

Sunday, December 3, 1995.

Dearest family,

The spirit of Xmas is upon us! We have the snow and I already got my BIG Xmas present. I tell Dad that it is a Thanksgiving gift; I had it before that holiday. It is a JVC CD player---boom box! It is portable but it is not going to leave my divider between living and dining rooms. Pen and Lou have one; I enjoyed the music there so much. I suggested to Jim that I would like one for Xmas. That very night he was checking Consumers Guide and the very next day we shopped and brought it home! I got a Roger Williams CD with a lot of my piano favorites. I have played it so often it got trite. Now I have 2 more CD's, Piano interlude (Xmas music) and Van Cliburn playing Beethoven and Brahms. The machine holds 3 discs; I have plenty of music on hand while I am in that part of the house. It has a double tape deck and radio too! Your Dad is great! But you already know that!

Since I am in such a grateful mood, I've decided to share with you some of my very special thoughts about you children---maybe biography style. When I don't fall asleep easily at night or when I wake and can't get back to the arms of Morpheus during the night, my mind has to have something to occupy it. At times like these I prefer to have pleasant thoughts; lately I have been giving thanks to God for your specialness. To do that I have to bring each one of you to mind.

With Lee Ann's entry into to the world I grew in self worth. To have someone so small completely dependent upon me was a lesson in humility. At her birth I had no encouragement that she would live. You will recall that I had Mom and Dad as patients and was adjusting to being a bride. I was scared! Getting up so often during the night to feed LA with an eye dropper was sapping me physically. I learned I was made of what it took to do a difficult job; LA grew and bloomed to beautiful baby and wonderful human being. With her I learned the impossible takes a while if you persist. She warmed the hearts of her parents and Dzia-Dzia many times watching her grow. My Dad teaching LA to walk with a towel supporting her under her arms (to save his back) is very vivid in my memory. He finally succeeded when she was 20 months old! Being so premature growth and development was slow. She taught me a lot about patience. My Dad was her biggest defender often reminding me of her prematurity!

Doris was special in things LA was not. She came hurriedly (3 1/2 hour labor) and seemed to rush right through babyhood. She was pottie trained at 9 months (but breast feed the longest of all of you), was cause to put our Xmas tree in the playpen the first year of her birth, walked at 10 months, developed independence (the 'do it self girl!') very early on in life, and took on as leader of the pack. She learned quickly and usually kept that knowledge. She was an interesting child to watch grow. When Doris was born (in Michigan) Mom was already dead and my Dad just had gastric surgery. My hands were pretty full but at least with a "normal" baby who fortunately slept well between feedings, life was less hectic. Once Dad was recovered and back on normal diet (he had been on ulcer diets for at least 7 years), life was quite pleasant. Your Dad was not happy in the job he had. He was driving to Midland every day. When the GE job opportunity came along, we moved to Schnectady.

Adjusting to upstairs apartment living was a challenge. Two babies did not like the change and cried a lot which in turn upset the landlady. She spent a lot of the day at the Saratoga races and wanted to sleep late. My children napped while she was at the races. With this change in our environment I learned what it was to be a family unit without relatives around. It was a change fraught with many anxieties. I was forced to grow; this time in independence and social graces (had to make new friends).

When I became pregnant with Jim, we knew it was time to move into a home of our own.

DeeDee (landlady) said nothing when she knew I was expecting yet hinted we might need a place for kids to play outside. Your father was apprehensive and concerned about financing. It was a stretch for us. (Seem familiar to your own experiences?)

When I almost lost Jim in early pregnancy, I learned how much I really wanted to hang on to him! I could never have an abortion! It was scary enough just being threatened with losing this child. In a way having Jim made me feel whole and sane! Jim has rewarded me as a son to be proud of many times. I am proud of all of you but Jim and I have a special something I can't quite define. Maybe it is pride in having succeeded with odds stacked against us.

Having Mike and Mark so soon after Jim seemed like an impossible task that turned to stark reality! I confess I feel a sense of guilt of having neglected this precious gift of Jim's life. I remember his tearing face in the playpen screaming at me for attention when I had to hold or tend to the other two boys! With Jim I learned God does things in mysterious ways. Patience (that word again!) is important.

~~Having Mike so soon after Jim was scary! We did not plan it that way; it just~~ happened and more so with Mark! Jim had feeding problems which did not want to go away. I remember long hours refeeding being physically tired and emotionally spent!

Mike came in the dead of night during a snow storm. I was in active labor wondering if I was going to make it to the hospital in time when we had to stop for a train. Mike waited for the delivery table. He was a gorgeous baby! He was so cute he was often mistaken for a girl. He was a good baby fortunately. To this day think of Mike as being in a hurry-----always in search of the next step. I'm in awe of him. He has probably faced more adversity than any of you yet I have never heard him blame anybody for his misfortune. With Mike I grew not only in sense of wonder but also in trust. I thank God he handles himself so well. With his boys Mike reminds me of a big teddy bear you have to hug. He has a great capacity for loving those children and he is justly proud of them.

