

Monday, March 1, 1993.

Dearest family,

It has been too long between letters again! It seems each day gets busier than the one before it. How this manages to be is a mystery as your Dad is helping with the housework (still doing evening dishes and the heavy work on Fridays). I did all that and more in my normal schedule and still found time to write. I will admit to reading in a lot of my free time. For years I had no time for books; now I read every free moment. I enjoy mysteries and have taken to reading a lot of John Lutz (a Pulitzer prize author) and find his way of solving problems very fascinating. He has a lot of profanity (seems to be the "thing" in literature these days) which I thoroughly dislike, but that is a price I pay for reading a good story. Your Dad has always been an avid reader and continues to be one. He came across a list of "Should be read books" in Heritage Magazine and tries very hard to get and read them. He just finished Oliver Wiswell by Kenneth Roberts (over 800 pages). He tells me it is a historical novel of the Revolutionary War period which he hugely enjoyed. There are some 42 books on this list which he intends to pare down one at a time. Compared to his reading, I guess I got junk but I like what I read.

We will be on the road again. Actually we are flying to Texas March 20th and returning the 29th. Late in April we intend driving to Columbia to be there for the arrival of Mary's son. We will leave Florida for a Thanksgiving or Xmas vacation. We are staying home this summer to be here when the weather is at its best and we can enjoy any visitors who may want to spend some time here. You are all welcome; just don't come at the same time. We can put up 8 without a hassle, however.

We are enjoying a cold and snowy winter like that of my youth here. One day we had a foot of snow (we shovelled 4 times and the blower came in very handy) and that was atop some we had already on the ground. The earlier snows I was in no condition to help; this last one I was ready to pitch in and I did. I enjoy this work. It gets me outdoors. The air feels fresh and clean. It is gorgeous when the snow is new and clean. As you probably remember of New York days, as soon as you got your drive and walkways done, the plow comes through. That happens a lot on Swede as it is one of the main arteries north and south. Since we moved here, there has been a lot of construction and the road gets used more often. This means they clean it first---which is nice yet the apron to the street needs to be cleaned more often. Our walks are more of a challenge. That is good for us. Your father is a dedicated walker! He will go even I feel it is too slippery or cold. Properly attired, it is comfortable and enervating. We have had no January or February thaw. You should see the heaps of snow in the parking lots around town!

It was my intention to write more about our Endwell days. Somehow I managed to fill almost a page in "catch-up" material of news about home. Surely you are more interested in those earlier days. Since my brain is not as young and agile as it was when we lived in Endwell, there may be errors in what I recall and when. I will not try to be chronological or delve deeply. I will share what I remember best. With you children on the scene now these letters are like a sharing; talking over old times. In this case it is a monopoly! I have the floor. When you are raising 8 children, having the floor is novel. The demands of the children came first. Those were pre Marriage Encounter days and you children came first in our lives. We had within us college religion and a marriage course that stressed the prime reason for marriage was for procreation and education of our children into the Catholic faith. You should remember our dedication in providing you with a Catholic background. The schooling, family worship at home and church, the honesty and integrity we strived to teach, consideration for one another (yet with a healthy respect for each other in private rights with your own things), good and healthful meals, clean clothes, a warm house, attention to your individual needs (very hard with 8 on hand), doing things as a family, (wonderful vacations with the Schmidts among them) encouraging you to study hard, (hopefully without nagging) and nursing you through illness to mention just a few of the things we do as parents. Granted these are all positive things and we parents tend to forget the many mistakes we make along the way. Hopefully we left no permanent scars in the negative things in your lives. Now in rearing your own children you have an appreciation of some of the sacrifices you make in being parents. Love is a powerful force and we sure loved all of you---and still do. For the most part, I am pleased in myself as a parent. Living in today's world and starting over again likely I would do some things differently---but only through what I have learned through experience. For sure, I would take more time for myself to "smell the roses" and enjoy the better things in life while I was young. I have that opportunity now and I do take advantage. Yet--there is that guilt sting! I tell myself that I am worth it but deep within me there is doubt. Marriage Encounter did a lot for us in positive thinking and I do owe a lot to the organization. Yet when I had youngsters about me all the time, it seemed impossible not to put them first. Looking back at it now, I view myself as a martyr to the cause and that seems unhealthy in my present thinking.

