

My car and I make quite a team,
A comic one, so it would seem
Get someone else behind the wheel
and like a dog, she came to heel.
Goes right along as if content
to take us to the journey's end.
She saves her whine and wheeze for me
and clashes gears with grateful glee.
When I set forth in gloves and hat
I almost always have a flat.
Confronted with a grade she'll cry:
S"I cannot take this hill. Not I."
And then as if to make amends
And show that still we might be friends
She makes it to the garage door
before the gears fall on the floor.
If Grandpa had a team like that
He'd take them out and have them shot.

Frances E. Casagrande, date unknown

Cars Hate Me!

The letters of Frances Casagrande 1946-1957

Life was always fun in those early days of wedded bliss when the Man and I rode the highways and byways on our bicycles all over Long Island and New Jersey. But it became really exciting when the children and Lady Liz, a Ford of ancient vintage, entered the game. It was really a momentous decision to make, for I had resisted the [blandishment] of motorized transit these many years with the [reasoning] familiar to those addicted to a habit, saying that only by leisurely riding through the countryside can you appreciate all the [miracles] of nature and still get around faster than walking. I still believe that, but getting around with three small children clinging to your skirts can become quite a problem. The Man was doing his bit for his country in the Navy by this time and had adopted a mode of travel that made a bicycle outmoded. He hopped a plane to get from here to there. So one fine day, after struggling with the budget, trying to fit the outgo to the Income, I find to my pleased amazement that we were a little ahead. The Wolf at the door slunk off and hid in the woods, and I, gripping an ad in my hot little fist, went out and bought a used car. Well used, I might add. The windshield was cracked, the outside handle of the door was off, but to me it was a thing of beauty and delight. A car of my own. Of course I couldn't drive, and I'm sure the man I bought it from is still asking himself 'are women people'? He drove it home for me and parked it in the driveway

I took some driving lessons and with a courage born of the conviction that if others could do it so could I, piled the children in the back and took a few [cautious] turns around the block. With each successfully completed turn I got bolder and became a familiar sight practicing u-turns and parking. It seemed too easy when the instructor said: Now all you do is swing the wheel to the right until your front wheels are level with the rear wheel of the car ahead, then swing to the left and you're in. Hal'o simple did he say?

Step on the clutch, step on the starter, release the brake, shift into first. My head was whirling but I must have done the right things in the right sequence because the car started to roll. It was moving! I was driving a car. I found [my way to the controls] only to be met with the cold admonition for 'always keep your eyes on the road'

This book is a compilation of my mother's letters—newsy, amusing, filled with the every day details of life, and often concerned with her adventures with the automobile—during the post war years 1946 to 1957. There are a number of letters in the summer of 1946 when my father was working for the military in California and a few in 1947, but the majority of the letters were written from 1952-1957.

[rec'd 8/16]

August 9, 1946

Friday

Dear Lord & Provider(?)

[with drawing of stick figure mother, two young children, baby carriage, duck in pond near tree--park?]

The mailman has just been and gone and left me nothing but a cheery 'hello'. As you will have noticed by my previous letter I was not able to dig up a bottle for an airmail stamp, and as a matter of fact, this will be my last three-center, too. I guess for Sunday Dinner we'll go down to the ducks and pick out the one we've been fattening up these many day! (Your offspring feel themselves cruelly neglected as re: ice-cream cones, and their wails are loud and piteous and might be heard all the way to Miami) I sent Camille over to Mrs. Iger with some nice fresh string beans and she gave her a nickel (most unnecessary I thought) and of course it was lost and found a dozen times yesterday. When the 'tinkle-tinkle' of the ice-cream man was heard today there was a frantic search for that missing nickel and oh, the wails and tears! I finally found it and of course had to scrounge around for a bottle for Bobby. I scooted up to the store and spent an anxious five minutes running down that elusive white truck. Bobby was properly appreciative and impressed...He really is a good kid, you know, and never carries on the way our Eldest does when things don't pan out.

The man from Slomin's came today to clean the furnace. I was beginning to wonder whether they'd forgotten. Did I tell you Betty had an oil-filter installed? Cost \$7.50. She asked me to call Slomins and find out how much they charge. They want \$8.50. It's supposed to cut out clogged nozzles and they say it pays for itself after awhile. If all the things that are supposed to pay for themselves were added together-----!

Well anyway, the man left the truck parked in the driveway or what passes as such around here, and I went out to pick up some toy or other and didn't notice a large hook protruding from the side--it was all hidden in the forsythia--and rammed my forehead against it. I thought I'd split my head open. Honestly thee ought to be a law...against poor dopes like me, I mean. You better come home before I kill myself by slipping in the bathtub or somethin'.

Incidentally, I was talking to Betty about this and that and mentioned that I didn't think Anita was capable of taking care of children, and what do you suppose I found out?

Remember when we went to see Peckham's (and you were so uncooperative about going home) and we left her to mind the children. Well, it seems her mother won't let her mind them anymore because she had first of all a terrible time to get them into bed, had to call her mother for help and put them away in their clothes! and then we came home so late (you see!) and oh, a number of other reasons. What do you know. Seems to me the time to object was beforehand and she knew right well we wouldn't go out and come right back at nine o'clock...

Never a dull moment around here---, I heard the darndest screeches sometime last evening, like brakes going on, and thought I'd better round up the kids if there was a lunatic loose. I found them all right, all the kids in the neighborhood with the exception of our Bobby who was punished by staying in his bed. It seems the Volunteer Fire department of Lakeview practices over on South Oak, in front of Mrs. Skofskie's house. Of course I let Cammie stay and even went home and got Bobby out of bed, after all, a fellow doesn't see two fire engines close up like this every day. They had a grand time. The engine would come down the street like a bat out of hell and would brake to a stop, the men rushed out got the hose on, and so on so fourth. The fun was that they didn't always get the hose on, and then there was a fountain of water all over the street. The kids stayed there until it was dark, the longest they stayed up in ages, it was eight-fifteen when I finally dragged them home.

Well, my darling, I think I'll say goodbye for today. I'm plumb out of inspiration. Besides this does not seem to be my best day anyhow, for reasons you can guess. Gee, seems to me that period rolls around with astonishing frequency--every three weeks. I keep wondering if there could be something wrong! Guess I'm not looking at the world with rose-colored glasses today and look for trouble yet! Oh well. I have no one to growl at, unfortunately, but our poor kids. If they have any sense they'll stay away from under my feet, today anyway. But I love YOU, just the same. Even if I can't weep on your shoulder.....

The processing is still going in and out of Avis's guess even with the prevailing housing shortage people can't see \$14,000. in that house. Oh did I tell you, there's quite a furor kicked up here on account of the shoddy housing going up. The veterans have banded together and complained (and who can blame them) loud and long about their new houses falling down around their ears. Of course nobody wants to take the blame, and nothing seems to be able to be done about it. The FHA only warns prospective buyer to beware and look with eagle eyes at the houses offered for sale. That helps a lot when your ceiling parts from the wall, and your cellar is flooded with stinking smelling water from your waste pipe, as has been the case according to the paper. Yes, there has been quite a tempest in-the-teacup. And through it all the inspector maintains that the houses were perfect when he looked at them, and to his way of thinking there are no better homes to be had anywhere for the money. Of course the fact that he is a building contractor himself and in partnership with the company that put the houses up might have something to do with his sentiment. I'm darn glad we have this house, and I want to stay put...

Well, looks like I got another paragraph in after all, but now goodbye for sure. Take care of yourself, dear, and try to find some nice friends to talk to. Are you doing any better now? How long do the s'pose you'll be there? Or don't you know? We miss you.

With all our love and lots and lots of hugs from your loving Brood and ME your spouse.
[with drawing of crying baby standing in crib in font of window with word bubble "we want our daddy!"]

[rec'd 8/16--with drawing of boy and girl and bubble "Hello daddy" and letter "to daddy xxxx"]

August 10, 1946
Saturday

Hija, Darling:-

Thank you for your letter today (all contributions gratefully accepted) we're always more than happy to hear from our daddy. You know, any old crumb from your conversational table is more than welcome. And thanks again for sharing the wealth...Could you spare it, dear? You mentioned something about not getting your check?

I want to thank you, too, for that lovely birthday present...bet you didn't know anything about that did you? I got Archie and Mehitable from the library and noticed it was published in Garden City, so I asked Madeline to try to get it for me. She did, and it was only a dollar. Thank you so much! Oh, but I love Archie and his comments on Life and Love and What-have-You. Not to mention Mehitable, who is always the lady. Toujours gai, she says, toujours gai...

The Avis's both back from their vacation, I just noticed. But the parade is still on. The girl on the corner (I don't know their name) stopped me today and asked whether you came home this weekend????? I suppose the Schreiber's have their own source of information, eh? They must be right up on the news. So I told her you were in Miami right no, might as well give them the record straight. And she said, "Oh, I thought he was in Norfolk". (see what I mean?) and I said "No, he is, but.." Would you care to add a word or so to your fans???

Sunday

Well Darling and how are you making out in that Turkish Steam Bath of yours? Shall I enclose a little of this lovely cool breeze we're having this morning? Oh, but it's beautiful today, in fact we've had the nicest weather this past week. We've had some rain, it's true, but just enough to make a nice green lawn, and there is still lots of sun during the day.

Our string beans are swamping me, I've given Betty permission, nay, I begged and implored her to take some away whenever she wants them. She did this morning and found a huge green caterpillar, the nasty things been eating the leaves and I couldn't find it. Now it is no more...The tomatoes will come in any day now, and brother, is my tongue hanging out for some right now. There will be lots and lots of them, I can see that. No, don't say it. I can't stand the word 'canning'. I probably shall put up some tomatoes but I will not be bothered with the beans. Besides I haven't got a canner.

Well, darling, looks like you can't complain that your family neglects you. I may sound like a chattering, gossiping magpie, but I manage to get a page a day written to you.

It's almost like talking to you, you know, whenever something crosses what ordinarily passes for brain, I rush to the typewriter and get it off my chest. At any rate we think of you all the time...

Your kids are hanging from my skirt tails right now and saying, "You wrote enough Mama, come on now, I'm hungry" and to tell the truth the chicken does smell appetizing. We'll adjourn. Bye now, dearest, write when you can, and let's keep our fingers crossed that you'll be home soon.

With all our love and affection, as ever
[signed] Frances & Co.

[delightful drawing of mother in kitchen dumping huge basket of cherries captioned "picture of me surrounded by cherries"]

August 12, 1946

Monday

Hija, Skipper:-

Well, I have seen my duty and I done it...the HOUSEFRAU in me has cropped out once again. I noticed all those lovely wild cherries growing out there in the lots, and after sampling them (kind of tart and bitter) I decided they'd make dandy jelly, and besides, you gotta try everything once. So the kids and I, not to mention Duke, went and picked a strainer full and made jelly. It's quite a messy job, as you will remember if you think back to Albemarle and the grape arbor, but oh, what a swell tasting product it makes. Soooo, I went to work and picked some more. Up till now I've had six large glasses and I do mean large, and one to eat and several to give away. I told Mary about them, in case she feels ambitious too.

Incidentally, the moving man brought barrels to Avis's today and Mary went over with a stack of newspapers, so I guess it won't be long now before they'll move. I heard he's going to Pittsburgh. They seemed to have sold the house on Sunday (yesterday) because a real estate man came around today asking if there were any houses for sale and when we told him he went over and shortly came back and said they had both been sold. But yesterday the cars were still as thick as flies on a piece of meat, so that means they must have sold just then. They probably did get their asking price. I tried to get Mary to give out with some information, but she was apologetic and said it was confidential and she'd rather not say. Which was very white of her, I think. So whatever information is forthcoming will be through Betty, who said Nekton was handling it. Shall I get in touch with a real estate man, too? At thirteen thousand?

Erick stopped the car yesterday to say 'hello' and asked how you were. You know, that fellow has me tongue-tied. Can you beat it? But I just can't talk to him at all. I asked about the old man and Mrs. Isbister, and he said okay, and now this morning the girl from the corner, (what IS their name!) came over and told me that old Mr. Isbister had died last night. Of course being a well-brought up young lady I went right out and bought a sympathy card. I guess they'll sell that house now the Old Lady will not want to live by herself. And I don't think Eric would like her to.

Darling, thank you so much for that lovely long newsy letter. I'm glad you found someone to talk to, or should I say listen to? Six children, my of my, but they sound nice. I hope you don't want to exchange your little white brick house for a little white adobe mansion....

Incidentally, now that Schreiber's are away on vacation or something, the girl on the corner must be lonesome because she's come over and we've had some nice long chats

together. She told me about the house they bought and which they can't get into. Now they've been thinking of selling it again and buying Isbister's. She likes it out here.

Anita came and cried on my shoulder last Saturday because her mother wouldn't let her go away for a week. Boy, she sure took her hair down this time, Snow White's stepmother seems to have no edge on this one. Anita said a little more and she'll run away. I believe she'd do it, too. Of course I talked to her like a Dutch uncle and said time will heal all wounds and before she'll know it, she'll be eighteen or even sixteen and can go to work etc. etc. Poor little kid. But I still won't let me mind the kids anymore...

Goodnight now, dearest. We miss you more and more, and even hardboiled Bobby keeps asking when Daddy will come home.

Tuesday

Rose Binsack has just been here. I phoned her, you know, because I figured if we're going to do anything about relocating now is the time. I told her what we had in mind and she said she'd look through her files and see what she can find. It would help if you gave me some idea of what and where and how much--you see, that's the part of this arrangement I don't like. Not selling our house, or moving, but the fact that you're not here to look at places and decide about them. Well, we'll see what develops. Naturally I would want to have a place first before selling this, I've had my share of hole-in-corner living. Let me know just what you want and I'll try to do my best. You should have seen her eye light up when she saw this place, she said maybe you'll let me sell this house for you, and I said of course that's the idea...In spite of all the little flaws in the place, I don't think we'd have any trouble finding a buyer.

Islip? Merrik? Babylone? East Hempstead? Suffolk? Nassau? North Shore? South Shore? One Acre, two or three? Chicken Farm? ?????????????

Mrs. Iger just came to ask me to help her sew a skirt. So me and my scissors went on a neighborly good deed. I'll just cut this short today so I can catch the afternoon mail. Goodbye dear heart, I love you, come home soon.

With all my love as ever
Most faithfully yours,

Ye Olde Homestead
151 Harrison Street
West Hempstead, N.Y.
August 16. 46

My Dearest and Best:-

I truly wouldn't blame you if you shook your head in disgust and wondered audibly WHERE my head is. Just because I get a check for more than the expected amount and right away I'm thrown into a state of utter confusion! All I can plead in my shamed and cowed state is that you did mention in practically every letter I got that you hadn't received your expense money yet, and I knew you must be pretty desperate for cash, so I rushed right out and wired you some. But while I was stirring the jelly tonight (yes I'm still at it) in the quiet of the evening, I idly applied my mind (!) to the problem and it hit me like a bolt from the blue--two times \$163-.25 - \$326.50 -- and which is exactly what I got. But why they sent the whole months check has escaped me so far. Have you been fired? Or quit? or what?

