

Biog XV

10/13/92

October 12-14, '92

Dear family,

We (Dad and I) just got back from a walk that was unbelievably beautiful! This has been the most gorgeous fall that I can remember. I trudged out of the house tired to begin with but once out in the cool fresh air, I was quickly refreshed in spirit. This is one of the reasons I came back to Michigan. Summer was cool and pleasant. What will the winter bring? With a renewed spirit and a cup of coffee at my elbow, I feel enough energy to continue with my life story.

As I recall, I was telling you about those first years that we were on our own at last. Living in a flat---especially with someone else's furniture---was depressing at times. Once some of our things arrived and the place got the care and attention it needed, we found life pretty comfortable. John and Aggie had Johnny by then so we had a lot in common. We saw them often and it was ideal to have ready made friends to share some meals and take rides together. John did not have a car yet so we would take them out Sundays for an afternoon drive. Johnny loved to sleep in the car. Lee Ann and Doris had other ideas but we had a good time anyway. We shared some picnics, sometimes Ag and I shopped together for clothing, and Dad and John got on famously and still do.

When the Giorgis's got a car, Dad taught Agnes to drive. She had never been on a bike and lacked confidence in steering and stopping. Dad would admit to Ag being his most difficult student to teach. You will recall he taught me and all of you. He also taught brother Al's wife when he died so that he has done a lot of teaching behind the wheel. Aunt Ag took the test 3 times before she passed!

There were few children in the neighborhood but Lee Ann was lucky as there was one little girl, Meg Cooper, her age and the two played together very well. Once I took it for granted that she was with her and put Doris down for a nap. Minutes later I went out searching for her and she could not be found. I screamed and asked neighbors if they had seen her and had all negative replies. Like with Doris and the bed episode, I was near panic! There was an alley behind our dwelling and we used it to get into the garage. There she was playing in a pile of sand oblivious of my concerns. She heard me but did not respond! Kids!

We must have been in the flat about a year and a half when I realized I was pregnant with Jim. We had a tiny room off the living room which opened to the porch. It was big enough for a crib, but little else. We were a bit strapped for room and a safe yard for the kids. It was then that we began looking for a house. Our landlady tolerated the children but the handwriting was on the wall for her to accept another one. She did not say that exactly but was edgy about the noise the children were making. She went to the horse races in Saratoga often, got home late, and desired to sleep in. With 2 active children up and about in the early morning, she no doubt would wake up cross. The house was not well insulated against noise so the patter of active feet did filter down to her. She did not try to dissuade us when we told her we were looking for a home.

Dee-dee and I did become good friends. She had a son who in a special school. He had an IQ of a moron at best. Phillip (the little guy) would report to me when he got home and would watch television until his dad came home from the post office. If the girls were napping, I would sometimes watch TV with him. Would you believe that we watched the Mac Carthy hearings! The TV was just a box to him and he watched anything. Dee-dee was fascinated with the hearings and had it on all the time she was home. When I hung a load of wash out, she would invite me to watch (if I had time and opportunity). She believed Mac Carthy hook, line and sinker and had all sorts of arguments to present in his favor. I kept quiet about my being labeled a "comie" in high school. I might have been invited to an early exit of the place. So that Mac Carthy area goes back to just before Jim was born. We've come a long way since, eh?

Less than half way through the pregnancy, I had a problem. It may have been precipitated by my having carried heavy bags of groceries up the stairs; God only knows. I started bleeding pretty badly and started to labor. I was scared, of course. Bed rest, medication and lots of prayers saw me through the pregnancy in relative safety. There was some septicemia (blood poisoning) and I had a special no salt diet to put up with too. I tried very hard to be patient and good about this turn in events. With 2 active children to look after, no sisters about to help me, and a house to be moved into around Xmas time, it was rough going. It was then that we got our own television set to keep me and the kids quiet when Dad was at work. Sometimes Ag sent over a meal but she was in Scotia and we were in Schenectady. Long about moving time, I was doing much more than I should have and worked too much. We did get moved in before I started bleeding again and Jim

needed to be born. He was about 3 weeks early. I did not go into active labor without being induced by drugs. I remember short bouts with labor and then they anesthetized me. I woke up finding a transfusion running and being told it was over and that I had a son. The Lord had been kind and gentle with me again! I felt stronger after Jim was born than with any other of you. It must have been extra good blood! They did caution me to be careful and I tried to be.