Who knows what you would be if we were free thinking, easy going, relaxed parents in rearing you? We'll never know now. You have that opportunity in rearing your own. In 20 to 30 years from now how will you evaluate yourselves? Prayerfully it will not be with remorse and guilt that I sometimes feel. God knows I did the best I knew how yet gnawing guilt is there in my doubting. We make your own decisions in life. I think back at the number of you I had and wonder was that fair? Yet how could I decide which of you should not have life? As Essie once asked long before I was married, "What difference would it make if you never had life in the first place?" If you are not born, there is no need to speculate about life. She had 5 kids; she must have changed her mind.

What does all this have to do with my biography? My dears, this is who I am. It is very difficult to share my opinions with you. I do believe to truly understand who I am, I need to share my understanding of life as I see it. Thinking back to my own parents I wish I had a better understanding of them as persons. I know only what they cared to show me and much of what I may have assumed could have been faulty. We tend to hide our feelings and reveal ourselves. You have to in life not to hurt the feelings of others. How wonderful it would be if I had better knowledge of my parents as kids that I could share with you! We children saw a lot of sadness and sacrifice and little joy in my parents. I would like to envision my mother as a child playing, having friends, schooling, etc. but I run a blank. You all should know who I am and was through my telling my story my way. I have had a wonderful life (and still am) and I want you to know it. Sure there were times when I would have dumped it all (I was ready with my recent rib fractures) but in bouncing back each time, there is value and life is good again. I have shared with you how I always loved to use my mind in making up stories to enjoy. Those cold mornings in bed as a kid were made an adventure with my mind enacting a happy day with a beautiful tree for Xmas---or what have you. I would enjoy knowing my Mom did likewise when she was a child. I cannot see her doing that! What a pity. I do remember Mom had a beautiful alto voice and she enjoyed singing. How lovely to have that memory.

We have had lunch and I am back but I seem to have lost the thread of what I hoped to share with you. Rereading (nice feature of the computer!) has not stimulated my brain. That happens in old age---I mean vivid recall is elusive. What is even harder to believe is that the far greater share of my life is behind me and not before me as it was when you children were growing up. There was such joy in watching you grow in mind and body! The sheer joy of realizing that we had a part in your formation as people of the future was ---is awesome! Life is still full and interesting for me. Living is an experience in itself. The last 20 years have been particularly rewarding. Not only have I been better educated in ways of Faith but also in the ways of the world. It is very upsetting in a way to realize the full impact of the nasty things that happen all over the world and in our own back yards, yet challenging and sometimes rewarding if we take the initiative to do something about them. We help financially, of course, but our church has support for Habitat and food for the hungry. I would like to get more involved in Habitat and we have talked about it but not done anything. Dad is so good in fixing things and I do a fair job of cleaning. These are areas in which much help is needed.

My hit and miss attitude in writing has forgotten to include Tom into our world. He was the only one born to us while we lived in Endwell. Teri was but 6 months old when we moved and I thought she was the last in line. I was well into my 40's by then. Heck no! Into our lives came Tom. What I particularly wanted to tell in this letter was how proud we parents were about you, as a group, being so receptive to each addition to our family. Sure I know you had no say about it but a lot of families built up resentment among the children. I remember how livid Essie got when Mom was pregnant with Penny! She was a senior in high school and Mom was in bed the last 3 months due to a fall on the ice. Es was a January graduate. Pen's birthday is January 14th and to hear her tell it, the weight of the Zielinski world was on her shoulders. We were all helpers around the house but Es felt the burden was all hers. Heck she even played the second lead in their senior play and she had to take time out to learn her lines. I remember going over her lines with her. I remember so well bringing Tom home. Oldest to youngest sat on the sofa and held Tom in the lap! It seemed like an immediate bonding to me! I'm not saying there was no friction among you, but basically you were cohesive and loving family then and I believe you still are. We are very proud of all of you!

Seems like my hope to finish my autobiography within a year of writing will not materialize. We are into March already and it will be a year in April since I started. You know what the rest of my life has been but you are not aware of how I felt with the emptying of the nest. It started in Endwell you will recall. Next time onward!

Love to one and all, Mom

Hope you all had a marvelous time on your vacation. Tell us about it when we see you in April or May. Hugs for Rosie - &