Can you see it in your heart to forgive me this stupid mistake? Because you now have next fortnight's allowance. I don't believe I actually need it, do you think you might bring it back in person?????

Sperry's had a little strike flurry over in the Lake Success plant because someone was dismissed and the union protested. (A Jew of course they say) But it didn't last more than a day. I hear the salaried employees are going to have to take a cut again????!??

I bought some clothes for the kids and myself today. Camille was practically walking on the ground again, so I bought her a pair of shoes. Bobby's are still all right and anyway, he has the white ones yet. I did buy him a couple of suits because the ones he now has are much too small for him. I wandered into one of the stores where they were having a sale on summer things and got three polo shirts (I paid \$1.25 for them before) at fifty cents a piece. Also two pair of shorts at 59cents each, and a pair of slacks at \$1.50 which I like very much. I'm afraid I'm going to be addicted to slacks, they certainly are comfortable and easy to get into. I got some underwear for myself, too, and it's been such a long time since I bought some, when I saw the prices! I almost didn't, but remembering the rags I call panties I just had to shell out the necessary coin of the realm. 89 cents for a pair of pants, it's ridiculous, oh are the good old days of 100 cents to the dollar ever going to come back?

Saturday

Well Dearest it looks like another bleak and daddy-less weekend. I got my sewing machine back again. Twelve-fifty. It had better be good for at least five years to make it worth while.

Have you been getting any chess in? And how do you spend your spare time these days???? No redheads, I hope!

I just got the surprise of my life with Mami walking in with the pups and a suitcase, so I guess they'll stay at least over the weekend. More next week, sweetheart. Goodbye and best love as always;, and a hug and kiss from your best little girl and your son and heir, and last, but not least

your loving spouse
[signed] Frances & Co.

P.S. Mumsi said where's the card you said you were going to send her?? Had a letter from Ruth. They bought a house up there, so I guess Joe will just never be back now. More about that later. F

[part of letter from] August 19, 1946

Incidentally, Bonne's got \$13,000. for their house, I couldn't swear to it, but I think the Avis's got their asking price. They were so closemouthed about it, I wouldn't demean myself asking Mary about it. Let them keep their little secret for all of me, Oh you know, when the movers came, little Margie asked him where they were going and one of the men said 'Philadelphia', so take your choice. At any rate it is out of the state. She came running over to tell me about it, she had heard (by grapevine) that I was anxious to know where they were going. As I said before, who the h---I cares where they're going. I told you he'd never make an effort to be friendly with you, because we're friendly with Betty and they just don't want to satisfy her curiosity. (Betty told me a nice juicy tidbit about herself remind me to tell you when you come home...just to show you it happens in the best of families)

I got a letter from Ruth, she said they were buying a house up there, a duplex, and they are on pins and needles right now. They didn't think there was so much red tape connected with it, and they haven't closed the deed. Their landlord is making hell hot for them, and they don't know when they'll move out and conditions aren't very pleasant there. Guess Joe will just never come back to New York now, gee.

I also got a birth announcement from Jerry, and the cutest snap shot of the baby. Wish I could go and see her. But I suppose I'll have to wait for mother, she did promise me to come for a couple of weeks after the pups are sold and Tante Hanni has come and gone. (and there isn't the slightest suspicion of you coming home) she said she wouldn't want to butt in on our few days together. Gee, the way things are going that's not hard to arrange!

[letter from F to J with picture of bunny bank with question marks and coins going into the slot and caption "Ha ha! Did you say save"]

Wednesday
August 21, 1946

Dearest Darling:-

Well here we go again, and this time it's your letter that's full of question marks. Let's see what happened around this little Garden spot since my last letter. Nothing actually, and it's awfully quiet around the house with Cammie gone, and would you believe it--I don't miss her at all--is it possible? Now that I've put it on paper it sounds simply incredible, but there it is, I hardly know she's gone. For that matter, Bobby is out all day, too, and only comes home to eat and wee-wee anyway. Lord but it's peaceful. I was thinking of going to Oceanside today, but Bobby won't come, he's been playing in the Bonne's house (!) all morning and I could scarcely get him home for lunch, he's just fascinated by the fact. Oh well, another day will do as well. My wash came back today and I have lots to do.

About your check, well Jere, it's a funny thing. The stub says nothing whatever, except that the date is 8/31 and the amount is, as I said, just \$326.50 net. I sent you the money because I thought it was yours and because I thought (if I thought at all) that you would have difficulty cashing a personal check. You said so once. I put \$100.50 in the bank, and kept 63 dollars. I spent thirteen dollars on clothes including the shoes for Cammie. We have now a balance of \$110.89.

I phoned Rose Binsack again yesterday, and she said she hasn't been able to locate anything yet that would fit with what I told her. She said that sort of house costs \$15,000 or \$16,000 and I told her we couldn't or wouldn't want to pay more than we could get for ours. She seemed to think she could get between \$12,000 to \$13,000 for ours 'because it needs decorating'. When I mentioned flaws, Dear Heart, I meant the obvious ones, like wallpaper and paint and hard wear we've given it. Not structurally, and naturally I had nothing but praise to her when I showed it to her. I noticed several likely prospects in the paper, notably in Port Washington, Islip and the North Shore, but Darling, how can I possibly track them down. I have no car and the children. I could go maybe by train and once or twice if I can get Geraldine to mind the baby. I think I'll call someone else, too, it can't do any harm.

You know My Lord and Master, if I didn't make a mistake now and then, you wouldn't have anything to catch me up on, and you might even lose your old touch, and that would never, never do. Wives or wives, whichever way you spell it, I'm yours for better or worse, and don't you forget it! The Larsen Man keeps teasing me all the time and telling me about the time he was in Miami. He said the way the girls run around kept him a nervous wreck. Shall I send you a pair of blinkers, like they put on horses???? I told him that you may look but mustn't touch. Well anyway, up till now you've described the

natural beauties to me, and not the bathing beauties. Oh you know, Jere, what you said about the water being so lovely, reminds me of Lake Constance. At that time I couldn't get over the color of the water either, it was so lovely. Only that was more blue than green. Some day when our fledglings have flown the nest and you collect your old age insurance you can take me around and show me all the beautiful sights you've seen. I had a nice, long letter from your mother, too, and she also writes about scenic beauties and how marvelous it is in California. (But she is still homesick, and feels as if she were only on a visit).

I just noticed that car in front of Avis' again, if those are the people that bought it, well, they have a big beautiful Doberman (the kind I've always admired and which costs a small fortune, so they must have money) and the people are quite elderly, but not so old that they don't enjoy life anymore. I think I mentioned them once before. Well, no matter. I don't expect to be friendly with the new people anyway, and they probably want to lead their own lives. I shall never be sorry that I laid myself open by asking about the Avis's affair, gee, you don't dare have a bit of natural curiosity around here without people thinking you're a gossiping snoop. When I told Mary I'd heard that the Avis' were going to Pennsylvania, she said, Well, now they're satisfied (meaning Betty) and also said she didn't want to broadcast other people's business like a town crier, and run from one to the other with tales. Those were not her exact words but that was the meaning, and I felt it like a slap in the face because essentially it is quite true.

Well, darling, that about brings us up to date, your youngest is howling for her dinner, so I'll sign off now.

With all that rain we've been having the lawn has become so lush, I had quite a job to cut the grass yesterday. A little more of this and we won't have any bald spots at all. And that darn old forsythia and peach tree is getting so wild, it pretty near leaps out and bites you as you go past. I certainly am going to transplant it the very first chance I get.

Went out to hang the wash up and Mary told me that the people I mentioned above did buy the house. She didn't venture any further information and I didn't ask. Maybe someday it will all come out naturally. I bet they got the \$14,000 they asked, the people did look affluent.

Bye for today, dear. Oh I hope you'll be home this week-end. With much love, as ever
[signed Frances Bobby, Diane, etc.]

[picture of auto with rumple seat, caption "in our merry Oldsmobile"]

Thursday

August 29, 46

Dearest Darling:

That was quite some Odyssey you had there, didn't you? I thought that only happened in books or on the radio--where one's bags go off and you're not with 'em. Some people have more fun! How about writing a book for the edification of your offspring.

I have not been idle either. I sent to Mineola today to get a permit to learn to drive, and tomorrow I shall have my first lesson. I enquired about learning to drive and apparently my best bet is to go to a school. The Nassau Auto School to be exact. I shall have eight lessons and it will cost me fifteen dollars, and they will go with me for the road test. Betty says to ask them for a guaranty for the passing. She had paid ten dollars at the time when she learned. She told me that Cliff had started to teach her, but they decided it was worth the ten to get her lessons from someone else!!!! I hinted to Bill McClenahan and he said who is the unlucky sucker who will let you ruin his car? and I dropped the matter right then and there. Mrs. Iger told me she paid thirty dollars and then she was so unsure they had to give her another test. But am I a Mrs. Iger??? Incidentally would you consider selling the house to them? She mentioned it to me today. Said at one time I said we would sell and she has been thinking about it and would like to have it because it has a backyard and two such nice neighbors?????? I wonder how long she'd think that with Billy loose around here. Anyway I didn't say one way or the other but said I'd write and ask you. And another thing, are you sure Mr. Purser is going to do right by us? Here it's been almost a week and neither hide nor hair have I seen of a client, or heard from him in any way. I've tried to get him on the phone about that message and finally gave it to his girl.

Jere, do you suppose there is the slightest chance of getting a furnished something out there? Or do you think it wouldn't be worth while to go and have you move on again? I'm also going to ask mother to try to get me a furnished apartment or house in or around Dover, then I'd put our things in storage and get out right away. With the house empty and able to be decorated it might perhaps be easier to sell it. She is bringing Cammie back this Saturday and after Tante Hanni has gone home again she will come out for a visit. If I still have a roof over my head by then. You know, there are times when I feel I wouldn't be sorry at all if no one bought this place. It is so convenient to everything, and so nice for the children with the school near and friends. If we go out into the sticks they'll grow up alone, and when they get older they will not like it to be stuck away someplace with nothing to do. You know how young people are.

It's pouring rain again, and thundering and lighting, gosh does it ever do anything else. I suppose I ought to be thankful that my wash dries every day. Remember that other storm I wrote you about? Well, one of those lighting flashes went through Betty's cellar where

Cliffy was working and blew out the bulb and went through his leg. Gave him a shock anyway, but no burn. I knew it was close the way it crackled around me.

Bill McClenahan is building a garage, and the poor guy is sorry he ever started the project. He's worked like a horse and faces the cheerful future of working like a horse some more. They came and dumped the gravel in his driveway and in order to make room for the cinder blocks he had to cart the gravel in the back by wheelbarrow and oh, his aching back. I went up to return the magazines Irene had lent me, and gave him a hand for a little bit. Just like old times when I worked with Pop.

I went to Mineola this morning you know, and figured I'd be back by twelve, but you know how the bus service is around here. It started off by me missing the Lynbrook bus by a nose, it was early of course, and when I rushed Bobby up to the station that one just went by as we got to the service station there, and as luck would have it there was no one waiting, so he went right on. Then I chased back Eagle Avenue again because I wanted to take my watch to the repair shop (you'll die when I tell you it will cost me eight-fifty because the fall I took broke a part inside. Damnation) Anyway, when I got back at twelve-thirty I saw Mrs. Stauder wheeling the baby up and down in front of her house! Can you imagine? While Anita was having her lunch. Irene has her sister and her little one for a visit so I couldn't ask her, and Betty was feeling punk with a headache and lying down, so I didn't want to bother her. I'm telling you Jere, it will be just heavenly to have a car and be able to pack the kids in it and just go.

Betty's brother was around yesterday with his big empty truck and the kids had a picnic playing all over it. That is, it was fun until Billy Iger half cut his finger off on a crate or box or something inside it. His mother was almost beside herself, and Mrs. Burchard took her to a doctor or anyhow they went from one office to the other and no doctor was available. Finally a druggist patched Billy up temporarily, but he had some stitches taken in it tonight. I tell you, that boy is so stitched and banged and scared, there is hardly an inch on him that wasn't injured at some time or other. He's the perfect example of that article I was reading some time ago in the Parent's magazine. They claim that a child that has more than it's share of accident has an underlying cause of anxiety or fear that needs to be straightened out first. Do you think because his parents are so overanxious about him that he's tense about being hurt? Because he would never keep away or be careful, not Billy. I keep telling her she'd do better to leave him alone. But it's Love's Labor lost to say anything, oh well.

Well, my darling, the storm is over, perhaps I can go in and listen to the radio awhile to put me to sleep. I guess I'm worried these days, I don't sleep as soundly as I used to. Things go round and round in my head like a squirrel cage, not that it does the least good, I keep telling myself that. But I guess I just don't like the uncertainty of it all. I do more than dislike it, I hate it. The thought of having no definite place to go to except my mother's house is very distasteful to me.

Well anyway, goodnight sweetheart (come home, all is forgiven, mama.)

With a hug and a kiss from your son & heir
and ditto, ditto, ditto

your loving spouse

[Part of letter from] Friday, August 30, 1946

Hello, Dearest:-

Whe-e-e-e! I've druve a car!

Much to my surprise I did not freeze to the steering wheel, and I felt quite composed, but Oh Brother! When I got home and sat down I trembled like a leaf. The instructor is a young fellow (probably a veteran) and very slow spoken and patient and easy-going. He explained it all very carefully first and then before I knew it the car was rolling. My worst trouble was keeping the car straight and on my side of the road. I didn't have any trouble shifting gears but that steering wheel! I think having ridden a bike so long, sort of complicates it. I can't see how much room I have in the car and I tend to turn the wheel long after it's necessary and so go too far right or left as the case may be, and it takes so much zigzag to get on an even keel. And once or twice to my shame let it be said, I stepped on the gas instead of on the brake. Well, I guess once you have the mechanics pat it only takes practice and more practice to learn to drive smoothly. Keep your fingers crossed....I keep thinking whether I'll freeze when the inspector gets in the car with me...

Incidentally, they do not guaranty a license, that's agin' the law, as he says, we will teach you and the rest is up to you. I think he's got something there, cause from what Mrs. Iger told me she had thirty dollars worth of lessons and still gave up the ghost at the crucial moment and it took two tests plus a little 'smearing' to get her license. And Mrs. Conry told me, she drove to Brooklyn and back with the children, and yet when it comes time for the test she doesn't know her right foot from the left, and after a dozen tests has had to give it up. I expect to do better than that.

Thursday
September 5.46

Hello Darling:

Well I see you made it. I told you not to worry just put on your most important air and the ol' Casagrande poker face, and it will get you through every time.

You know, dear, much as I'd like to write you every day, we seem to be running out, nothing happens nothing is worth writing about. And I feel as if I were living in a rut, I don't ever even get a chance to go to the library anymore. THAT, as you can imagine, is a fate worse than death, even though I only skip from one murder to another. Still there is always the chance that I might run across something nice.

