

Sunday, August 23, 1992.

Dear family,

Between family visitors should be a good time to squeeze in another letter. Mark, Terri, and Rosie are due in the sometime this weekend. Mike and the boys left yesterday and arrived safely in Columbus just before 4 pm. That was a long and brave trip to take with those active boys. We appreciate Mike bringing them to us. They are so handsome! But then so are all our grandchildren. Look who their grandparents are! Just kidding, of course. Midland fortunately has a lot of playgrounds for the kids to enjoy and Mike even took them to the lake (Sanford) twice to enjoy the water and play in the sand. They seemed to enjoy themselves.

We had a letter from Teri yesterday. She said she missed my letters in the long interim between them so that I am all fired up to continue with my saga in life. There is still much to tell; as I recall, I had not even finished college in my last installment.

Marie and I headed back without a roof over our heads. We knew the University had a bulletin board with available rooms for rent. We were not overly concerned. We needed cooking facilities and that made the search more difficult. We made a hit with the Falconis' who had a basement kitchen for us to use. God was looking after us again. The room was about the same distance as Mrs. Mike's and again on 13th St. but at the other end. The Falconis were an older couple and seemed to yelling at one another all the time. Your Dad was not too happy about coming there when we had dates or phoning. They were hard to understand and often spoke Italian mixed with English. They would be mad as heck if we left a light on in the basement (we would go there some evenings to make coffee and study) but when she made spaghetti, she would always send us down a big serving and even give us wine to go with it.

My last year of schooling was really interesting. I had subjects more in line with my field and I got experience in Psychiatric nursing at St. Elizabeth's Hospital. We got to do some very interesting projects as well as the nursing experience. To go to the hospital, we could not walk. One of my classmates had a car and we paid her and got there without much hassle. One of the projects had to do with planning a ward. Remembering how inconvenient most hospital wards are designed, mine had the nursing station and equipment in the center rather than a remote end of the floor. Instead of long corridors of rooms, I had small halls arranged in a circle with the work desk readily available in the center to all. I was there long before my time! The newer hospitals do have that arrangement! Your Dad helped with putting the plans on paper. We were allowed to do that. Can you imagine your Dad doing anything illegal? I had those plans with me for years (a matter of pride) and finally got rid of them in our move from Florida.

We did a lot of case reading on that affiliation and that was interesting yet not pleasant work. The human mind is a very complex organ. I read through a lot of sordid behavior sometimes to the point of nausea. One of the facts that stuck with me through the years to this day is about 90 per cent of the addition cases I read through started with the "innocent" marijuana. It frightened me enough so that I determined I would never try it. What a waste of humanity when the mind goes! In my day some of the treatment was barbaric!---that is when they treated patients. A lot were left to vegetate. We used a lot of insulin and electric shock therapy which sent the patients into convulsions. This supposedly was done to rearrange the synapse into proper alignment to encourage rational thinking. I saw no improvement in behavior patterns in that department. More to my liking were the group therapy sessions. Through those and the sharing done there, I did see improvement in the quality of life. No wonder there are so many groups still around. It was through this experience that I decided the importance of being a listener. Just about everyone wants a listener---probably make a good living hiring oneself out to do just that. While I was working there, I had no time to nurse elsewhere so money got very tight and I had to watch every penny. They had a wonderful cafeteria but I made my own lunch to save money. I did very well that last year and got good marks so that I could graduate with honors even with that D in German.

In that year I also took a course in Marriage. I guess I had more hope for getting married now than I had in Bay City. Dating in Washington was a lot easier----even without the frequent dates with your Dad. Life was lively in spite of the extra loads at school. I learned a great deal in that class. One was the beautiful concept that the union of husband and wife was a sacrament and considered a gift as was the Eucharist. When sex takes on this connotation, I feel blessed to be partner in it. Your Dad asked me to take his ring on my birthday that year in 1949 and I found myself accepting. My how things changed in my views and attitudes! I was finished a year ahead of your Dad and it gave me the opportunity to go to Grand Rapids and work out that year of service required to fulfill the scholarship requirement.

Back at St. Mary's (Mercy Central School of Nursing) I was teaching mental health and hygiene. I also kept health record on all the students. I was Freshmen class advisor and I tried to be a friend to the students and treat them as I wished I had been treated. I had an opportunity for a gem of a job in a psychiatric hospital in Ann Arbor, St. Joseph's, but had to put that by the board in fulfilling my Grand Rapids obligation. My how I coveted taking that job! I taught there one year and came back to Mercy Bay City and got married.

Meanwhile on the home front in Bay City health was again failing in my parents. Dad really needed surgery on his ulcers as diet alone was not working very well. Mom had the morbid fear that if Dad had surgery, he would not come out alive. So he suffered the tortures of hell. Mom, meanwhile continued to have blood pressure problems and the Parkinson's disease was taking a firmer grip on her life. Gee was married and living in a home of her own. Pen was to enter nursing school that fall. So once again I was called to duty. The handwriting was on the wall before your Dad and I were married and we talked about our future in Bay City or no future together at all. You know the answer. I really felt terrible about asking him to make such a huge sacrifice. There were no engineering jobs to be had in Bay City. He had such excellent grades in school that it seemed like such a terrible waste to not use his gifts.

Well intentioned family wanted ~~me~~ to have a big wedding, lots of bridesmaids,----the works. I wanted a simple ceremony in a suit or dress that I could use again. Well, I gave in to wearing white (I deserved it and your Dad was a virgin, too) but kept the wedding simple. Helen was my only attendant and we had a simple brunch after the wedding Mass for family and close friends. We honeymooned in the Michigan Upper peninsula and we were as green as the forest. I admit to you that we didn't do any "heavy petting" prior to our marriage so that we were really novices at this love making business. I'm not sure your Dad appreciates my being so candid with you, but the truth is not something one should be ashamed of. We had a marvelous time getting to know one another and learning together. Nursing does not teach you sex---just the consequences of the act itself. Perhaps we were too naive; we did do some things right! We had 8 wonderful children. With the concept that marriage was a sacrament and God was with us condoning our naivety, we grew in love and warmth. To this day we have retained the closeness and warmth given to one another.

Our first year of marriage was full of problems with my parents. Mom broke her hip that November and that was a long time healing. She started having mental problems. My guess is that she had a stroke, fell and broke the hip. Some well intentioned neighbors supported her home on that fracture, I called the ambulance and had her hospitalized. She had open surgery and pins were put into her hip along with traction. In this environment, she was confused and that compounded her mental instability. She got very noisy and since Gee had children and a home of her own to look after and I could not be with her night and day, the staff recommended I take her home (with hospital bed and traction) and nurse her there. This meant giving up my job as instructor at Mercy and I never got back to hospital work after that. I didn't realize that I was pregnant with Lee Ann at the time so life became very difficult. Your Dad saved my sanity! With proper diet and medication, Dad improved and he comforted Mom while I did the housekeeping. We had to move downstairs to the small bedroom next to the dining room and I had Mom in the dining room. Every other night she would keep us awake, playing with her traction and babbling. The hip was a long time healing and Mom's mental condition got worse. Thank God I had the training I needed to handle the situation. My siblings were not a great help as they were involved in their own families. Ernie would come over Sunday afternoon sometimes to give your Dad and me a chace to get out of the house. Es came from Midland when she could but the grind and the pregnancy were wearing me down.

At this point, I think I will rest. Rehashing this part of my life is pretty painful and I would like to procrastinate to another time.

Love you all. Been a wonderful summer for us with so many of you sharing yourselves and your children with us. We miss you so much and thankfully look forward to visits from more of you!

As always,

*Mom*