

Monday, Sept. 7, 1992.

Dear family,

This has been a very interesting summer; it was filled with many visitors and lots to do. Mark, Terri, and Rosie left yesterday and now I have a short breather before our Sisters Reunion. We leave Sunday after Mass and will be back a couple of days before LA and Rick arrive. Time (summer) has flown around here! Already weatherwise we are into fall. Trees are turning fast this year. Most of the tomatoes are still green though we did have some red already. Rosie was enthusiastic about picking them off the vines.

With much more busyness ahead, I determined that another chapter of my life is apropos lest there be too long a time between letters. The church fall calendar is starting with its classes this week. We will be doing Isaiah in bible class. Soon it will be canning time (Penny has apples ready and I have sauced and pied some of those). With so much to do one just cannot get bored.

We were in the first phase of our marriage when I wrote last. Mom had broken her hip and had become an additional burden to me. I quit nursing and gave full attention to the patients at home. As luck would have it, I realized that I was pregnant with LA. Fortunately I had no problems with nausea but I admit to being very sleepy those afternoons of the first 3 months. It is a hard thing to take when the demands upon my time were so great. The fractured hip was easier to care for than the increasing amount of mental instability Mom was now showing. She became quite neurotic, fancied people were after her, heard voices and noises in her own world. I mentioned her sleep pattern. Every other night she would lay awake and make noise by pulling on her traction. No use telling her to stop; she was beyond taking orders. She would then sleep all day and I could not do much about that. Dad would help by trying to keep her awake in the afternoon so that we would get some sleep that night. In that mental state, she became incontinent and had a bladder infection so that she could not have a catheter. We did not have an automatic washer! Enough said; you get the picture. I was BUSY! All the psychiatric training in the world does not teach you to keep your own sanity while this goes on 24 hours a day everyday. That was the hardest year and a half of my life and I repeat that I could not have done it without the support (emotional) of your father. He would talk to me and take walks around the block to get way for just a few minutes. He did all the shopping, paid bills, and did what he could to make life easier for me.

Uneducated neighbors and friends did not come to the house to visit---even the relatives stayed away. My siblings came when they could which was not that often. I mentioned Es was in Midland, Edith in Pinconning, Gee in Jackson, and Pen in Grand Rapids training so that left my brothers in the city with me. They had busy lives and kids of their own. Ernie was coaching sports as well as teaching so he was busy evenings too. Time passed and eventually Mom's hip healed enough so that she was out of traction. She had a very bad limp but she did manage to get around. She got around too well and used to run off on me when I was not looking. She told neighbors that she was being kept prisoner and that they should call the police. Fortunately called me instead.

There were times when Mom seemed almost normal and that was encouraging and gave me hope. Then she would go off into a deeper delusion and it got so she would say her food was poisoned! Things really got to me and that may have been one reason LA was born early. The work load, the stress, lack of sleep---whatever, anyway I went into labor and started bleeding. It was a difficult delivery (feet first) and LA was small. The doctor did not hold out much hope for her. You know, of course, she was in the hospital 2 and a half months before I brought her home. She just then turned 5# and was not even sucking a nipple yet. I was feeding her by dropper less than 2 hours apart.

While LA was in the hospital, I concentrated on Mom, got her a wheel chair and she seemed better. She loved Dad! He gave her the joy and attention due her. Watching my parents through this terrible ordeal, I learned a lot about what true love was all about. Those 2 went through hell together with the depression, raising children, sickness, doing without and making do. They fought and yelled at one another those early days of my childhood but they seemed to change when the money crunch was eased. As the kids married and the pressures eased up, Mom and Dad did things together---well they would walk, stop at neighbors and talk, and spend some time playing cards. Mom was a poor loser! Dad would play poorly so that she would win. Now that the chips were down and Mom needed his love and support, he was there for her. She got so that she didn't know anyone else (I was "that woman who keeps house here") but she would hold Dad's hand and know he loved her. She was sweet with LA, too. Getting dinner some evenings, I would put the baby in her lap in the wheelchair and she would coo over her and make her laugh. I must confess that I am crying at this moment in remembering this.

This was going to be hard I knew (I took time out to compose myself) but I did not expect to cry. I thought about not telling you all the details but that would not be truthful---especially to myself. You all could live without knowing about Mom, but I had to share it with you for ME!

In April of 1952, Mom made a feeble attempt to kill me. I was on my knees doing floors and she took a towel, got behind me and tried to choke me. She had little strength and I was not in real danger but Mom was no longer in control. I discussed this with her doctor and he recommended that she be institutionalized for my sanity. The pressure of 24 hours a day of tension was wearing me on me. Dad agreed and Mom was hospitalized in Traverse City. She wasn't there 2 weeks when she had a severe stroke and died. Had I known her life was soon to end, I would have kept her home to the end. What flak I got from Mom's siblings and relatives! Helen's Mom was the worst. She never came to see Mom or give me a rest but she laced me up and down for committing my mother to an institution! The lack of understanding really made me ill. LA was not yet a year old. I was emotionally and physically tired. Dad and my siblings understood. That was all I needed to know.

Just one more tender note in regard to this year in my life. St. Stanislaus has the custom of having the Angulus bells at noon and 6 pm. This is a reminder for those who pray for peace or whatever to say a few simple prayers. After those bells are rung, if someone is dead in the parish, they ring 3 additional bells to remind parishners to pray for the dead. I had never seen my Dad cry (it was not the thing to do!) but when those bells tolled for Mom, he sobbed! He needed a hug then. Oops! I'm tearing myself again.

This was also the year my brother Al died of ruptured ulcers leaving 4 children and his wife pregnant with another. Mom didn't realize the significance and was not able to go to the funeral home or Mass. It was a blessing as when Pinky and Don died, she was inconsolable.

Well, I'm relieved that part is written. It was difficult for me to share this with you. First year of marriage normally is happy and fulfilling and I pray all of you had that blessed year. Your Dad and I have had a lot of happy years after Mom's death. I will go into happier days when you came into our lives the next time. Thanks for listening!

All my love,

Mom

*We miss you! Hope your trip back was not too
hurry + that you got back safely. We enjoyed your visit
& look forward to seeing you again.*