And the line of people jostling one another I their anxiety to look over our little white love nest is NOT forming to the right. Sometimes I wonder if Mr. Purser is interested in selling this house at all, seems to me when the folks across the street where in the market, there was a continuous stream of people looking at it. And how are you going to find a buyer if no one comes to look at it. Not even to look at it. I do think we should have given the house to more agents. I know you think there is no hurry, but gee-whiz, you know me, when there's something to be done, I want it done an over with. And if we're going to sell, it seems to me we ought to sell it now. From the way you talked you'd think people were falling all over themselves to grab this house. I just can't stand this uncertainty. I don't want to do anything and then again, I feel I should go on as if we were staying here, and transplant and paint and fix as we had planned. Oh hell! I drive myself and the kids crazy trying to keep the place neat and clean and feel positively frustrated whenever another day has gone by without any clients dropping in.

They brought some oil today, and there was another bill from Slomin's in the mail. Shall I send them a check? \$13.50. The oil seems awfully high to me this time. 8.9. It came to \$17.80, and it seems to me we never had such a high bill before.

Well Dear I think I'll call it a night. I'm enclosing a letter I got today from Mr. Nekton. Are you happy now? God only knows where you will be by that time. Mother called up and said she was coming Saturday, or did I tell you that once before? Well again, g'by.

With our very best love and lots of hugs and kisses
from your brood, and last (but definitely not least) you loving wife [signed F]

[drawing of beach scene with palm tree and caption have fun, dearie...]
Friday September 6, 1946

Dearest Darling:

Well, well, the globe-trotter is at it again---! A little bit further each time, eh? And don't forget to send a postal card to your stay-at-homes, will you? To think that all my life I've dreamed of far-off places and the nearest I'll ever get to 'em is to sniff the rare exalted air on a bunch of envelopes, woe is me, alackaday.

I had another lesson today, and I tell you frankly, Jere, I'll never get my license unless I have a car to practice with. I do all right as far as that goes, in fact I do much better than I dared hope, but I can see there is lots of room for improvement. I hear tell they are pretty strict these days, especially on u-turns and parking, and after doing a couple of them you begin to feel the strain. I have a tendency now to stall the motor on the turning, and after him telling me a couple of times to give it a little gas I gave it gas and how! I don't know how much you know about the mechanics, but you see you have to ease up on the throttle or clutch whatever you call it, and give it the least little bit of gas at the same time, if you give it too much you car leaps forward and if you don't time it right, it stalls on you. I feel I could do better if I could practice by myself for a bit, this way, with an instructor in the car with me, it makes me feel so dumb when I do a silly thing like that, and you know me, it puts me on the defensive right away the more I try to be perfect then, the more I fizzle it. I have to take a tight hold on myself, and a deep breath and deliberately go about it. I feel pretty confident on a straight driving and turning, though I must say, I'm still a bit leery going across heavy traffic, where there is no light, but on the whole I'm not doing too badly. As I say, I can see where lots and lots of practice does the trick. He asked me if I get a lot of practice in since the last lesson (so I must have improved a little) and when I told him I had no car at all as yet, he said I should not feel too badly if I fail in the first few tests, as it does take a lot of practice to get on to it. Betty keeps telling me that after all she's been driving for sixteen years and she wasn't so hot when she started. I know all that, but that still won't help me. Everyone consoles me with the same thing, but at the same breath they tell me not to be offended if they don't offer their own car to practice with. And I can just see Pop if I should ask him! You know he would never even let Joe drive even after he had cars of his own. I'd dearly love to buy a car, there have been several listed at around two-hundred fifty to two-seventy five, and one or two at a little less, but the way you talked in your last letter I don't know whether I should wait until you have your buying spree over with. God, when do I get a chance to spend money???? What do you have to get now, that is so important? Mind you, I don't care actually, but I've started this now, and I'd like to get it over with while I still have the nerve. You know something? It's going to be wonderful to have a car of my own to drive, it gives you the loveliest feeling of freedom. Just the thought of it gives me a thrill. But as I said to my instructor, I want to be sure I know how to handle a car under all conditions before I take the kids out with me, I have quite a lot of respect of an automobile and all it can do, and when you get in trouble it's not just yourself that gets hurt, I feel the responsibility very much.

Cammie came home in high glee this morning with a handful of little records that Mrs. Schreiber had given her. I was promptly regaled with Three Blind Mice and Hickory Dickory Dock etc. etc. They are quite nice, wee little records that Hazel had had as a child. I thought it very nice of Mrs. S to give them to the kids, especially now that Hazel is on the brink of matrimony and presumably motherhood herself.

I brought up some of the old records to try out and see whether I like them or not. And I can tell you frankly, your oldest girl-child is not, so far very much impressed with the old masters. In fact, she definitely does not like 'em. Gwen does, and she wanted to play "standchen" which I think is quite enjoyable even for kids, and Camille was so annoyed she walked out of the house in a huff. Gwen plays them all as they come along, and it's a little funny to hear Caruso mixed up with Cock-a-doodle-doo and GalliGunci singing the Bell Song right after the three blind mice have galloped away from the farmer's wife.

I bet you haven't given your new radio time to cool off yet...

Anita and I have been having a contest whipping up fudge, and so far I've won hands down. You know I kind of like to have the kids hang around and mess up my kitchen. It gives me a phase of my girlhood that I missed out on entirely. I used to hear talk of girls making up a batch of fudge in their mother's kitchen but I never had good fortune to be in on it. I think Anita will never have that experience either unless I give it to her by proxy. I can just see what her mother would say about the mess and wasting sugar etc. etc. Besides my sweet tooth aches, too, and I haven't got the wherewithal for an honest to goodness box of chocolates. And you never did buy me any!

Well darling, I'll say goodnight and go in and drown my sorrow in fudge and a book. Yep, a book. I may mail this tomorrow morning or wait until after my folks have gone. Bye now, dearest, with all our love to our daddy, as ever
your loving family

[note: we have \$233.22 balance, an oil bill of 13.50 and a telephone bill of 11.36]

drawing of high kicking dancer with caption "This is what I feel like doing]
September 8, 1946
Sunday

Hello, my darling;

Well, we've been tested and approved. Tante Hanni, Pop and Mami were here yesterday, although I have to pinch myself to remember them, they made such a little dent in my life. YOU know, here at twelve and gone by four. Oh well. Tante Hanni likes our house and wondered (audibly) why we wanted to sell it. She brought a box of chocolates and the thought of them and the book I was reading at present made the thought of their early departure bearable. Can you imagine my chagrin when I looked for them and found mother had hidden them! The little minx. By the time I found them and combed the kids out of my hair the mood was all gone, and to make it doubly bad, after me longing for some all week I found my mouth too sore to enjoy them. Too much fudge or tomatoes or just plain 'badness' on my part, I guess. Anyway, I'm alternately endearing myself to our children or infuriating them by doling them out like the precious commodity they are. Incidentally, Tante Hanni sends her regards and her regrets that once again she's missed meeting you. Did you ever---here we are married going on thirteen years and she's never once met this paragon I married, though I don't doubt but she's heard plenty about you. And to think her bounty away back in those golden days made it possible for you to take me to the movies remember? And by the way, Mami is just as jealous of her as she ever was, the poor darling, she and Hanni just never hit it off, and Hanni grates on her like a hair shirt (or am I mixing my metaphors?) Tante Hanni is the sort of woman who is statuesquely positive about everything, she has a very imposing facade and (don't breathe it to a soul) I like her a lot. Well, now that her lady is dead and she is at loose ends she wants to settle in New York, and Mami has threatened dire things if Pop so much as opens his mouth and looks as if he might invite her to make her home with them...

You know, dear, it looks as if even old Mother Nature is doing her best to put the 'kibosh' on everything. Now that they have our old enemy the Japanese Beetle under control we ups and have a new blight on the tomatoes. I hear where it ruined acres and acres of crops in New Jersey and is spreading here to New York. The Casagrande Pride and Joy Handkerchief Patch has found that out. I've had to throw more than half of the tomatoes away, and it still is taking half the coming crop. But I am not alone. Mary is working against time to get enough under jar lids to make the growing worth while. It's in the skin only, and if they had a chance to ripen more or less, you can skin them and use the meat for juice or sauce. Of course if it comes on the green ones the best thing to do is to throw them far, far away. The beans have gone now, and my mother was mad at me, she said all she ever heard was how many beans I had, and when some comes over they're all gone. Everybody get's 'em, she says, but me.

I don't know whether you've had any repercussion of this food situation, but it sure is getting fierce. In the first place we have this trucking strike tying everything up, and now with meat being back on OPA there just ain't any, and every time you turn around your

dollar buys less and less. Betty tells me it wasn't worth going to Hempstead yesterday, the shelves were bare, there was no fruit no vegetables and no meat. Maybe I ought to breathe a prayer of thanksgiving that Old Bease gave me that little piece of roast and a chicken after vowing, as usual, that there was nothing in the store. More damn strikes, even the Sperry drivers are striking in 'sympathy'.

Gloria Goodman just went on her way to matrimony, past an admiring throng of neighbors. Yes, I was one of them. I happened to be talking to Mrs. Sauder about that cute youngster of hers, when the procession went by. Mrs. Goodman, damn her eyes, was smiling sweetly and oh so proudly, and waved her hand.

Not much else to report. Big Cliff has an eye infection you know, his tear ducts don't work, and he has to squeeze out the puss at intervals and it's quite painful, he is not at his best these days...(I'll have to get a new ribbon if I should ever get into town again...)

Monday

I've been a very busy girl this morning--I've moved our bedroom around, and I like it ever so much better. I think you will, too, when (and if) you come home again. D'you suppose they will let you come back for the week-end before you go to Cuba? Cuba!--sigh! sigh!

It's been the darndest weather this week. Summer is taking a reluctant leave, and just to show us what we missed it was quite sultry yesterday and today. The thermometer says seventy degrees, but it feels like ninety-five. Maybe the humidity has something to do with it. Maybe there is something to that old saw after all. You know--it's not the hear, etc. etc.

Once again, goodbye my darling. Write often and I really don't mind hearing about clouds, I like clouds too, when I can see 'tem. Say, Jere, do you think you could send one of those Leaf of Life's to mother? She would love to have something like that, I know, and she would be so pleased.

The mailman is coming up the street, so I'd better hurry and finish up. I hope he has a letter with green ink on it...

With all our love to Daddy,
as ever
his loving family [& spouse Frances]

[part of letter from] September 10, 1946

Well, Darling, if you were to ask me now I could say in truth, yes I can drive a car. I know all the mechanics. I have learned to U-turn and park behind a car, I can keep the car where it belongs, and don't feel too apprehensive crossing traffic, but all that doesn't stop me from stalling the blasted thing when I try the U-turn. My mind is crystal clear on the subject but my left foot and my right foot can't get together on it. I take my right foot off the gas pedal too soon and by the time the left one eases off the clutch the motor is stalled. I make the U turn all right eventually, but it makes me so darned mad that I can't get that right. My instructor laughs at my chagrin and tells me everyone has that trouble in the beginning, but I feel that's no reason why I must, and nothing infuriates me so much as the instructor calmly remarking "you've stalled it again". It's then I wish to chuck the whole thin and am sorry I ever started it. I suppose if I were all alone in the car, I'd just swear a little and go about it again and again until I had it. He, the instructor, said that all of a sudden it will come automatically and then I'll wonder what made it seem so hard. I suppose he's right, and one of these days I'll be eligible for membership in the Perfect Wives Club. I heard Arthur Godfrey mention it on his program, seems whenever a woman has driven ten-thousand (I think he said ten) miles without an accident or traffic ticket, she can join after getting her husband to sign an affidavit to that effect. Hitting him over the head with a rolling pin to get him to sign does not count. And, he said, if you're a single woman it's a little harder. First you must get the husband and then the car etc. etc.

Our youngest sprout is giving a dress rehearsal against the time when she really begins to creep. She puts her nose down and gives a mighty heave, with the end result of her derrière in the air and herself not one inch further. She twists and wriggles and turns over so it isn't safe to leave her anywhere except in her bed or on the floor. I've put the pad down lately and she has a lovely time rolling around on it, only she usually ends up off it, or the kids lie down with her, sometimes with disastrous results. I think we ought to get a play pen. Bobby is very busy right now demolishing something in his room and reminds me of a poem: to wit

The Scientific Approach
What goes together
must come apart---
On that theory
Little boys start.

But for some reason
They don't care whether
What came apart, goes back together!

We had a letter from your mother yesterday. Laura and George are giving her quite a whirl according to her glowing descriptions. These two celebrated their fifth anniversary on Aug. 25th. I'm sorry to say I had quite overlooked that momentous occasion. They

took your mother to Hollywood for a show, where the stars appear in person, like vaudeville. They also went to a big outdoor rodeo, with Roy Rodgers and Trigger (naturally) as the stars of the event. They went to the Pan Pacific Industrial Exposition and she said you would have liked it, they had a lot of electronic equipment on display. You know, radar as used by ships and planes, and without a doubt a good old gyroscope or something. They showed things in plastic and the newest in house-hold equipment. She mentioned a trailer at the mere cost of \$40,000. Fit for a movie star to live in, no doubt. With portable swimming pool! She says she loves it out there, gives glowing descriptions of the scenic beauty and Hollywood by Night. Oh you traveling people! Between you, you are certainly making it hard for me to be a stay-at-home. We got clouds here, too, but they will never compare to yours, and we have twinkling lights at night, and balmy evenings and the same moonlight casting a magic glow on the countryside, but can it compare to Cal-for-ny-a? Never. Oh for the privilege to see it for myself, with my very own eyes, and then say: "Shucks, it's no different from home after all".

Did you have your radio on last night? (Monday) There was quite an interesting program describing the effects of the Atom Bomb on the people of Okinawa, what's the matter with me, not Okinawa, but Iwo Jima. I can't for the Life of Me remember what station and I have only the vaguest idea of the time, it must have been either during the Lux Presents Hollywood (phueey) or Lady Esther neither of which I cared to listed to. It was remarkably well done, and is in four installments, last night's was titled The Silent Noise, and it was really something to get the re-action of people who lived through it for some fluke or other. Did you by chance tune in on it? I had been lying on the bed, drinking a bottle of beer out of sheer boredom (it had been left from Saturday) and can you imagine me being a solitary bibbler???? To think it has come to this! It will be Pepsi-Cola next, and then I'll be Case No. 04048766 on some doctor's agenda. In this month's Home Companion is a timely article on Do Our Women Drink Too Much, maybe I'd better read it again and take it to heart before my Nearest and Dearest says to me with averted eyes: Lips that touch Pepsi shall never touch mine (unless it also has some rum in it) How I do run on, eh? Just to fill up space.

