

Oct. 2 to 4, 1992.

Dear family,

Several weeks (busy ones!) have lapsed between letters. This week has been filled with something everyday and here it is Friday already. We spent from 9 to 1 at the Community Center in the second day of a drivers education course for seniors updating our skills and refreshing our knowledge of what to do on the road to be better and more informed drivers. It was time well spent. AARP provided the instructor and the text. Dad has been wanting to do this since we moved up here. Now it is done. Bible classes are in full swing and we managed a trip to see Helen who is now in Sterling in a nursing home----and very unhappy about it!

The saga continues. The last episode gave you a bird's eye view of our first year of marriage. (I do keep a copy for myself so that I can reread and try not to be redundant. It is also in my file in the computer so I can refer to it if I desire. Sage advice from your father.) That last letter was the hardest to write with many memories of a sad nature and they were hard to live through.

Your Dad should be filling in the gaps of his life at this time. Surely he will share that with you in his time. I have seen his format and he is using an entirely different approach. He is much more organized. You know he has been that way all his life and could be no other way. I go with the flow. You accept me as I am too. I mention this because he needs to tell you about his side of the details, his job changes, etc.

After Mom died, I had Lee Ann and Dad to care for. Dad's ulcers were bothering him a lot. Since Mom was not there to object to Dad having surgery, upon advice of his doctor Dad was scheduled for a gastrectomy. Fortunately Dad had Bay City's finest surgeon (advantage of having worked in the hospital and know he was tops!) He removed two thirds of his stomach---all the scar tissue---and had him up on the side of the bed by evening. That was just the start of early ambulation. In my training period we would keep the patients in bed a week before we tried to get them up. We kept mothers in the hospital for 10 days and they didn't get up until the 7th day. He had Dad eating soft foods the next day and within a week we had him home. Gee came in from Jackson to special Dad and I took care of her 2 children and Lee Ann while she was on duty. I was pregnant with Doris. I had no uniform to fit me. Dad made a remarkable recovery. He resumed eating foods that had been tabu to him for years. You probably remember Dad eating Polish sausage and eggs while he visited with us. He was enjoying real food and he was one happy man! Dad gained his strength quickly. He used to take Lee Ann out in the stroller when I got dinner. His friends would fill LA with candy taking away any appetite she would have for a proper dinner. When I spoke to Dad about this, he would remark that he could not disappoint his friends who were trying to be kind. Dad was a special person; uneducated, but a thoroughly good person who loved his God very much.

If Dad missed Mom a lot after she died, he did not share that with us. He always hid his feelings so we were very sure how he felt. He did seem more relaxed. He welcomed the surgery. He suffered many years and had about enough. I had the feeling he believed Mom in her prognostication of his death if he went for the operation, but he suffered so much that death would have been a welcome release. Once Mom was out of the picture, we used to tease Dad about remarriage. There were women who would go out of their way to talk with him. Dad's attitude was that one woman in a lifetime was enough. My purpose in telling you this is to enlighten you of the change from havoc we had been living with to the very first peace any of us had experienced in a number of years. I was especially happy for Dad. He took up fiddling again. Many years before Mom had sold his fiddle without asking permission and Dad was deeply hurt. Mom used to call his fiddling "screeching" and had decided that she had enough. Somehow, somewhere he found the replacement you kids will remember. When Jack Batcke showed an interest (which he never developed) in the violin, Dad bought him one. In later years, Jim John got Dad's and took some interest. I think he finally got rid of it in his last move. You will remember Dad had little ability but got real pleasure for many years to his death making his own brand of music. Ernie tells me that Dad even played on his last birthday; he died a few weeks later. My Mom had a beautiful alto voice and sang in our church choir. So, there is a love for music in our family.

Once Lee Ann was out of the woods healthwise, we were a happy family. Your Dad got a better job with Austin engineers and made more money. We bought the food, paid the utilities but lived rent free. Hospital costs from LA's 2 and a half month stay at the hospital took the savings we had. Because she came so early, our insurance did not cover expenses so we were mighty glad to be free of major expenses. By the time Doris came

along, we were a stable family with a future to look forward to. It bothered me a lot that your Dad was not doing the kind of work he had prepared for in college. Penny was in her last year of training when we decided that we could leave Bay City and think of ourselves for a change.