To this day I feel a special closeness to Jim. I can't explain it, but I feel through him I got my life back. I really thought I lost it in delivering Lee Ann! That was a truly painful delivery; such a small baby and so much pain! Jim seems like a gift in a very special way. I had prayed very hard when I almost lost him. Having held on to him, I knew God was really looking after me and him. Being my first son also may have some influence in this closeness that I feel to him. Please, none of you feel slighted. You are all very special to me and if I had to choose a favorite, I could not! I have been guilty of doubting the wisdom of having had so many of you so quickly. I would almost despair in the thought of being pregnant again and again. My own selfishness would cry out in unanswered pleas of how I was going to cope handling yet another child! My every waking moment was already full to the brim; how could I go on? The answer was always the same, alone I could not do it. God was always there for me, guiding me. You know what a terrific Dad you have; he was absolutely wonderful. I don't know how he stood me while I was pregnant! My temper was razor sharp and everything became a "big" issue. Instead of nausea and vomiting, I had this bad temper to control; it was not easy. How I worried for you kids! I felt like a cruel mother (Cinderella's step mother equal) and I was sure you all hated me with justification.

Bringing Jim home from the hospital was such a joy! We had our comfortable home now with a yard. Once my strength returned, I was back on a normal diet and life looked good to me. Jim had his problems keeping food down and often he had to be refed. I had to give up nursing him and resorted to a bottle. He was such a good baby and a very good little tyke when Mike and Mark came along. I remember feeling very guilty in ignoring some of his needs to tend to the younger two. My eyes fill with tears in remembering seeing Jim, crying in the playpen while I had Mike on one knee and Mark on the other. Lee Ann and Doris did a lot to try to be pals with you, Jim. They would try to interest you in toys and make you laugh. What you really needed was a huge hug from your Mom and she was too busy to give it to you. Mike and Mark came so quickly after Jim that I felt strongly that the bonding I really wanted to give to this special son of mine, was put on hold. Jim has never made me feel that he felt slighted; it is my conscience that tells me that. You were all wonderful children in those busy years. I was proud and still am of every one of you. If there was sibling rivalry afloat, I was not ware of it until the youngest 3 had their squabbles.

Since this is a family history and I have no idea how your Dad is going to approach his health problems, (if at all?) I will share with you about his allergies the best that I can recall. I remember that he had some hay fever symptoms, (runny nose, itchy eyes) soon after we were married. It seemed to be a seasonal thing, spring to fall, with relatively calm winters. When we got to Scotia, the allergy symptoms started earlier and lasted longer. It became so annoying that I insisted he see a doctor. He was told then that the clearing of his throat was habitual and the doctor could not account for why. He has been prescribed drugs to ease him along during the worst parts of the year. The shots did not start until we got to Florida. He is taking something all the time now; less in the cold months but still some. He has been seeing a psychiatrist for over a year who seems to treat him with sedatives to calm his throat reflexes. There is improvement (slight) but the medicine seems to make him drowsy. You may have noticed that when his mind is occupied, his throat is very quiet. Likewise when he is relaxed or sleeping. He is at the piano now and nary a cough is coming forth. If I am to reach saint-hood, it will have to be through my decision to accept what is in him. I do complain but not often to him. As marriage encounter taught us, "the only one you can change is yourself" and I have tried to adjust. His skin cancers started early in our married life, too, and he had his first removed shortly after we moved to Scotia. You are aware that he has had dozens since then.

Seems I have jumped around this time. Next time I will share with you more about our family life and some of the joys and sorrows we shared as a family when you grew. I love very much. Doing this writing reminds me of what terrific kids you were and what a blessing you have been to your parents. Thanks!