I took that old sewing machine stand out of our bedroom again and left it in the hall temporarily, and it wasn't five minutes later that Bobby was found squatting underneath it, moving that wheel on the side and making believe 'motorcar'. I'm glad now I wasn't able to take it off when I was dismantling it, they have such a lovely time with it. I moved it into the dining room and right now Gwen and Cammie are having the time of their life--one on top and one underneath--and how can I concentrate with little treble voices making like a motor---brrrrmmmbbb---

You haven't written yet whether you want me to pay our bills or not, and what you had in mind to buy (besides my birthday present.)

Goodbye darling sweetheart, our best love to you
as ever

[signed Frances & Company]

[part of letter from] September 11, 1946

That bottle of beer must have been loaded to put me in such a haze Monday night. I listened in on that program I told you about again last night, it and seems to be on at nine-thirty on WOR and it's about (let's see if I get it straight this time) Hiroshima and it was written by John Hersey. This time it talked about what happened after the first shock wore off and people began to pull themselves together and fight the fire and help the wounded as much as they were able. Wow, it must have been something indeed. I wonder how I (or you_) would react under similar circumstances. Iwo Jima, ha, why not Fujiyama. I get those darned Japanese names all mixed up. One would think that name Hiroshima would be fixed in one's memory and inextricable interwoven with 'atomic bomb', so you can't think of one without thinking of the other. But not me. Oh no. I talk about Okinawa, or Iwo Jima. Those poor kids that died in those places must turn over in their graves to think they made not more of a dent in my mind. Well, anyway, you should have listened, if you hadn't. (Here we go again, in that style so inimitably like Frances). It just occurred to me I'd better look up that word seeing you always pull me up short whenever I use a word of more than one syllable, and sure enough I was wrong as usual. I'd said 'inimitable' and inimical means something altogether different. Namely: hurtful in tendency opposed, antagonistic, unfriendly etc. etc. Sometimes I wish I had never seen a dictionary...but then I'd have to stick to words of two syllables at most, and that's no fun!

Kenneth Binsack brought two prospects around so far, but nothing further has developed. I haven't heard from Brierley's at all. I understand the banks are tightening up now, and are reluctant to grant large mortgages. Bonne's are moving this Saturday, and right now they're living in a state of siege. I can feel for her. The house is stripped but with the children you can't pack as much as you'd like and Olive will have one heck of a time the last few days unless she sends the children or anyway Bobby to his mother. I mean Roy's mother.

The weather is still abnormally warm, in fact it's downright uncomfortable during the day, though it cools off rapidly at night. The trucking strike is still going strong and is threatening to spill over into Nassau, because they are stopping the trucks at the county line. The A&P and other large self-service stores are shutting down, their shelves are bare, and other stores are beginning to feel the pinch. This is really bad. I haven't felt it so much, because the Royal Scarlet is well stocked and the new owner seems to be a better business man, as I believe I told you once before, and he is doing all right. I wish the check would come this week, I'd like to stock up too. With the beans almost gone now, and the tomatoes such a wash-out, our garden is not the source it might be, and while we can do without meat if we have to, I'd like to at least have staples enough on hand.

I really have to get out, do you know, Bobby put up such a fuss the other day when I went out for my driving lesson, he had the whole neighborhood out with their eyes bugging out. He ran after me and then stood in the middle of the street and had hysterics, you

know him, stamping up and down and screaming bloody murder. Betty went after him and put him in his bed and calmly told him she couldn't possibly talk to him while he yelled so, and when he wanted to get out of bed he should say so. And that was the best thing she could have done, because he went to sleep. But it embarrassed me so, when I heard about it, after all, I don't go galloping about for my own fun, and people might think it terrible to leave the kids. I don't know. You see, Anita just is not able to cope with them. It's okay when they are good and play out side as usual, the baby is no trouble to her, but when they get obstreperous and unmanageable, she doesn't know what to do, and her mother just doesn't wish to be bothered. As it is, I usually come back nearer to six than five-thirty, and I invariably find Mrs. Stauder minding the baby while Anita has her supper. That is, when she sees me come, she makes a great show of rushing out of the house and covering Diane up and wheeling her up and down. I'm glad when I don't have to call on Anita anymore.

[part of letter from] September 12, 1946

Mrs. Binsack called me up a few days ago and told me that she'd been busy having a big wedding for her son and getting the upstairs of her house ready for the young couple, and that only now has she been able to attend to things again. She said she hadn't been able to find just what we had in mind, she did mention several possibilities but they were not quite what we wanted. One was in East Hempstead, but had only two bedrooms, and the other was not large enough in acreage, something like that. I told her during our conversation that perhaps it would be better to sell our house first, and gave her the details as we've given them to Brierley's. She has indeed gotten busy on it. Her son brought several people around within the past few days, and one family was very much interested. They have a little daughter, nine months old. Tomorrow the Franklin Square Bank is sending an appraiser around to see how much of a loan they can give them on the house. If that goes satisfactorily, I guess we've got us a client. And truthfully I couldn't ask for a nicer family to get the place. Well, we'll see. But honestly, Jere, it is such a relief, in a way, to know, for sure, that something constructive is going on. I don't know why I should call Purser, there is nothing to call him for. If he has a buyer he'll come over and if he hasn't, there is nothing gained by conversation. I didn't take to that man at all. Mrs. Binsack called me before coming to tell me they are coming, and didn't just surprise me with my hair down, so to speak. Himself, as I told you, just barged in on me one fine morning and before I could get my breath back they were gone again.

So you heard that report on Hiroshima, too? I might have known you would know about something so unusual. It will make the pleasure of listening tonight that much greater, knowing you, too, will listen in. You put that very well, indeed, Jere, it has an eery (eerie?) quality, and is presented most forcefully in a style that makes it unforgettable. Like a report. It has such dreadful potentialities, it makes me shudder. And I never fail to ask myself how I would stack up under circumstances like that.

I was talking to Olive the other day, and she said there are now nine men busy trying to get their house ready by Saturday. Ye Gods, what sort of a job can they do in such a hurry, when carpenter and painter get's going at the same time, neither can do a proper job, it seems to me. Oh well, it's their funeral pyre.

You want to know what the kids are doing? Right now they're up in the attic making me think the ceiling will come down nay minute now. By 'they' I mean Billy (of course) and little Julien whose grandmother lives up the street by the McClennahan's. The paper just came and I looked for a car again, gee Jere, I wish you'd come home and buy one for me. On things mechanical and things electrical I feel I'm a pure-bred dope. What sort of a car can you get for 200??? Will it hold together long enough for what I want? There is always something listed, and a lot of them up in Islip and thereabouts. What shall I do, what SHALL I do...

I spent the morning on my knees, no, not praying and maybe I ought to, but cleaning and waxing the dinette. Maybe the wallpaper ain't so hot, but by cracky my floor is so shiny

you can see your smirking mug in it, if you were here to take a peek. No fooling, Jere, maybe by the time our house is sold and I've gotten my Bachelor's Degree up at Mother's, the habit of cleaning the house and keeping the kids from messing it up too much will be too strong for me to break again. And then woe betide you, my fine feathered friend, we'll see how you'll like living with a Housekeeper with a capital H then. No time for fun or walks or talks or cups of coffee in the middle of the afternoon..

Well My Love, time to take our leave again and make our daily pilgrimage up the street tot he mailbox. I thought I'd have this letter written by the time the postman came by, but Mrs. Iger and Betty dropped in one after the other, and then Julian's mother came for him, and each one took a few minutes of my valuable time. You see, dear, I always have someone to talk to, but Christopher Columbus, I'm sick of hearing about the same old thing. Betty's mind is full of you know what, she is filled with fears and misgivings, and I'm the only one she can talk to, and Mrs. Iger's husband is very sick with his asthma, I feel this is no place for him to live, but wouldn't say so, and Mrs. Iger not only feels that way, she says it, too. The doctor came in a rush call this morning and gave him some injections. She is very worried about him, but not so worried that she can't check up on Billy every ten minutes. Ho-hum.

I went over to see Mrs. Surge yesterday, I'd heard that Christy was sick with pneumonia. He is now home and getting better. He also had an attack of asthma, and his mother is very bitter about the 'jungle' in which they live right now. Incidentally their house was sold, and they will have to move. She said they had a chance to buy it at \$6000, three years ago, and didn't feel it was worth it, it needs repairs badly, and is in terrible condition because Mrs. Cabalero never would do anything about it. I think it was sold for eleven thousand, or slightly less. And my Lord and Master, though far be it from me to criticize a neighbor and such a nice one at that, if you think our house is in a mess you ought to go and take a look at hers!!!! It just seems as if three kids and model homes just don't go together. Anyhow, she and I would make a swell team. I'd never be embarrassed if she should drop in, and she has no intentions of apologizing for the state in which her house is, either. Well, bye-bye lover.

[part of letter from] September 13, 1946

I had the radio on practically all day today, I don't know whether I'm too lazy to turn it off or whether I like to hear it, anyway, it's been on all morning now, I heard a storm warning from Miami, are you in for a bit of a hurricane, maybe? Better fasten that Mae West tight around you and hang on, this is no time to learn to swim...I bet you miss WQXR don't you? They do have the nicest musical broadcasts, there's nothing like nice soothing violin music to help speed the work of folding diapers, or a bit of violent Beethoven when I scrub the bathroom floor. Or is that sacrilege????

The people who bought the Avis Mansion are having it decorated, the painters were here for the outside and I noticed yesterday they came by with an armful of wallpaper. You know I'm not the snoopy type, but I just happened to be in the dinette and I have got eyes in my head...it made me chuckle quietly when I noticed that they had no sooner gone around the corner when Mary who still has the key, went across, I'll bet my bottom dollar to take a look at the style and pattern of it. She still takes care of their lawn and they periodically come around and always stop at her house.

The Avis' incidentally, are still around. They are with relatives in St. Albans (or thereabouts) and have put the furniture in storage. They still drop around to see Mary although I've not spoken to them. I noticed once in a while that Regina is playing with the kids, and that's how I heard they are staying with relatives. Naturally I'd rather drop dead than pump Regina, so I only said, that's nice, and let it go at that.

Darling, I'll make it short and snappy today. I have a lot of work to do, the laundry came back, and I want to get it out of the way. You see, I'm haunted by that specter of possible visitors, and want the house to look uncluttered. The kids, fortunately are playing outside, although it's quite brisk and cool today. And anyway, I want the mailman to take this letter when he comes by in a little while. Goodbye, Love, and try and come home soon, yes???? With all our love to you, as ever your loving family
I got the baby on my lap while I'm trying to type and she is not too young to want to help me....

[part of letter from] September 16, 1946

Bonne's have gone, and the new people wasted no time getting into the house. I haven't had more than a glimpse of them up till now, I guess they're too busy getting organized.

This letter is pretty disorganized, I write a little then go away to do something else, then come back and write some more. I meant to tell you that the Bank's appraiser has been too busy to come around yet and he phoned and said he'd come around Tuesday. There has been a steady flow of people a lot of whom seem definitely interested. Looks to be a question as to who has the necessary wherewithal first. There still has been no sign of life from Purser, and it will be with the greatest of pleasure that I'll call him up and tell him the house is sold! Believe me.

If this keeps up, there can be no doubt in any of our neighbor's mind that we're on the market, and I keep wondering if Mrs. Schreiber will ask me about it for her friends and relations who have been looking for one. Mzsry hasn't questioned me yet, either, and for her I shall keep just as mum as she kept to me. I'll be glad to get out of this place, dear, it's bringing out the worse in me. Me, that used to be such a trusting, friendly soul thrown in with this bunch of hypocrites, so I don't know who is sincere and who isn't. The Goodmans don't exactly snub me, they just don't think I'm good enough to go to church to see Gloria take her nuptial vows. And while Mrs. Schreiber is bidding me the time of day, I'm pretty darn sure she isn't going to confide in me that Hazel plans to be married October 14th. You know, it wouldn't matter if we had all started out to be on this aloof basis, but gosh, when we were here the first year there was none of this 'now you speak, and now you don't' sort of thing. What changed everyone so, I wonder.

[part of letter from] September 18, 1946

Betty brought some wool for a sweater for Diane, at least it gives me something to do while I wait around! Incidentally, the grapevine is busy already. Cliff was asked yesterday whether we were selling our house. Cliff looked surprised and said he didn't know. Betty said to me if anyone should ask her about it she'll tell them they can jolly well ask me for themselves. And she's right. By the way, Mr. Avis is in Pittsburgh and his wife and Regina are still with their relatives. Guess he is going to have to find a place for them first. The old familiar pattern.

I was up at Irene's the day before, and conversationally I asked her if she'd heard that Hiroshima report, she said they listened in on it one night. No further comment. And now you know why I miss you. There must be millions of books and magazines sold, what I want to know is, do people just buy 'em to put them on the table? Nobody ever discusses anything but kids and meat, which there ain't any of, and your neighbor's business. I found Betty reading the back copy of a Reader's Digest some time ago and tried to draw her out on it. Seems she only reads once in a while (between True Stories) and then only because she has the dim feeling that she should be up on current topics. There's hope for her! She says Big Cliff doesn't read at all. I told her she should do what I do, read and then tell him about it in bed. God forbid, she says, let him do his own reading. You see what a paragon you have, (my smugness sticks out all over like the bristles on a pig!)

The truck strike is in its third week now, and the A&Ps have closed down. Meat is short anyway, and not on account of the strike, but other commodities are getting scarcer and scarcer. I haven't felt it yet, except for sugar, I'm running very low on sugar. And if we have to eat another chicken or its egg, I don't know what we'll do. There is no sense buying it just for myself, I'm not tired of it yet, but the kids are. They won't be browbeaten into eating it anymore. Betty gave me a piece of beef for stewing yesterday. Lucky Betty, she knows all the right people! You know that butcher friend of hers, (the one there was all the commotion over) well, he works in Long Beach and it looks like Long Beach has meat, if no one else in the island has. Leave it to them. Anyway, Betty drives down for hers. [second part of letter coming up. Love Frances]

[fragment]

She hasn't come over at all yet, though I waved to her once when she was talking the dog, and she waved back and smiled. She had quite a row again the other day with Mr. Angerer on account of Cliffy, you could hear her all over the neighborhood but I don't know what it was all about, I didn't stick my nose out. All I heard was Mr. Angerer saying he could water his lawn if he wanted to, and something to the effect 'you're always doing that' and 'keep out of my garden'. Poor Mr. A. He's such a quiet unassuming guy and hardly a match for Betty. Mrs. Angerer came back today, too, probably to keep an eye on the place. She seems to have been gone for about two or three weeks.

Milk is twenty-one cents a quart now, and how in the world I can pay that I don't know, I shudder to think how much homogenized milk is. Probably twenty-four or something like that. I'll have to start tomorrow, gee, maybe I'd better keep on with the canned milk, at least until the baby goes on the cup.

Mr. Beasey asked me how that wonderful piece of beef was, and I didn't have the heart to disillusion him about it. I said it didn't last as long as I thought it ought, (it was too fat your remember) and he said that's because it was so good! Good, ha.

No letter from my mother yet, she certainly must be having a wild time there in Atlantic City...