Mark warmed my heart early on in his young life. He was so kissable! Playing with him was a genuine pleasure; he responded quickly and with complete abandon. He seems to have kept that livability to the present day. Mark is warm and genuine; he responded with believable affection when I needed it and didn't know it. He is making a wonderful father displaying that warmth to share with Rosie. He has a real gift in writing. You are all good at it; I believe Mark is exceptional!

Mary! There is only one mold of her! Most of you have similarities that made you all Hamills. Perhaps I have this special affection for Mary because she reminds me of myself. As I grew up I tended to be a maverick. More than just "do it self" she seeks the adventure of not being read like a book. Some of that rubbed off onto Teri. Mary was/is not to be influenced but has to believe in herself and works harder than she needs to prove herself. people do accept her as she is. I am not sure she knows that. She sets goals for herself that John must find confusing at times. (you see an amateur psychologist at work here!) Like all Hamills, she has a lot of drive. She does her own motivating. Her experimenting in her early life (stomach pumping, climbing into mischief etc, etc.) just set the stage for the person she developed into. She wants to be and is strong.

Then came Teri! That fragile babe that come to life one Palm Sunday has shown the many strengths----carpentry, persistence, teaching ability, concerns for the environment etc., etc. Teri has the ability to be feminine and yet maintain womens' rights with courage and conviction. She has the ability to be loving yet maintain a sense of positiveness that has little to do with feelings. I believe she has great regard for the thoughts and feelings of others yet seems to be able to sort out the facts without emotion getting in the way. It took a lot of growing on Teri's part to

reach this stage of maturity. When she left for college in Orlando she had a lot of "protected environment" to readjust to a more independent life. That trusting almost naive gal learned the ropes with experience. A few men in her life, working, and living with Mary and Margo (especially) brought about some changes. Later we had differences in opinion that scared the heck out of me for a time. Luckily for both of us we came to an understanding. I believe we enjoy a good mother-daughter relationship with growth within each of us. Life as a PHD has not been a bed of roses. There is a lot more life with smoother sailing ahead for her.

The caboose, Thomas More (as Grandma Hamill said it: "Thomas PERIOD! not more" turned out to be prophetic) was the one child that I could give more attention to. We had our fun as a family; picnics, swimming, Spud, (you probably have your own list of family activity) but with the youngest and NOT being pregnant with the next one in turn, there was energy I didn't know I had. I remember playing basket ball and Frisbee. Frisbee was not my forte but I did toss the disc with Tom in the street on Capri. I see the advantage of having one or two children; you can make time for them. However, had I stopped with Doris the world would have been deprived of some truly great contributors. You all are assets to any community! Certainly none of you wish NOT to have the gift of life.

Most of you probably remember Tom growing up. He and Teri must live in a void of knowing the older siblings other than through here say-----like reading a book and starting in the middle. I feel pride in the way you as a family accepted each newcomer. I remember bringing Tom home from the hospital to be received by all of you---each in turn sitting on the sofa and being able to touch and hold the new baby. If you had any resentment, it was kept a secret from me. According to prognostication I being 44 at the time of his birth should have had a mongoloid child with an IQ of 40! For all THEY know! Happily Tom proved himself a worthy scholar above most intellectually. You can't be a candidate for a PHD with an IQ of 40!

Tom enjoyed a challenge and apparently still does. He had some interesting friends, played Dungeons and Dragons with zeal, and participated in Seabreeze's Brain team in competition other high schools. Letting Tom go off to Cornell was more traumatic than seeing the rest of you leave home. My baby was gone and I was left with time on my hands! It took adjustment to sit and rest in the afternoon and not feel guilty about it. It was after I talked myself into believing that I earned this easier life that I found peace within me.

Believe me, I have been over this letter editing and rephrasing several times and there is no way to condense this epistle. Please do take the time to read through it as I have given lots of thought and consideration. The messages heart felt. Hopefully you know me a little better. You are so far away and I see you less often. I have to refresh my memory like this to believe we were a family growing together. Please know I love you very dearly.

Dad insists that I repeat our Xmas plans. We will be at Doris's. Flight plans:
Leaving Midland Wed. Dec. 20 at 10:55 am arrive in Houston / Hobby at
2:43 pm
Leaving Houston Wednesday, Dec.27 at 9:05 am
Arr. Midland 11:40 am

If you need more than this information Penny has the complete scoop.

Xmas greetings coming soon. Stay healthy!

Hugs, love,
Mom