

January 11-14, 1995.

Dearest family,

While I was with Teri recently, we got to talking about my not having written about my life story in a very long time. She was particularly interested in your lives as children and wondered if I could elucidate on that part of our lives. Time does not improve my past memory (guess I am not senile yet!). With that thought in mind, I shall make an effort to illicit from my present memory what those early Endwell were like. You got it? This is another chapter to file away---if indeed you are keeping these pages. I must be allowed to share with you what I feel today about things that are now fading memories. In my attempt to abstract what I can please allow me the luxury of telling it my way---would be errors and all. Your memories likely will differ with mine. The judgements I made then are not necessarily what I would do today. As a reasonably responsible parent, I went with the flow. I tried very hard in disciplining you to be consistent and fair. Again I say, I have made mistakes and I'm sorry if I had judged you wrong or treated you unfairly. Many of you are now facing difficulties with your children. You are probably doubting yourselves as I did. Vivid in my mind is the fact that after I had punished you I often worried that I had been unfair. God heard many pleas from me to be forgiven for such transgressions.

Teri being a mere babe when we moved to Endwell probably has no recall of setting up our home. The house being so much bigger than the one in Scotia seemed like paradise to us. Tired as we were when we arrived and with a hectic meal at the motel in our bellies, we had to see our house before we retired. Picture 6 eager children running about the empty house staking claims and exploring. Everything looked so new (never lived in a house as young as this!) and wonderful complete with dishwasher and lots of cupboard space. I was happiest of all; I could not believe our good fortune. Never mind that we would be living out of unpacked boxes for almost a month. I was determined to have a place for everything---and everything in its place. Your Dad was happiest to provide each of you with a space of your own. It was most important to him for each of you to have your own bed, desk, and drawers. Unlike myself who never knew what privacy meant, your Dad was a pusher for individuality. He still feels the need to be private---to study, pray or just to be alone. I adapted to that very well. Need for privacy likely is part of us even today.

Establishing you in a Catholic school was top priority with us. The reason for this was to give you a better understanding of our faith. Dad and I had so little Catholic education. We found ourselves lacking to be good examples. Sure we did as our parents did (at least I did!) go to church, pray the family rosary, and believed once a Catholic always a Catholic that there was no salvation outside the faith. We hoped with proper education religion would be more meaningful to you than it was to us. I did feel that we grew in understanding as you developed. We took interest in learning more, took classes, joined discussion groups, and prayed with more sincerity and purpose. Without this growth our Faith would be hallow to us---a something you did because it was the thing to do and not because it is special to us and life would not be complete without God's love surrounding us. We do know there is salvation outside the Catholic Church. God's love is there for each of us. Hence you were all sent to Catholic schools; I believe they gave you a good basic education. I appreciated the discipline the schools encouraged. I remember stating to you children that if you were punished in school and told me about it, you could expect more at home. Teri reminded me of a confrontation she had with one nun, told her story to me and that I called the nun and discussed the situation to a happy conclusion. It was good to hear that I listened and acted accordingly.

It was very important to your parents to have me home when you kids came home from school. You may have gotten tired of graham crackers and milk (or an occasional lollipop) for an after school snack but I was there for you to bring home your papers and admire you for your efforts. I learned early in life that you don't say to your kindergarten child the picture they brought home from school was a tree when it was meant to be a flower. I found it more appropriate to say, "My how precious. Tell me about it!" (no hurt feelings). One of the hardest things to learn was to let you unwind after school. The nuns were great in demanding discipline. Homework delayed until after dinner gave you the chance to play. As you got older it was harder to force homework be done before television could be enjoyed. I heard a lot of "I did it in school" (ye, prove it!), "there was none today" sometimes true on weekends) or "I need Dad's help"---not often from most of you. I tell you now (if I missed telling you before) that you were all very responsible in getting your work done without a hassle. I have to credit Lee Ann. She worked hard for her marks. I was smart enough not to push her too hard. The rest of you with your multi brains blessed with at birth seemed to have wisdom to use your gift without nagging. I believe you have some of Dad's persistence to do things right and be proud of what and who you are. Parenting in that regard was a lot easier than a lot of other parents experience. Thank you, children!

The noise level among you children, the bickering, the spills at table, the mischief among you, and the tattling were not easy to take. I have poor tolerance for noise. (Strange to say being brought up with 9 siblings.) I like my music soft and no noisy gatherings.

Children will have their squabbles and tell on each other. I understood that yet they were hard to live with. Sometimes we adults forget what it is like to be a child. That is not good. I envy Mark and Terri who do such an excellent job of playing imaginatively with Rosie. Daddy becomes prince, Mommie whatever is called for. Dad had his "Cheezie-Weezie" stories. Looking back I realize I spent a heck of a lot of time being cook, servant, housekeeper, and nurse. I have those precious moments of you as infants, bathing, nursing, and blowing bubbles on your tummies during diaper changes. I can hear the roar of laughter from you to this day! I pray I did more with you than tell stories and participate in yard and playground games. How sad that my memory is so alive with service and so lacking in compassion and warmth. It brings tears to my eyes as I write that. There is no going back. Today I would take time out to "smell the roses". You children are doing a better job at patenting than I did, thank God. Your Dad is one excellent grandfather. He thoroughly enjoys playing and being with them and they know it!

Next I would like to go into what I remember most about each you as you were growing up in Endwell. That will be left for when we get back from Yellowstone. We had great vacations in Elgin and Albuquerque over our recent holidays---facts which I am well aware that Dad has given you a very good account of---so I won't be redundant. I thank both families for their generous gifts and the wonderful times we shared together. We enjoyed talking to those we had not seen. We are indeed one great family. I am so proud to be your mother!

Have a wonderful 1995! Love.

*Mom*

*Hugs for everyone. Be happy! Write when we get back.*