[part of a letter dated September 19, 1946]

Received a nice, fat letter yesterday afternoon, dated the 18th, postmarked the 17th. This is more like air-mail service. I suppose I should have answered it last night along with the other page I'd already written, but I was so tired and had a bit of a headache. I went into town to cash the check which finally came, and do some shopping. And how! I bought Bobby a pair of brown oxfords in the Franklin Shop and while I was waiting for my change I noticed a pair of brown suede shoes that appealed to me. I tried them on and--bought them. They cost nine dollars but are worth every cent of it. I had been thinking of getting another pair of shoes for when I dress up, without going anywhere, something with a lower heel than the blue ones. And these just fill the bill, they are Tread-easy, with a built in arch support and are very comfortable, and very good-looking. But you know it is always an ordeal to take the children with me. Irene kept the baby for me, and when we got back I stopped at the store and there was baby and carriage waiting for me, I dumped Bobby into it and he was sound asleep before you could say 'Boo'. I walked home with Irene and sat on her stoop and had a look at the newsay which had just come. There were several cars in it and I left the children with Irene and scooted off but as usual, I was too late. It's been this way right along, and I LOVE the way you say "go out a buy a car today". What I should do is go right to the office when the paper comes out and then rush right out. But the trouble is most of them are such a distance. Freeport or Islip or places like that, and how can I get there. Well, one of these days I'll be lucky. Gee I wish my Mom would come out.

The appraiser was just here. Now we shall hear shortly what is what. He said to me "have you a place to go to? If I were you I'd be very sure of that before selling." H'm.

By details to Binsack, I mean just that. I told her it was for sale for \$11,500. And from the looks of things now, I bet she sold it, too. I'd asked mother to look around for a furnished place, and she said there was nothing doing and for me not to be so foolish but come to them. She said it would have worked out alright the last time if I hadn't been so silly. If I????? Anyhow that's where I'll end up I guess?

I just got back from another unprofitable venture, on the track of a serviceable car. Betty took me to two places and in both instances the car in question wasn't worth buying. It might be alright for a fellow who can tinker with it, and they all seem to be very poorly tired. And tires they tell me, are awfully hard to get. One car, for one hundred-seventy-five needed two front tires and wheel rim, and the other at two-fifty had two very smooth front tires and the emergency brake did not work, the fender was dented and it had weak springs. All this came out by and by, as Betty tried the motor and looked it over. The fellow, a garage mechanic, said he'd fix all the little things for twenty-five dollars more, and for a hundred or two (?) he'd put it in proper condition. You know, straighten the fender and put in new springs shine it up, and so on, but then it would still need tires, and by that time it would be close to four hundred dollars. H'm! I've asked everyone to keep an eye open for me, and Betty is going to ask her garage man if he has something. It's awfully hard for me to get about, Jere, I have to make arrangements for the kids and I hate

to always drag Betty away from her work. Bill's been working overtime for the past three weeks and Irene tells me, she feels just like I do, except her man comes home to sleep with her. Big Cliff is still bothered with that sore eye, and on top of that, he too, has been coming home late often lately.

The trucking strike is still on, and now it is really getting serious. The butcher has nothing whatever in the store, and the staples are running very low. The new man in the Royal Scarlet has some stuff, tis true, but he is so very expensive, I was horrified when I settled my bill and bought some groceries for the week. If this keeps up I won't be able to manage anymore on my allowance. And I really don't buy much what I don't need. I do buy a lot of fruit, but I have to give the children something, and candy is out now, according to the dentist. They never got too much anyway, but between cookies and fruit I'd rather give them fruit. I can't bake now because I have no sugar, and buying from the baker is out, too. I can't afford it. I haven't been able to get any soap or soap powder, so I sent the wash out each week, and that is two dollars more I have to reckon on. Oh dear.

[part of letter dated September 20, 1946]

Mrs. Binsack just phoned and said that man who looked at the house this morning was very much interested and is willing to buy it for \$10,500 and talked of 'garage' and decorating and fixing up the lawn, but I told her and in indignant tone, that our price was so low now that we could not possibly come down, for reasons I clearly laid down. Told her to quote him the price they got across the street, and that this house has oh you know, I don't have to tell you. As I'm writing this the phone rang again and this time he offers \$11,000 straight. During our conversation Mrs. B. confided in me that if she hadn't just spent so much money doing over the second floor of her house, she would have loved to buy it for her son. The way she sounds, so regretful....? Anyway, if this house is not worth tat to anyone, it is worth it to me. The Bank is so slow in unraveling at their red tape, there has been nothing further said about the mortgage possible. Did I tell you the man who was here to appraise it took a picture? Maybe I should have asked him for a copy, except he went in such a hurry. With all this hot weather our beautiful green lawn is no more, as is every other in the neighborhood. I've pruned the trees a bit, and of course kept the grass mowed, although I haven't had too much time to devote to the garden and such. Now you can't expect too much of me, indoors and outdoors too! Betty brought me some chopped beef from Long Beach, now there's a friend for you! Greater love hath no man, than to share such a scarce commodity. I know both Irene and Mrs. Iger have been fishing around about that, Irene even asked Betty where her butcher friend was located now. But after all the trouble it caused with Mrs. Mitschke, Betty would just as soon not take anymore friends shopping with her, and I can't say I blame her. I haven't asked her to get me any meat, she does it on her own hook, not that I don't appreciate it no end. Indeed I do, but if it would cause her inconvenience I'd rather she didn't. It is worth more to me to have Betty for a friend than to get some meat. Poor Betty, she is so worried, I can easily see why some women go out of their minds at this critical period in their lives. She is almost a month overdue and strain and uncertainty has driven her almost crazy. She is most emphatic in her statement that she's rather be dead than pregnant. Her doctor is not much help either, he says he can't tell yet, and that the rabbit test is not infallible. I try all I can to ease her, and I think it helps a lot that she has someone to talk to, I do hope, for her sake she gets over this bump on Life's Highway very soon.

[Part of a September 22, 1946 letter]

You know, it looks as if Pop might be right after all, so far three out of five people who have looked at our place have objected to the white painted brick, one party this morning wouldn't even come in to look, and four out of five turn it down because it has no garage. The others would like it but haven't sufficient cash. The bank only allows \$6500 on a mortgage. I had a talk with Mrs. Binsack this morning on the phone, to get the low-down on the situation. She is quite disgusted with wasting her time on people who haven't enough cash and won't tell her about it until the last minute.

I have also come to the conclusion that those ads for cheap cars are nothing but a 'come-hither'. I went right away to the Newsday office yesterday when the paper came out and trekked from Garden City Line to way past Franklin Square looking at cars. Each time the car in question was sold but they had something else there for anywhere from \$400 to 525. The ones for \$400 to \$450 were nothing but piles of junk, I don't know about the motors but the fenders were bent and the glass cracked and the upholstery torn. I saw one for \$600 that sure looked nice, a 1939 model in fairly good condition, but you wouldn't want to go that high anyway. I don't know what to say now. Wait until maybe I'm lucky or what. I just haven't got the time to go galloping about all the time.

Sunday evening

Oh, what a day this has been! Mrs. Binsack has had an ad in the paper, yesterday's Newsday and Today's Tribune I think, and it's been a steady procession all day. And Jere, I would not have believed it, if I hadn't heard it with my own ears! People who would be interested turn it down cold, yes, because it's been painted. All day long I've sat here and anger has been boiling inside of me, though God knows people are entitled to their own taste. Mrs. B has worked valiantly, but to no avail, she even has assured them it was an easy matter to get the paint off. For one party she has gone so far as to enquire of someone how much the job would be and how to do it. \$500 to blast it off, and some acid or other, forgot what she said, which would be a messy job. Anyway, that's the way it stands right now.

Mrs. Binsack called me and wanted to know if you would be willing to let her have it for \$10,500 without any commission. (She said her commission would anyhow come to \$700, would it?) I said I'd write and ask what you'd say. She said at that figure she could take over the old mortgage and take title within ten days. She still would like to have it for her older son. Let me know what you think. I've made myself clear, haven't I? She wouldn't get any commission if we sell at that price.

Wednesday, Nov. 27

Hi Darling:

I just spent the most enjoyable evening talking to this Lt. Colonel I mentioned in my last letter. It looks as if I rented the house at a hundred a month. He's going to call me tomorrow and let me know definitely and arrange things. Incidentally, Camille and the baby have come down with the Chickenpox, as if I didn't have enough trouble. I only hope it has cleared up by the time we are ready to leave, though actually I ought to keep her in bed and indoors for at least ten days. She has those pustules all over her body and some on her face, and of course they itch. The baby has it very mild, only a few here and there, but Cammie, oh brother, is she a mess. Gail had them, and naturally I find it out when it's all over but the shouting. Her mother supposedly kept Gail away from the other children, but I understand the pox don't show until sixteen days after exposure, so for all I know she's been exposed to the same source. Cammie, I mean.

Thursday

D'you know I almost forgot it was Thanksgiving Day today, just goes to show how our life is turned topsy-turvy. But never fear, the kids will not let you forget, it's been 'anything for Thanksgiving' all morning and our own two have been out all decked out in mama's best lipstick and rouge and such.

By the way, you'd better write to your lodge you got another notice to appear on Dec. 2nd, and from all reports you won't make THAT date.

Thursday night

I'm all tired out tonight. I went to bed so late last night and then I was up half the night with Cammie, I'd like nothing better than to call it a day now. I have not heard anything further from Col. Perron, and in a way I'm rather relieved. He is very nice, and as I've said we had a lovely evening together talking of this that and the other. He is somewhat in the same sort of boat as you and I, his wife and two small children are in Texas and he's trying to persuade her to come out here for those few months. I understand he's just been back from China, which he liked immensely, but his wife wouldn't consent to coming out there. (I think I would like it) Anyway, if he took the house, while he seems reliable enough and all that, it would be quite a bit of trouble to me to make the house ready, you know, clean and empty closets and bureau drawers and such. Well, he might come around yet, who knows, I didn't give him much time, but yesterday I didn't know about those darned Chicken Pox, they came out overnight. And if he wants the house by Monday I don't know what I shall do, what with this mess (Calamine lotions to relieve the itch, and keeping her in on account of the fever---) and me being unable to get reservations. I do sound a bit incoherent don't I? But honestly, darling, why must those things always happen to me at those crucial times. On top of that Mrs. Binsack came again today with a couple, they sure give up hard. While I was away someone kept phoning, and I don't know what mother told them, but I had hardly gotten warmed up Sunday when they called again, offering us the munificent sum of \$9000. It's for her son,

a veteran and "I believe young people should be by themselves, although we have a big house and plenty of room etc. etc". I told her you thought that offer ridiculous and impossible. Mrs. Binsack keeps saying the market is down (and it does seem so) and would we settle for less. Would we settle, doggone it, I thought I'd made it clear I didn't want to sell. Mother must have put a bee in her bonnet with this California business, and us maybe settling out there. I'm so tired of the mere idea of moving.

I moved the peach tree yesterday, and am keeping my fingers crossed that it will grow and flourish.

I forgot to mention, Pop was so mad at me he would hardly talk to me, and he came and picked up Mums without any fuss or feathers. Mami was okay once she saw me, relieved of course, and unhappy about that letter, I do wish I could remember what an infant she is, and not always get annoyed with her so much. I guess Pop did make hell hot for her about coming home. She had a tooth pulled the day after she got back, it was badly abscessed, Betty told me she was very much worried about mother's habit of taking so many aspirins at once to kill the pain. She'll not only kill the pain one of these days, but herself as well. Betty is not well at all, she went to another doctor and he told her it wasn't what we thought at all, but a tumor, and Betty is worried to death it's cancer. She has to go to the hospital to have a piece of her womb tested. Poor Gal.

Darling, this has been the darndest thanksgiving we've ever spent. Apart. No company, no fuss nothing. I had a chicken, but I might as well have saved myself the trouble, the kids weren't hungry, Cammie was too sick to enjoy it, and Bobby too full of candy and peanuts and God knows what else. (Their loot amounted to about fifty cents between them and not to mention the candy etc. etc.)

Friday morning

Just a few more quick lines to bring you up to date. I spent another horrible sleepless night with our female child. She's got a cold to top everything off, and coughed and sneezed and cried and 'itched' to make the angels weep.

I meant to tell you, I tried the car and it seemed to be alright, but when I took it out to try it, something was definitely wrong, there seemed to be too much of a flow of gas, and the car leaped forward like a startled fawn without me so much as touching the gas pedal, in fact I had to ride the brake most of the time. Yesterday being a holiday there seemed to be nobody at the gas station, so this morning I set out again, this time I went to Dick Clarke, He's an old timer and has a fine reputation. First he said he had no time, too much work, and most everything was done on appointment, but after looking at it he said he could fix it right away, and he did. I got some gas and a new windshield wiper and it cost me \$2.70. It sure made a heck of a lot of difference. I was scared to take the car out before, but now I feel right at home in it again. I went up to West Hempstead, but parked it just before the traffic light and walked the last block, at that it saved me quite a bit of time and trouble. I wonder if I should apply for another test...Oh yes, I also asked Clarke about storing the car for three months, and he said while he didn't ordinarily, last winter

he stored one for a man in the neighborhood while he went to Florida. Said, he had a space in his garage, but it would have to be moved occasionally, said he'd arrange something with me when I'm ready to leave. So that's that, can't cost a fortune, and I'd still have the old Rattle-trap when I come back.

Well, darling, I'll be looking for a letter from you in today's mail. Will write more later. I made out the checks for the bills I mentioned in my last letter, and they are now in the mail. I forgot to tell you, I got a check from Sperry's on Wednesday. My, but they were in a generous mood to send it so early. Probably to give their people a chance to buy that turkey! We have a bal. of \$14.62 and no outstanding bills except the insurance. How's every little thing with you?

Had a card from Ann Platts, they had a little boy, now isn't that nice? They have their pair too. I have to sit down and write her a nice long newsy letter, God knows I'd love to go over. Wished I had nerve to take the car!

Bye now, dearest, and all our love
as ever

[part of letter from December 3, 1946]

I'd been worrying about my suitcase, too, and now it has finally turned up, so that's one worry off my mind. It sounds so simple to say "Worry is interest you pay on trouble before it's due", but when you lie awake in the middle of the night it's not easy to keep worry off your mind. I took the car to go up and get it and although I had quite a bit of trouble getting it started (I finally had to call Pete to help me), I got so used to the car, I take it at whatever opportunity offers itself. If only the kids were well, I could do more, but I hate to leave them alone for more than five minutes or so at a time. The car sure saves time for me...

[part of a letter from December 6, 1946]

I have scouted around for a garage in the neighborhood, and may yet come up with something. Burchards have rented their extra garage space, and the people across from McClenahan's don't know whether they want to or not as he has his work bench in it. But she'll let me know.

