

Tuesday, December 29, 1992.

Dear Family,

We had a great Xmas! Hope yours was as pleasant. Tom being here and your phone calls made the day for me. Aunt Pen had the full crew and I was envious. Likely we will never have that pleasure again; we are too many in number and too scattered. Gift wise we did very well, too, and thank you very much. I said phone calls are enough and I meant that but thanks anyway. Pattie, I didn't get the wine glasses until yesterday! Some 2 day delivery service! I know you sent them in plenty of time to get here for Xmas. I was beginning to think them lost. In this carefully wrapped box came a wonderful T shirt with all my grandchildren hand prints! It is just darling! I giggled and teared when I got the significance of the shirt. You must have gone through a lot to get that done, Pattie, and thank all of you for cooperating so that she got all the hands together on the shirt. What a cute idea. I am mad that it did not get here in time so that I could have worn it when the Schmidt clan was here for dinner Sunday. That would have been a cute way to brag about "my" grandchildren.

Life has been busy and very full since my last letter; it seems ages ago and checking back I see the last letter was in late November! Dad has been more diligent than I and says he is ready to send on another chapter. If I was as careful as he, I would be 20 years getting mine done. I'd be long gone by then and you would not get the full story. Being who I am, I'll go on extemporaneously as I have in the past. With you children now on the scene, (and probably remembering more clearly than I do with my addled brain) I could move on more quickly. Some of you have said you have been and still are interested for us to continue. This has been an experience for me. Most of my life I have concluded that people are not interested in who I am as a person; to find you children actually inquisitive about my past gives me an ego boost! Thanks! It may not be true but I have felt that for most of my life I have been taken for granted. In growing up I had the feeling that "Lee will do it" (whatever!) and she did because it was expected of her. I remember few thank yous. As a married person again my full time was for my husband and children. It wasn't until Marriage Encounter that I began to realize I had worth as a person. Our marriage, my needs, and then you children was the picking order.

Since I have started on this topic, I may as well go on. You are where I was in those years before ME. I see the same devotion of selflessness to your families as I had. You work your fingers to the bone, your whole attention is centered about the children and their needs. You seldom get out as a couple alone. I remember the first time I left Lee Ann and saw a movie. Pen was a nurse and the best sitter anyone could find, and yet I was miserable through the movie. I had the idea no one could take my place and I belonged home with her. What a "duppa!" (that's ass in Polish) If I knew then what I know now, I would have taken a lot more time to get to know my spouse, enjoy him while I was young with life to celebrate, and put you children last. Once I started to do that, I found I had a lot more energy, was a happier person, and jobs went smoothly. I then was content as a person, happier in my relationship with your father, and realized my being taken for granted was of my own making. In these later years you may have heard, "I'm worth it!" from me when good things came my way.

You are to know, too, that had we not started in ME to realize to the importance of OUR relationship, Dad and I would be married singles each doing his own thing even today. There is enough of that anyway. He has more free time to spend at the computer, reading, and doing his thing own while I am still "housewifing". We do go out as a couple, have things to talk about when we walk, enjoy bible study together etc. etc. We need space from each other too. My day and a half off every week came through a discussion we had. Dad is now helping to clear the table, put dishes in the washer, and get his own meals on the days I choose to be away. If I decide to stay in, I cook dinner and he cleans up. You know Dad's allergies are a constant irritation to me and I have had to learn to accept them. ME says the only person you can change is yourself and he is not about to. So far none of the treatment (even psychiatry) has done much good. Were I to start over again, (and had the knowledge I now possess), I would spend less time in the kitchen and more time smelling the roses enjoying life. God has been good! My life has been pretty much my own since Tom went off to college. Your Dad and I have done some wonderful things together. Life has been full, pleasant, and rewarding. One of the things that turns us on is the freedom to travel. I have been to the Grand Canyon and San Francisco--- great longings of mine as may well remember. Seeing Alaska is a dream not yet fulfilled. It may happen when we go West again. Perhaps I will be the first Hamill to see Alaska instead of being the last as in seeing the West Coast.

Seems I have been packing us off for Endwell a long time. This is the third attempt to get us moved! However---a few stones are left to be upturned! I don't remember telling you of the fenced in area we had in our back yard in Scotia. It was an area of maybe 12 by 14 feet. With 3 young boys under foot all the time, it was not easy to keep a watchful eye upon them. There had to be a place to put them while I dashed to the basement to get another load of clothes to hang out, answer the phone, or what have you. Mike especially hated to be put into that play area. I can picture him even now crying his eyes out, feet on the support boarding of the gate trying to scale it to venture out! Jim was a little smarter. He started digging out a trench under the gate (just like a dog!) as a means to escape. We would fill it in, pack the ground down, but like the gofer, he didn't give up. I remember 3 boys into the challenge and making it play time to get the opening back into crawling out shape. They succeeded! Dad gave up and pulled the darn thing down. There was also a sandbox at the back end of our property. I had it placed way back so by the time you got to the house, you had less sand in your shoes and clothes. Once a week new sand was placed in the box; every week more sand spilled into the grass and carried into the house than the project was worth ---to me. You kids loved that sandbox and never seemed to tire playing there. There were roads, bridges made with sticks, and block houses. You were such an imaginative bunch of kids. When the sand was not replaced, you used what was left in the lawn but interest was soon dead.

You may remember, the long pulley clothes lines I had in the yard. We had them in Endwell too. The small back porch had a ledge about 8 inches wide 5 feet up from the frame. Those were the days before automatic washers and dryers. I would hang the clothes largest to smallest and send them down the line to dry. When I took them off, I would stack each kids clothes separately on that ledge, and then had you kids take them upstairs to your dresser space. When you would ask, "Mom, where is my underwear or whatever?" I had a ready response of, "Right where you put them, dear!" We had to have a system and cooperation to keep the busy household in semi-order.

Remember the busy jobs you had before you went to school, Doris and Lee Ann? I don't remember what LA had to do but Doris was assigned to dust mop the upstairs floors. We had beautiful wooden flooring that needed constant care and waxing. Kids will be kids and they grouse about "all the work they had to do" and parents have to keep in mind that they are teaching responsibility when they could do the work themselves in a short time. Anyway---at times like this I was reminded all over again of when I was a kid and had those same feelings with assigned tasks. "I would run away and then who would do all the work for the family after I am gone" rationalization took over. Don't get the idea she was the only griper! You all did it and probably remember as well as I do about my youth. Keeping in mind how I resented all the responsibility I had to assume as a member of a large family, I know I bent over backwards trying not to heap too big a load upon any of you. If you don't believe that, you have no idea of what I went through as "the responsible one" in our family. Some of my siblings still have no idea that it was a position I had not chosen or even that I did all that much. Being taken for granted is not a desired nor healthy thing. My siblings did a lot for the family. I have shared with you that we all pitched in; it takes that to make a family. My family married early in life except for me and that automatically made me the oldest at home and the responsible one. I, for example, had to quit college and come home to nurse Mom when she fell ill. With God's grace I did go back.

Sorry! We have not picked you up at St. Joseph's school in our Ford station wagon yet for our adventure ride to Endwell. Mary and Teri are at the Lominis' being looked after while the final packing is being completed at 123 N. Holmes St. Will you wait with bated breath to the next letter? They used to leave us with a cliff-hanger in the chapter plays at the movies in the 30's to entice you to come back for the next installment. The ride to Endwell was something and you may be interested in my version of it. I will not rush through it now. Next time we will get there. I promise.

Much love,

Mom

It's appy "93! Enjoy life. You're only young once time around. Hang for Rosie. She sure has cute hands.