.

The war made life pretty miserable. We had rationing of certain foods and products like shoes and clothes. Nylon was used in parachutes so rayon hose was what we had to wear. It was awful stuff and snagged and ran very easily. We nurses had to wear white hose, of course, and keeping them supplied was a costly matter for us. The government gave us a \$20 allotment every month and boy! was that great. As a hospital unit we were not as limited in our food allotment as most people were but the cooks lacked imagination and we ate untasty and poorly presented foods. We did not hear the guns of the war but we had drills and black and brownouts frequently to keep us vigilant. The news on the radio was very depressing. Since I had brothers and friends in service, we were concerned and worried. My Mom's vivid imagination had my brothers killed several times when letters were long in getting to us. When we did hear of Don being missing in action, she was a basket case! We did not hear he died until the war was over and one of his buddies came to our house and told us. He flew the same flight with him and was taken prisoner. Don was killed outright when anti-aircraft fire zeroed in on the plane. Many of my high school graduating class died in the war. Everyone seemed to lose a family member or a loved one.

We student nurses worked hard during the war. We had no interns in Bay City so that meant when an accident came in and you worked emergency room, a lot of time was wasted while we tried to reach a doctor. The doctors (older ones) were overworked and reluctant to come in. The ones we could get were not the cream of the crop but at least we got orders, stitched patients, treated wounds and sent them home or hospitalized them. I really disliked this part of my training and could never be an emergency nurse. Since there was such a shortage of medical personnel, we student nurses had to take on responsibilities we had no business or right to. It was common practice for a student to be in charge of a whole ward of patients for an evening shift. Understand the gravity of this when no interns are around to help you through the rough spots. Fortunately I never met up with a serious enough condition that caused me any real trouble.

My first 3 months upon my return to the Bay City unit I spent in surgery. Thank God the anatomy and physiology we learned in Grand Rapids was making sense when the body is opened and surgery was performed. We started with simple operations as tonsils and by 3 months, I was a pro scrubbing in for major surgery and really understanding what it was about. I moved from one department to another getting 3 months experience in all the services: pediatrics, public health (another non-favorite), orthopedics, medical diseases, OB and nursery care, and psychiatry and communicable disease affiliation in Kalamazoo and Detroit respectively. The food in both these places was excellent and the salt rising bread in Kalamazoo I covet to this day. It was very hard work. We often worked split shift (am and pm 4 to 5 hours each) and had classes all afternoon. We studied mostly on our days off to catch up. We did a couple of weeks of night work in each service, too, so you can see we had a very broad experience. You didn't dare take sick leave! Once I had a real bad cold. Sr. David gave me a whiskey hot toddy and insisted I come to work the next morning.

There were no TVs around so that we were saved from the horror and graphic pictures of the action. Dad's well trained ear was again glued to the radio and he kept abreast of the progress of the war with lots of interest. The news reels at the movies gave us some insight into the war horrors. We were a worried and very patriotic nation. We were singing songs with patriotic overtones and buying bonds to keep arms supplied to our boys. The factory workers were working overtime and weekends to help meet the ever increasing demands. The movie industry was very busy putting out apropos themes of war films and making a lot of musicals to cheer us up. There are a lot of those around even today on cable TV. Dates were hard to find. As the song said, "they're either too young or too old; too bold or too grassy green. What good is in the army; what's here will never harm me!" Just everyone my age was in service and the F4s left around were not choice people. I did see service men in training in my senior year at Kalamazoo where I had my psychiatric affiliation experience. The guys were kept so busy and so were we that we just did not connect. Nursing is very taxing work and there is little energy left for dates. We saw a movie, went to a concert or a Tiger game (in Detroit) but mainly we had our noses to the grindstone.

When the war ended, I was in my last year of training. I intended to go into service myself when I finished but we were urged to stay. The guys were coming back and we were really needed at home. We had State Boards to pass to get our RN's and we were nervous Nellies about that. We studied together and apart and all of us passed! We had a progressive dinner in-celebration. Graduation took place in Aug.'45 and all of us were looking forward to the event. Well, Pinky died in the plane crash and I missed the celebrating to attend a funeral and be a support to my parents. That was a great blow to me and I was a long time getting over that. Pinky had always been very kind and good to me. I missed him. Just 2 months prior to that we had word of Don's demise. It was a terrible year for Mom especially and all of us in general. Ernie came back without a scratch. We were grateful for that.

After graduation I stayed on at Mercy as a Clinical Instructor for the new students coming back from Grand Rapids. The head of Mercy Central, Sr. Mary Xavier, was aware of my interest in Psychiatric nursing and when she became aware there was a scholarship available in the field, she put in a good word for me. A year later, I was off to Washington. Tell you about that experience in the next letter.

Much love,

Mon

*most of August (7th on) is open to visiting. Hope you
all can make it our way. Hope you had a good sibling
reunion this weekend. Miss you!*