Dec. 9, 1946

Hello Sweetheart:

You'll never guess where I went yesterday...! I thought it's being such a nice day and the kids clamoring for me to take them for a ride, and seeing I finally got a car-bed for the baby (I was going to take it on the train for her to sleep in) we'd see what we could do. I'm having an awful time starting the car these days, though. And how I miss your strong right arm! Cliff got me started once, and I went around the block warming up the engine, but when I got back to the house, off it went. Then I was too embarrassed to get Cliff back again, he was washing the car, so I asked Bill. This time I managed to conk out going up the hill on South Oak, and Mr. Burchard came to the rescue. After that I piled the kids in while it was in neutral, and off we went. Oh, we got along fine, and had a lovely visit with the Johnson's who appeared delighted to see us. Went back and had a chat with Ann, but because the children still have runny noses I couldn't let them come, and consequently stayed only a moment. (A long one) And when it got time to go home we went through the same rigmarole, the darned car wouldn't start and Elmer gave me a push. I did okay, but I was in fear and trepidation that I'd stall at one of the numerous traffic lights and then what...? But that's one fault I seem to have overcome, and once the motor is going I am pretty much in control (I think) anyway, we were fine until we got to Moses' and the kids clamored for ice-cream and since I did promise them I had to stop for it. And stop is right! I couldn't get it to idle, so I just went and bought their ice-cream and when I got back by the grace of God she started again and we got home okay. You should see me make the driveway these days---!

If I get started again today I'll even try to go over to Roses. It's easy, just going along the parkway and Linden Blvd. And Uncle Lorenz is home today so he can give me a push to get started.

The mailman just came by and left me a registered envelope for you, forgive me, but I opened it to see if it was worth sending on to you. It's the Digest, from the ACG from Washington. Do you want it? Also the letter from the lodge came back from the Hotel Maurice. I'm sending it on.

I just phoned Penn Station again for a reservation. A section as usual, no compartment no bedroom. It's for Dec. 20 and would get to Oakland on a Monday. I'll have to pick up the tickets by Dec. 12. So unless you can send me another hundred dollars before then, I'll have to try to borrow it.

I didn't rent the house, and I'm just as well pleased in a way. Gee, Jere, this is costing us a lot of money isn't it? I never got around to asking you how much the house rents for, and if you expect to carry us all on your expense account, or what was your intention. I spoke to Eric again last night, (someone else is moved into his house, the Sauders had gone) and he said something about the company moving your family if you're at a place for six months or more. Is six months official yet? Or is it still ninety days?

The kids are okay, but oh this Christmas business is really something. If I take that reservation next week we'll get there just in time for Christmas and I won't be able to buy anything or get a tree or anything. How about you playing Santa Claus this year? It will give you something to do. Ha ha! And what about food and such????

Well, I've left you with some food for thought for the day, so I'll say au revoir. Here I go crying for mail again---I hope there's a letter this afternoon!
Bye sweetheart, love from us all

[part of undated letter]

I called up mother to tell her I got the license and am leaving Monday, and to my dismay I found them both at home sick. Pop has a bad cold and his back bothers him, but mother, gee, she really is in a bad way. Has gall bladder trouble, she told me she was all yellow; and she has trouble with her intestines and is on a strict diet. I thought that would happen. Nothing spicy or greasy. She sounded pretty sick when I talked with her, but would not hear of my coming out before I go. I feel pretty bad about that, and only hope that nothing happens to her while I'm gone. Of course, she's right, there's no sense of taking a chance with an old car in this cold weather and me with a reservation next Monday and a lot to do yet. I haven't heard from Nekton at all. I tell you, Jere, no one wants to rent for such a short time, especially in the winter. Now if it were summer, it would be different. I'm sorry you're disappointed, but it can't be helped, and frankly I'm glad.

[part of letter from] December 10, 1946

Now, to get back on that moor question, MONEY, again, you know it is very hard for me to get along on the twenty-five, I won't even bother to mention the car, which is my delight and despair at one and the same time. But food costs have gone up so, and now you can get all those commodities that were so scarce, but at what price! A box of soap flakes at thirty-eight cents, it used to be from 19 to 23 cents. And everything else is in proportion. From meat up or down, as the case may be. I bought the car bed for the baby, thinking I'd use it for her on the train while I slept in the upper berth, and then it comes in so very handy taking her out with me in the car. It cost five dollars. I also laid in a supply of disposable diapers and the panties to go with them, another two dollars. By the way, what in the world gave you the idea as of your latest letter that I'd have a large part of the fare required? Where would I have gotten it from? I told you after paying all our bills on the first, there was a bal. of about ten dollars or so, and all I had was the fifty for the house. I paid the milk bill this Monday and (7.68) am now stony broke. Well, anyway, all I have toward fare is what you sent me plus what I'll get on the fifteenth, or if I should be able to sell the car.

You remember that trouble I mentioned with the car not starting, well, I figured if I want to sell it I must be able to start the darn thing, so I called up the garage man that Betty and Mrs. Iger go to, I did try to get Pete but he was in the city, anyway, the man said he'd come and get me started so I could get the car into his place. He came, just as I was about to pop the kids into their bath, five o'clock and pitch dark outside! Well, for one thing, he was so much more business-like than Pete, he had an extra battery, and he got the car started with it, none of this pushing by hand to get it in the road and then by car to get it going. What got me, I never had driven the car in the dark before, and I knew the tail was out. Well, it got there anyway, and not too badly either. Incidentally, seems the tail light has a poor ground and when it touches the car body it lights okay, they fixed it anyway. What with one thing and another and the battery charged, it cost me four dollars. Now if I find out tomorrow about the Airline and know what I'm about I'll put it in the paper and keep my fingers crossed that the cold weather stays away long enough for me to sell her. Poor old Lizzie, we've become such good friends. Sticky gas pedal, noisy muffler and all...

I took the children into Hempstead to see Santa Claus, yes, by car, I parked in that block before the post office, and walked the block over to Main Street. We picked a bad hour though, Santa was out to feed the Reindeer (or himself) so the kids were so disappointed and kept talking about the mechanical one at Garden City, seems Gail and Gwen were there. You know the kind, like the store in San Francisco, the one who has the maniacal laugh! So, I figured we might as well try there, too. I did alright, made a U-turn and went up one of those side-streets to Garden City, and again parked a block away from the main street and walked over. We had absolutely no trouble at all, and the children were satisfied to have seen Santy. The baby just loves to ride in the car, and is as happy as a bug, cries only when we stop. Much to my amazement it doesn't bother me at all to have to stop for traffic lights and cops and such. I neither stall the car nor jump forward like a

frightened doe. So I went up to the Auto School and told them to arrange another test for me. I had been debating in my mind whether I should take our own car and ask Irene to go with me, or go back in the Instructor's car. I decided that might be better, because I don't know how ours will stand up under mechanical inspections. The muffler, you know, and cracked windshield. Well, wish me luck now. I don't know why I can't keep my head for those eight measly minutes even with an inspector in the car. By the way, I felt so badly when I heard that Eugene got his license the first time until I was told he'd driven a truck in the Army. WELL! No wonder.

[part of letter of] December 12, 1946

I took the kids in the car to Hempstead, and oh brother, am I now experienced! It was raining when I went to the travel bureau and he had said on the phone for me to come in, because of the possible questions that might come up. I wanted to get as close to the Hempstead Bank as I could, so before I could say "peep" to myself I found myself bowling down Fulton Street amid all that traffic with my heart in my throat and my fingers crossed. Well, it seems to me, if you just go easy and keep in a lane, doesn't much matter which one, so long as you stay in it and keep your eye on the traffic light, there's nothing to it. I went around the corner at Washington and found a place to park. We finished our business at Clarke's and stopped at the A&P for groceries. Gee, what a wonderful feeling to plop the packages in the car and load the kids in again, and off we go. I went up around the other way because I wanted to stop at the Camera Shop and found a place to park on Franklin Street. Got the films and with a veteran hand (harumph) guided our chariot into traffic again and around the corner and the rest was apple pie. I tell you, dear, I shall just HATE giving up that tin-buggy, it's such a comfort to me knowing I can get out anytime in all kinds of weather, and take the children with me. I'm going up for my second test this coming Monday, and doggone it, if I don't pass I'll be awfully made. Maybe I'll even get up nerve enough to take the car out to California myself! Hah!

[part of letter of] December 16, 1946

I went for my test this morning, and am keeping my fingers crossed that this time I made it. I was much more confident and in control of the car, and besides I had a very nice inspector. Calm and easy-going. Let's hope I made it. I had to ask Mrs. Fink to stay with the children of course I paid her, I was so grateful that she would come. Betty went to the hospital this morning, and I gave her a little present to cheer her up. But I didn't see her, with Bobby having the pox so badly I was afraid to take a chance, in her weakened condition, so I sent it over and just phoned her. I hope she will be alright. She won't know until after the holidays, because right now all they intend to do is test a piece of tumorous tissue. Rose and Lorenz came last night with some people and little Al, and I felt so badly that I couldn't let them into the house, but chicken pox is so infectious I just can't take a chance. They came back this noon and brought Cammie a big beautiful doll and Bobby a box full of plastic cards, planes and ships. There was also a package from Laura with a little stuffed animal for Diane.

[part of undated letter]

I called up mother to tell her I got the license and am leaving Monday, and to my dismay I found them both at home sick. Pop has a bad cold and his back bothers him, but mother, gee, she really is in a bad way. Has gall bladder trouble, she told me she was all yellow; and she has trouble with her intestines and is on a strict diet. I thought that would happen. Nothing spicy or greasy. She sounded pretty sick when I talked with her, but would not hear of my coming out before I go. I feel pretty bad about that, and only hope that nothing happens to her while I'm gone. Of course, she's right, there's no sense of taking a chance with an old car in this cold weather and me with a reservation next Monday and a lot to do yet. I haven't heard from Nekton at all. I tell you, Jere, no one wants to rent for such a short time, especially in the winter. Now if it were summer, it would be different. I'm sorry you're disappointed, but it can't be helped, and frankly I'm glad.

On stationery "United States Pacific Fleet, Air Force, Fleet Aircraft Service Squadron
Eight, U.S. Naval Air Station, Alameda, California]
January 21, 1947

Hi, Betty:-

It was a pleasure to hear from you again, and it's good to know you are back in circulation. Just take it easy and one of these days you'll show 'em there's many a dance in the old dame yet. But not too lively please, you know old bones are brittle!!....

Seems to me all the news I get back from home is bad. Have I told you my mother was in the hospital for observation? They think it's gallstones or something like that, and they kept her at the hospital awhile, though they won't operate just yet. The doctor wants to try something else first. If anyone should ask me (and they don't), I think that doctor would make a very good shoemaker. He's had mother under his care for so long, and knows she's complained of pain, and I can't see why he hasn't suspected something like that sooner. I do hope nothing serious happens to her, I feel so darn helpless away out here, and I'd just never forgive myself if anything should happen and I couldn't be there. I know she felt badly that I wasn't there at Christmas time, and God knows, if I'd had an inkling that she was that sick I would have waited and spent some time with her first. Well, all that is water under the dam, and since one can't turn the time back, there's no use moaning. Life is full of such If's and Maybe's anyway.

As far as we're concerned, believe me, Betts, there is never a dull moment. As for instance only the other day I was in a particular hurry to get my work done because I wanted to go shopping (little ol' Cindy was at the garage having her innards repaired. I'd brought her home from having her motor overhauled, and was beginning to congratulate myself on how smooth, for her age, she was running, when there was a clank and a clash--gear jammed! And only a block from home at that. She's very considerate that way...) Well, I went to the laundry early, and was just letting the soapy water run out, when something happened and said soapy water went all over the floor. Before I realized the hose had come off we were almost ankle deep in water. I jammed the hose back on and went to mop up the water--and endless process, and in so doing I managed to knock my nice clean wash on the floor, and presto, it was not nice and clean anymore. Back I threw it in the water, and in my hurry to get done, I fed the wash too fast in the wringer and before you could say "stop thief", my hand was in it too. Luckily it's one of those where you don't get hurt much if you shut it off right away and reverse it, and with those soft rollers there's not much chance of damage. I kept my outward composure, but to you I can say I was saying nasty words to myself inside. The lady next to me said I was certainly good-natured about it all, and now I ask you what good would it do me to dissolve in tears and beat my head against the wall????? Incidentally, now that we're here awhile, the blur of faces cleared up a little, and it's got so I know some of the women. There are, like everywhere else, some that are nicer than others, and while I don't know anybody's name, we've broken down so far as to say hello and good morning when we meet. So democratic!

I found a place down at the beach to take the kids to whenever the weather permits. It isn't much of a beach for bathing, but for the children it's fun to dig and play along the shore. There are great big rocks tumbled together with driftwood caught between, and in this particular place is a great big thick plank above the tide level with a big rock behind it, it's sheltered from the wind and always sunny, so I sit there and read while the children play around, and the baby bounces around in her carriage. It gives us a place to go, and there is always something to see, as for me, I love the water, and this lazy life just suits me, I rush through the little housework there is and go out. I certainly wish I had the camera with me, all the things I can think of that I wish I'd brought! Well, I'd love to take some pictures. It looks so pretty to see all those little white houses along the shore and the mountains behind them. With here and there a palm tree, it looks so tropical, or anyway it reminds you of what you think the tropics looks like. Some of the newer homes that are built along the water front are little gems. Most of them are white stucco or cement and they have great big huge windows, and when you go by, it seems as if they all are living in glass houses, you can see so much interior. And most of them have shelves along the outside with colorful pots of flowering plants on them. They are so gay and attractive. And there are flowering shrubs everywhere. Geranium grow like bushes and poinsettias like trees, a story or even more high, just covered with flowers. And the cacti, I tell you, this is a gardener's paradise.

Jere was aboard one of the carriers last week and was gone for about a week, he came back all bubbling over with what life on a carrier is like. He flew in one of the planes, and it must have been exciting. To be catapulted into space and come back again to the mother ship, wish I could be on one. I watch the planes all the time, in fact right behind this settlement is the airfield where the surplus planes are stored, and we can see them sometimes bringing one and taking some away. Some of them have their wings folded up, you've seen 'em, I'm sure. Some have all kinds of scribbling all over them, that the pilots left on them, those are the fighters that are not used anymore. Oh, I think it's so exciting to watch them. Well, when Jere's ship was expected back, we went out to the point to see it come in, but to tell the truth, I'm much more excited about such things than the kids. All Bobby cares about is things on wheels and those wheels firmly on the ground. He'd follow a tractor around to hell and gone, but those big ships zooming overhead or the carriers here at the base leave him cold. Oh well.