John Giorgis was the one who introduced Dad to the idea that GE would be interested in him. We took a vacation to Washington that summer of 1953 and on the return trip to Michigan, stopped in Schenectady to see John and Agnes. John arranged an interview with the higher ups, they liked your Dad, and he had a job offer. I waited until Penny was through with her training and would make her home with Dad. Your Dad went about 6 weeks earlier, lived John and Ag until he found a place for himself, and then searched for a flat for us to live in.

Perhaps you can understand our enthusiasm for starting our new life. Remember when you went off to college and how free you felt? It was like a breath of air in leaving a stifling room. Long had I waited for us to be a family on our own! Your Dad was marvelous about my staying in Michigan when I was needed. The sad part was that there were no engineering jobs in Bay City. I felt the lesser jobs he took were demeaning to him, but I never heard a complaint from him. To this day he finds some merit in having been a "peon" for that period when he worked at the power plant. I am not sure what he will tell you about this part of his life, but I want it on record that he was a real hero to me and the Zielinskis. I know God is blessing him in many ways for his efforts.

The flat that Dad found for us in Schenectady was a large 2 bedroom upper part of an old house. It was furnished with old stuff, wall papered, and needed a lot of TLC. The things we had amassed in Michigan (crib, some furniture, etc) were coming but not in place. I had dare hope for better but Dad assured me that he looked at a lot of places and this was the best for what we could afford. LA was a bit over 2 and Doris about 6 months when we made the move. You can be assured there was a lot of cleaning (even wall paper) that had to be done before I felt it was more like a home should be. We had 2 flights of stairs; 1 in the front, the other to the back yard. I had an Easy Spin washer in the kitchen and hung outside. In the winter there was an attic above us that had clothes lines and I dried there. Birds somehow would get trapped up there so often I had the experience of dodging flying birds (who were as terrified as I was, I presume) and finding dead ones in their fatal attempt to get free. It made life interesting.

Perhaps I should have told you about the train ride to Schenectady; it was a harrowing one! Helen drove us (myself and the little ones) to Detroit to catch our train. We had a bedroom compartment. Two bunks but LA would not sleep in the upper so 3 of us crowded in the lower one together. Doris was good, but LA was cranky and irritable which in turn made her Mom cranky and irritable! It was an overnight train and supper was had before we left, thank God. I was breast feeding Doris so that feeding her was not a problem but LA just was the unhappiest baby I had ever seen. No amount of cajoling helped and we were a mess when we got to Schenectady. LA didn't remember her father. She treated him like a stranger. I had not been to Mass (it was Sunday when we arrived). I took off for Mass leaving the 2 with their father. LA cried the entire time. The lack of sleep might have been a contributing factor adding fuel to the fire. Meanwhile the landlady downstairs is tearing her hair and wondering if she made a mistake taking us as tenants. Rent was prepaid so we were safe. We all got to be good friends after a time but it took a while. Dee-dee (landlady) even came to see us in Scotia when we moved.

There was one incident in which Dee-dee came to my rescue and helped me save Doris' life. Before our furniture came I had to use our bed as a sleeping place for Doris. The bed had old fashioned springs and mattress along with the traditional headboard. Doris, ever the wiggle worm, only 6 months old, worked herself up on that bed and managed to wedge her head between the springs and the headboard. I tried in vain to free her so I yelled at the top of my voice help to Dee-dee. Fortunately she was home and came running. I put my full weight on the springs and made enough room for Dee-dee to snake Doris back out of the hole she was in. Another few minutes and she might have choked to death!

Enough for this letter? Whew! living that over was almost as scary as when it happened. My love to one and all.

Mom
Thanks for writing Terri! Your support means a great deal to me. Mark has chosen wisely. Hugs for all.