The weather has been consistently lovely, only for the past four or five days we've had those celebrated San Francisco fogs, but it seems to lift in the afternoon. I am getting quite unconcerned about driving in one, though sometimes in the early morning you can hardly see ahead of you, and the curb is invisible. But you know, I'm no speed demon, and the way Cindy and I crawl along we couldn't possibly get into trouble, unless someone bites us in the rear. (which could very well happen) You know, Jere gets quite a kick out of using me as a chauffeur. The other night I took him to see the secretary of the Apollo Lodge here, and after leaving him there I came home again. Well, about ten o'clock I thought it would be nice to go and pick him up again, to save him that long walk home in that foggy and damp night. When I got there I couldn't for the life of me

remember which house it was, so picture me knocking on a door saying: Pardon me, is my husband still here? As it happened I didn't even know the name of the man he went to see nor his phone number nor the number of the house. I felt like such a silly fool. And while I was standing outside again (no they didn't know nuttin') someone else opened the door and asked me if they could help. No doubt they were forestalling my 'casing the joint'. Anyway I explained and he said, Oh you must mean Mr. Noes, and like a gentlemen took me to the door. Unfortunately ten minutes too late. So I came home. No Jere. I went out again, back the way we had gone and peered through the fog. No Jere. Home again, and still no sign of Jere. Once again I patrolled the street, taking in the ones we usually walk on. No Jere. I stopped for gas, this gage isn't working either and I didn't want to be stranded. Well, when I got home this time, there was Jere all agog saying "Where have you been?", seems we just missed each other each time by a fraction, and he was walking around looking for me, and me doing the same. More fun I tell you!

February 11, 1947

Dear Betty:-

I was sorry to hear about the loss of your father, and I know how shocked you must have been at the suddenness. Words are such poor things to tell a person how much you feel for them, but, Betty, please don't feel so badly about it. Remember death and sickness come to us all and we must bear it as best we may, and you mustn't, don't ever feel that is your fault in any way. It's not a punishment visited on you, but one of those milestones we all must come to, sooner or later. Don't grieve too much, Betty, just try to remember all the nice and pleasant things about your dad. It sounds so futile for me to sit here and tell you that, I know, and if it were my own I'd probably be broken hearted, too, but you know, too, I'd do anything to make it easier for you, if I could. It's too bad it had to happen so soon after your illness, and you aren't prepared for such a shock, so take it easy, Betty, and you must not think that any action on your part would have made any difference. Oh, how I wish I could be there to pat your shoulder and say: "There, there, it will be all right."

We'll be leaving here on the 21st, Jere's orders are up here, and we shall probably go down to San Diego after that, and God only knows what happens then. Home James! I guess I haven't gotten around to telling you yet that Cinderella turned into "Lady Liz". Through a fellow who works for Jere he heard of a 1935 Ford V8 for only \$375 and in excellent condition. Seems this fellow got a new car and rather than trade it in and get nothing for it he'd keep it and sell it to a friend. While we can hardly be classed as 'friend', he nevertheless decided to let us have it. So I sold the old car and we bought this one. I went to get it myself (should I say 'naturally'?) and it was quite a thrill to drive a nice car like that home. I tell you Betty, I practically flew like a bird. I had to watch myself so I wouldn't step on the gas too much. The motor purrs like a kitten and it takes the hills like a swallow. The original paint is still in good condition and except for a few rusty marks on the front fender it is in very good condition. Now Jere wants me to drive it home, and what's more I'm more or less agreeable. First, as I've said we'll go down to San Diego with it, and it is sure nice to have a car you won't have to wonder if it will hold up. We could hardly wait for the weekend to roll around so we could really go on a ride. We've wanted to go into the mountains, but with the old car we didn't quite dare. We had to take it easy, and the way things are around here, you have to go through Oakland before you get out into the open, and for the first half hour it's nothing but traffic lights and shifting of gears. I tell you, after driving through Oakland a couple of times you can tell Big Cliff for me, that taking Jere to the airport would be a cinch for me. And as for driving in New York--pooh-pooh! In this one short month I've become cynical and calloused about the other fellow's fender, and I don't wait around like a nervous hen waiting for an opening, no siree, and parking on a busy main street holds no terrors for me. But don't get the idea I'm careless, no, it's just that I've gotten used to driving. As I was saying, last Saturday we decided to go on a real picnic and drive up into the mountains. It was fun, and I'm sure we passed some breathtaking scenery but I wouldn't know about it! When I want to look at a view I have to look for a place to park first and get out and look. Oh for the life of a chauffeur! I get a thrill out of driving though, and oh

brother, those mountain roads sure can supply that thrill. First you crawl up in second and then you cautiously creep down the other side. Those hair-pin turns were enough to turn my hair. (until I remembered to go into second). We had a grand time, and what's more the kids did too, even the baby is quite contented in her bed. We meant to go again Sunday, but unfortunately it poured cats and dogs, and we spent a most miserable day as you may well imagine. Jere and me walking around like caged lions because we had our heart set on going out, and the kids clamoring for a ride. We tried it for awhile in the afternoon, but

West Hempstead, N.Y.
151 Harrison Street
April 14, 1947

[Drawing of baby here.]

Greetings and Salutations:-

This was meant to be an Easter Special, but like all good intentions it went a little astray. Howsoever, better late than never they say, and while my halo is still on straight I think I'd better give an account of myself forthwith. I suppose your mouths are still hanging open the way us Casagrandes get about, here today and gone tomorrow, but I can tell you right here and now this time I'm staying put. Come to think of it that sounds awfully familiar so maybe I've said it before, and I'd best keep my mouth shut. Well never mind, before I completely forget the details of our trek across country I think I'd better tell you about it. It was a lot of fun, and if I had to do it over, knowing what we're in for, I'd still do it again. Going by car is the only way to travel across country. With or without kids. As a matter of fact, I had less trouble with the children coming home than I had going out, and they were pretty good even then. Well, to begin at the beginning we left Alameda on Friday morning and stopped that first night somewhere along the way, next morning we were off bright and early and I was just beginning to catch on to this business of driving and letting the car out a bit, after all I wasn't used to bowling along at fifty miles an hour. Oh by the way, I bet I never told you about the Ford we bought just before we left, did I? When I got there and Jere found I had finally gotten my license he gave me no peace until I'd gone out and bought a car. Naturally having bought an old jalopy made me automatically an expert on buying cars, so it was little me that went out and looked at 'em and paid for it and drove it home. We were fortunate, it's a 1935 Ford in good condition, the original color is still pretty much intact and when I got it, it only had a few dents and rust spots on the front fenders [it's a different story now!] It ran so smooth and nice and took the hills around us like a swallow, it was a joy to drive, believe me. Well, before we left I'd started to teach Jere to drive and a few before we were scheduled to leave the clutch gave up the ghost. Well, the day before I left the car at the garage to have the clutch fixed and asked him to see that there was nothing further the matter as we had quite a ways to go etc. etc. Well, to make a sad tale short, we were bowling merrily along at fifty-five miles and hour when I noticed a knocking in the engine, so I slowed down to fifty and after awhile the knocking started again at fifty and before you could say 'Jack Robinson' there was a ping' and there we were with the oil and water flowing away together down the street. It seems we threw a piston ring or rod or something, anyway the upshot was our engine was permanently gone. Well, Jere was determined to take that car home come Hell or High water, not to mention that our worldly goods were stowed away in back of it, not to mention the playpen tied on in back or the baby carriage tied on the roof, and how were we to get that home, please, unless we had a car? Well, we had a new motor put in at the trifling cost of two hundred and fifty dollars although we actually only paid two hundred and ten because that was all we had until Jere could contact his office at Los Angeles and get more. To top it all, when we got to San Diego it was Saturday night and there wasn't a place to sleep to be had and we finally wound up I the YMCA, imagine, me and the kids in that hallowed place! Next day, its being Sunday, Jere tried all

day to get in touch with someone at the base only to be told that he was to report to Washington. So, we trotted back to Bakersfield where we'd lift the car and settled down in a tourist camp and waited and waited and waited for the motor to come, so they could put it in so we could be on our way. We waited five whole days, five days wasted, oh well, it gave me a chance to wash the clothes and loaf in the sunshine. Finally the following Thursday we got the car back and were off again, although it was five in the afternoon already, we just wanted to shake the dust of Bakersfield off our feet. I drove that night until ten and we found a place on top of a mountain range. It was a lucky thing we did, when I saw the road we had to go over the next morning, our hair stood on end. Whewww. It curved like a snake in convulsions and was mostly down, so I had to ride the brake most of the way. When I tried to go in second we found out that second jumped into third whenever the speed was too great. Slipping gear yet! When things got tough, Jere would hold the gear in with all his might and main. More fun kiddies, but the best was yet to be. We began to notice that our radiator was running dry all the time, so to make life interesting we had to pant madly from one water pump to the other, and this in a country where water is such a precious commodity. It seemed whenever Jere went out to lift the hood the engine was sizzling like mad. We finally bought a water bag and honestly, poor Jere must have felt like the original water boy, forever hopping out, and lifting the hood and getting the bag and filling 'er up. We finally spotted the trouble, the fan belt had slipped and the pump was not functioning. The wonder was we didn't ruin our new motor. We went through Arizona and New Mexico and found it most interesting, for days on end and miles and miles the road would stretch straight and no matter how fast you traveled it always seemed as if you would never get to the end of it. We went through the Painted Dessert and it really was a beautiful sight. Going through New Mexico we saw real honest to God Indians with their blankets draped around 'em and the women in long skirts and beads etc. just the way you'd expect an Indian to look. (all except the younger generation, who wore bobby socks and modern dress). We even saw them on horses, and all along the way were the funniest little stone shelters, just big enough to squat in and build a fire for cooking, and some of them were occupied. In some places we could see the caves in the mountainsides where Indians used to live. I was only sorry we were so pressed for time we couldn't make any side trips, that's what we had in mind when we started, but we simply couldn't lose any more time. (I had intended going by way of Rochester, too, but we just had to forget about that.) After a few days on the road we had things pretty well under control, we'd cook our breakfast wherever we slept and around noon bought stuff for a picnic punch and ate somewhere along the roadside, that gave the kids a chance to romp and play and get their exuberance out of their systems, so for the rest of the time they'd be more or less quiet in the back. It worked, too. The baby of course was easiest, she had her own little car bed and her food came out of cans and bottles anyway. Sometime around five we'd stop and have a hot meal for all of us, and then I'd drive until around ten or thereabouts or until we found a decent place to stop over night. At first the night driving bothered me no end, you must remember, five months ago I had never even been behind a wheel and even though I'd driven about Alameda and for a few weekends we went for long drives through the mountains, still my driving experience was so to speak 'nil'. Anyway, at first I was scared to death, trying to keep the car on the road. The road was only two lanes wide and during the night all the

big trucks are on the road and they hardly ever dim their lights and it would blind me and make me afraid to being either off the road or side-swiped. But after the second night I told myself 'to hell with it' and kept my eye on the middle of my lane and the devil take the next fellow. And that was alright too. It was a great grief to me that always when we got to a landmark like the Colorado River or the Mississippi it would be during the evening when all cats look gray to me and all rivers, big or small, just a blurred silver ribbon. And it was always in the evening when we rolled through the big towns like Oklahoma City and St. Louis and Cincinnati and not to mention Washington. Ha, Washington! I drove all that day from a little place outside Cincinnati, O'Fallon to be exact, until three o'clock in the morning when we got to Washington and tried to find a place to sleep. But I'm skipping again. Let's see--Thursday night someplace on the Mohave Dessert, Friday night in Oatman, Arizona, Saturday night in Gallup, N.M. Oh yes Gallup, that's where we ran out of gas in the middle of nowhere, because our gas gage doesn't work and the gas station attendant hadn't filled the tank like we asked him to. Well, we sat there for an hour trying to make the car go, finally a soldier stopped and he and Jere tried about everything to make the car go, being out of gas was furthest from our mind, until somebody thought to try putting some gas in the carburetor and lo and behold it started. That nice guy gave us some gas out of his tank so we could get back to the town we'd passed and try to find a room for the night. By that time I didn't feel like driving on anymore and the upshot was Jere got us a cabin De Luxe, but I do mean Deluxe, with a TUB and a tiled bathroom and a beautifully furnished room and a heated garage yet, for the princely sum of seven dollars. Up till now five dollars a night had been the most we had to pay! We sure made use of that tub, believe me! I hadn't been in a tub since I left home practically. Well, Sunday night we hit Amarillo Texas. Texas, God's Country, some more wide open spaces with grass and cows in it. Monday night we went through Oklahoma City and stopped at Tulsa, just beyond it. That was the day we decided what the radiator needed was flushing out, and we spent the whole afternoon at some little gas station draining the radiator and filling it from a pump that had to be operated by hand. Ooof, the very thought makes my arm ache. We had no further radiator trouble for a whole day, and then---. Well, we hit St. Louis the following night, Tuesday, and now I can say I've crossed the Mississippi, but that's all. I tell you mates, being a chauffeur isn't all it's cracked up to be, you see what's in front of you and what you can get from the corner of your eye, and for the rest of the scenery you depend on your better half to give you the gist of it...Wednesday night we went through Cincinnati and noticed the radiator acting up again, we kind of lost our way around that town, and what with filling the tank and watching to see if it steamed or not we got turned around and poor Lady Lizz did some chugging around there before we got out of the town. We stopped just beyond it. That was the day we had intended to make Washington but went over one bumpy railroad crossing too many and broke a front spring. Another afternoon gone, not to mention the six bucks it cost to have fixed. That wasn't too bad, but after that we noticed that when the chassis settled it opened up a seam in the radiator and we were right back where we started--water boy-e-e-e! Well, Thursday night or rather Friday morning we rolled into Washington, after one of the most hair-raising rides we'd had yet. The mountains through North Virginia are really something, no wonder they have no speed laws, anyone going more than forty or thirty-five is committing suicide. On top of that they had had a

very heavy snow fall the week before and there were huge mounds of snow on either side of the road, higher than the car, and in places the snowplow had only dug out a single lane, and to top it all the road curved in regular horseshoe curves and went up and up and up until I feared good old Lizzy could never make it. We went in second most of the way. That was a ride! But Jere and I joked through it all and thought it great fun, and only regretted it was dark and we couldn't see the mountain scenery but it was probably just as well, if there had been traffic on the road it wouldn't have been so easy on me, because I really needed all of the road to get around those curves in those icy ruts. Well, as I told you I drove that night until three in the morning, and up till then I hadn't felt it, but when we got clear into and out of Washington without finding a place to sleep I got so discouraged I could have cried. The baby, who had been so good all through the trip cried and whimpered because I hadn't been able to give her much attention and she needed changing, her little bottom was sore, and here I was behind the wheel trying to make Washington that night. We did finally find a flea-bitten old hotel and stayed there for what was left of the night. In the morning bright and early I drove Jere to his office, and high time too, he was only seven days late, and they had written letters back and forth asking each other WHERE Casagrande could be. But Jere talked his way out of it and even got a few more days off to take his family home. They charged it off to vacation though, but that's okay with us, it was sort of a vacation, and something we'd always planned to do. We left Washington around noon and got to Dover around seven in the evening. Mother just about dropped dead, she'd gotten a card from me that very morning saying we were going through New Mexico, and here we were already. She hadn't expected us so soon. Poor Mom, I bet she worried herself sick over us, and here we're as right as rain all along. You know, the thing I thought we'd have trouble with was the tires, and we need have spared ourselves that worry, they're still holding up fine. (Fingers crossed, I'd hate to have to change 'em). Oh but, Ruth, (and Joe too) it was wonderful to see the skyline of New York appear again, and heavenly to ride over the Triborough Bridge and know that we were HOME again. I like California well enough, but to me New York will always spell HOME. It was simply thrilling to get to our house and see the same old neighborhood unchanged (and why should it?) and the same kids playing on the street. I tell you it didn't take them five minutes and they were all congregated at our house and weren't the kids excited to be home! Poor Cammie, she was almost hysterical, ran from room to room, and dragged her toys out and cried and was so excited there was no stopping her. And Bobby asked me that night: "Where are we going to sleep tomorrow night Mumi?" Poor kids, I guess it did tell on them to have no security at all. This time I'll really stay put, if only for their sake. Jere went back to Washington to take over his new assignment (Flying Missiles) and he comes home every Friday night and leaves again Sunday night. That isn't too bad.

Let's see what else is new. As an anticlimax let me tell you I've finally got a hold of a washing machine, and what a blessing it's turned out to be. Heavenly, with those kids of mine covering themselves with mud and glory, it's just heavenly to let a machine do the work for you. It does take a lot of my time, but I really don't mind, and I was getting kind of sick of the laundry sending me back odd socks all the time. I got it from Betty up at Mother's and went up to get it a few weeks ago. Now what with that telephone strike I'd

love to go up and pay mother another little visit, but I haven't gotten my registration papers yet from California and the other day a cop stopped me and said I couldn't use the car until I get license plates on it. In spite of all my explaining, he said DON'T USE IT. So now I have a car I can't use and another one at the repair shop. I'm reduced to the bike again. What a comedown. You know it's funny, you get so used to riding around in a car, why I'd even take the car to go down to the corner store. And how I miss the convenience of it. I wrote to the motor vehicles bureau and the man I bought it from but so far no dice. Gee, I made a mistake and put the Fibber Magee program on and now I can't concentrate anymore. See you later.

Well, Ruth, how are you feeling these days? Pretty darn punk I'll bet and hoping to have the whole business over with? Just you be patient, little mama, your troubles haven't even begun! But you know yourself the little things are worth every bit of inconvenience they cause us. I know I wouldn't send my three little limbs of Satan back even if I could. They try me sorely sometimes, and then I look at them asleep like the little angels they aren't, and I love them so much my heart about bursts. Well, Ruth my dear, I wish you the very best of luck, and I hope this time you have an easy time of it, methods have changed so these days, and I hope your doctor kept step with the time. Anyway, I'm keeping my fingers crossed for you, may you get your heart's desire. Boy or Girl. Hang on awhile longer and take it easy. If you feel up to it I'd like to hear from you sometime, but I won't be made if I don't cause I know there are times when you feel like nothing except crawl in a hole and pull the cover down over you. So chin up and stomach out!

Well, I got to run along now, one of these fine summer days I may run up and surprise you with a visit, then we'll get a look at what you produced at the same time. You might give me a hint in one of your letters how to get to Ye Olde Homestead. We wouldn't stay with you though, I'd try to find a Motel someplace in the vicinity like we used to. Well, so long folks, with our very warmest and best love to you all, big brother and little nephew and to you, Ruth,
as ever

[1952]

Hi, Honey Lamb:-

If this letter is a little bit choppy it's because, like a dope I cut my finger on Jere's electric saw. It was one of those days when everything goes wrong---I stuffed a lot of cardboard boxes into the fireplace and because I was mad at the kids and their messy rooms I turned my back to scold them and looked up in time to see the flames licking over the outside of the fireplace and though I put it right out still it left the paint all blistered and burned, Holy Cow! Now we've got to paint...While I was still mad at my self about that Bobby asked me to cut out his boat for him and although I should know better I reached over the saw for a piece of wood without turning it off first and whang---I had it, but good. Blood dripped all over the joint, while I stood there and read Bobby a moral lesson about why now he should know why I want him never, but NEVER to touch that saw...Oh well. To get back to your letter, I also am full of questions...like do they want to live in a motel while they look the situation over? Are they looking for a furnished house or apartment? Are they coming out by car, plane, or train. And shall I meet them? (Wear a white carnation) Our phone number is in the book, in case they should lose it. It's Osborne 5-1748. Gosh how I wish it was you I was expecting...Of course, I'll have them to dinner and do all I can to help. Too bad I can't put them up, but of course you realize that's impossible, with Jere and the kids and the house so crowded. If I knew them it might be managed, but total strangers, no matter how nice a set of people they are, is something else again. We can be on our best behavior for an afternoon or evening, but those early morning hours when everything is at sixes and sevens and there is a mad scramble to get the kids dressed and fed, you know how it is...Sure, I'll keep the paper for him, I can see why even if you don't. Ads, remember? Ads for jobs, ads for houses, ads to see what the score is. Luckily it's only the two of them, so the housing situation isn't too bad. There are lots of furnished apartments, close by and everything, also trailers. I'm enclosing a clipping from a local paper to give you an idea.

Honeybunch, we are not that broke that we can't have company for dinner. Remember our well stocked meat locker? Don't worry, I'll look after them to the best of my ability, and so will Jere.

Now to your questions, one at a time. Our trailer cost a thousand dollars everything included, hitch on the car etc. We took a note on the car, so now we own a trailer and still have \$800 to pay on the note before we can own our car again. No, me myself, I haven't gotten me a camera yet, the one we had fell off the icebox in Downey and shattered into a million pieces on the cement floors we had there. It was plastic, you know. Jere bought a good camera for fifty dollars that he takes those colored slides with. I had him make up some pictures, but they are not too good as pictures, though very lovely when looked at with a viewer on a screen. The trouble is they are so expensive and I wanted just an ordinary little old camera to take snaps with to send to you like I used to. I asked for one for my birthday but got the purse instead. But Christmas is coming up and I'm still hoping! Though Jere and I bought each other a fireplace set, screen, and so forth, and we got Camille another accordion. So Christmas is going to be slim pickings for our family.

She said she wanted nothing so much on earth, if she could only get a lighter accordion. The one we had bought for her has a lovely tone, but it IS heavy, I know, I get pooped myself after about fifteen minutes. She never wanted to take it anywhere to play for people, said it was ugly and she hated it, so one day at the stores I overheard a man say he had a little one for sale for a hundred dollars, his daughter got a better one, since she was ready to go on professionally and I asked if I could see it. It was exactly what we had in mind, and I had priced the same one I had priced at the store for three hundred and twenty five, so quick as anything I grabbed it. Now Cammie is happy and making the [walls] ring morning noon and night, I never have to remind her to practice.

Darling, I have to cut this short, will try to fill in the details in a later letter. Bye now.

Monday, June 30

Hello, Sweetie pie

Maybe you'd better fumigate this letter before you start to read it--it must be as full of germs as a dog is of fleas. Bob of boy, what a session we've been having! Wait until I put on my nurse's cap and finish taking temperatures...Deedee came down with the mumps and is one sick and unhappy little girl, and all of them have the whooping cough. Poor little Penney has it worse than any of them and it just about breaks your heart when she begins to whoop it up, and those deep circles under my eyes are not from the great night life I've been leading but because I'm up every night a half dozen times wondering if she's going to last the night out. Poor Baby, she just doesn't understand it and every attack leaves her faint and limp as a dishrag, although she is much better now. As a matter of fact, aside from having Deedee come creeping into bed with me is the very first night I haven't had to get up for Penney. You should just see the array of medicine bottles sitting on the dresser, and I line them up knee-deep with an assortment of teaspoons to give them their medicine four times a day.

And here we had Cammie all packed and ready to go to camp this week, and Deedee was enrolled in summer school, supposedly a special privilege reserved for the brightest and best pupils. And of course there was wailing and gnashing of teeth because all that is out for the summer. Happy Days!

To get back a little, I sure have been one busy little girl for the past month or so. First of all one of my neighbors was suddenly stricken temporarily blind, she is a diabetic and one of the veins behind her one good eye broke, and the doctor ordered her to bed to lie absolutely quiet lest it become permanent, and since she has a couple of little girl twins, Deedee's age and what with medical expenses and such, unable to hire a housekeeper us Neighbors rallied round and took turns going over to do what we could for her. One would give her breakfast, and by ten I was caught up with my own work to go over and take care of her until noon, see the kids off to school, dash home and make lunch for my own family, and before I could catch my breath Jere would be along to have me drive him hither and yon. He was doing some sort of research that meant I had to drive him from one place to another and spend hours sitting and biting my nails thinking of all the ironing piling up at home. The kids all helped a great deal until they got sick, and even then, they were good little troupers. By now, I hope he has it all lined up and I can relax a little. His vacation starts next week, but of course now we're going to spend it sitting on the patio. We had meant to go away for a week while Cammie was at camp, and I had planned to send Bobby off too, that would have meant only the two little ones. Oh well, the best laid plans---

Myra's husband has shifted to the night shift now so he is home during the day, and I only have to pop in at night to give Myra her supper, and she sent the twins to her sisters for the summer. Makes it a lot easier on everyone.

I still have the cubs every Tuesday afternoon, and until this epidemic broke out at our house, I used to take the kids in the neighborhood to the pool and leave them there for the day. One day all the boys, and Bluebirds had their Fly-up ceremony and are now Campfire girls, and I'm through with them for the summer, and I'm trying to get up enough nerve to tell Sophie Mae I won't resume my role as co-leader in the fall. I just don't see how I can.

Let's see now what else is new around here. Oh yes, I got a new gas stove--a beauty, with a stainless steel chrome top and a cover that makes up into a shelf, griddle in the middle--the works. And I'm so proud of it that up till now if nothing else gets done in the kitchen the stove gets polished up first. We also got us a set of new tires and slip covers for the car. Sears had a sale on them, and I bought them but nobody told me it would take days and days before they got around to putting them on our car. I went up three days in a row and put my name down on the list and they never did get up to my number. So on the fourth day I got mad and said unless they put them on right away they could have them back. You know how far you get with that kind of talk, so I got my money back. And since we got such a wonderful deal on the stove through a discount house (Northrop's employees get cards to different houses and they get as much as 20% off) we had looked at them all over town, and priced it at 300 dollars and got it for 235.00 So Jere called them up and asked about slipcovers and next thing I knew I was trotting off to Downey to order them, and picked them up the following Thursday and had them installed. They are awfully pretty, grey quilted plastic on the top and a green, gray and tan striped plastic material on the seat.

Last Saturday an Indian came by the house with the prettiest handmade jewelry while I was out and Jere bought me a bracelet, earrings, and pin to match. It's silver, with set in turquoises. It's supposed to be an anniversary present, and I love it so much I haven't taken the bracelet off since. He also got Pop a tie clip, which I hope he will like, and which finally got in the mail yesterday. The kids had pooled their money and bought him some skin bracer and he better write and tell 'em he just adores the stuff and it's just what he always wanted, they got their daddy the hair lotion, just what he needed of course!

The weather is lovely again today, and I'd give anything if I could take my brood to the beach, but until Deedee's swelling goes down, that's out. Gee, I feel just like Typhoid Mary, nobody comes near us, though the do call me on the phone every day to see how my poisonous brood is coming along. Thank God for television!-----

That Indian came back again and I got Jere a watchband, it's silver and made like a buckle, and it's a pity it doesn't fit mine. She looks nice and he likes it a lot.

I'm running out of inspiration, gosh, I'm so darned tired, I get no place fast, and I don't know where the days fly to. Well, I'll mail this, and maybe things will ease up a little and I have more time to write to you. I know, I have been a stinker, but honestly Mumsi, time goes so fast, please don't be mad at me.

I haven't heard from Filmore, so I guess I'd better write again. I was talking to Myra and she told me her sister (the one she sent the twins to) lives in Santa Barbara which is not too far from there, and she knows everyone and about everything, and she will ask her to look into the place for me. I have done a lot for her and I know she'll be tickled to do something to return the favor.

Well, goodbye again, and have a happy birthday darling, I will put your present in the mail this week, and it will be a little late, but I haven't forgotten you, angel.
Lots of love from the kids and me

P.S. Cammie has been fooling around with the typewriter to pass the time away, and she doesn't do too badly, so she wrote you a letter, did you get it?

Thursday, August 7. 1952

Hi, Parents:-

Excuse me while I wipe my fevered brow and catch my breath first----what a week, what a week. First let me thank you both for your letters, long looked for and very very welcome, thanks again, I'll get around to them later, but let me tell you of our latest exploit! Pop, you are so right when you say you wouldn't be surprised if we mailed a postal card from the moon, although after last Sunday 'Heaven' would be more like it.

Well, we decided to go up to Palomar State Park for the week-end and because Gary, the kid next door, practically belongs to the family now, he and Cammie are so much together, we took him along too. Jere had put a cot up over the table in the trailer, so ostensibly we'd have enough room. After a hectic and frantic day Friday, I finally had the trailer stocked with food and clothing and the beds made up, ready for the kids to crawl into when dark came and after supper we stuck the dishes into the sink and off we went. Everything went along smoothly until we got near Ellsinore. It's been over two years since we'd gone out that way and I distinctly remember the road making a sharp right turn by an old farmhouse. So blithely I turned right and after a quarter of a mile ran smack into a barricade, and what a time we had turning the trailer around on that narrow stretch. I always get out and let Jere do it, figuring, if he ruins the car or blows a tire, he isn't going to bawl me out, and he really did it quite neatly, even though he practically plowed through a barbed wire fence to do it. Well, it was dark by then so we bundled the kids off to bed and set off again. Seems they built a new highway and cut out all of the old road with its twists and turns and pot holes. We were barreling along at a good clip when finally Jere succumbed to the wine and the monotony and went to sleep. That would have been alright if this new highway hadn't completely thrown me off my stride, the map didn't show it, and I hadn't the faintest idea where we were going or how to get there. I finally succeeded in waking Jere up but it was too late. The road kept on winding up and down through the mountains without a sign of habitation or signposts that looked familiar and consequently we went about thirty miles out of our way before we finally in a round about fashion found ourselves on a road that said "Palomar State Park, 26 miles". We went a little way up the mountain until I found a convenient stopping place and we pulled up for the night. Bright and early the next morning we went on, and it was sure fun, nobody on the road, nothing but chipmunks and deer and squirrels, but it was rather a steep grade, and between Jere telling to shift all the time when I could see the motor wouldn't take it, I guess we were a bit hard on the transmission, and the upshot of it was when we got to the top and into that fine dirt the poor old thing couldn't take it. Oh, the motor purred alright but the car wouldn't budge. And we smelled something, brakes, transmission, or what have you, and there we were stuck right in the curve of a narrow dirt road. Brother! With a trailer behind yet! But the woods are always full of helpful people, in this case a bunch of boy scouts and their Scout master, and he came to the rescue. We unhitched the trailer and pulled it to one side and then after the car had sat awhile we were able to pull it into a vacant spot and the scout master hitched our trailer onto his truck and pulled it up into place too. And we had breakfast. That's the lovely,

lovely part of camping, as far as I'm concerned and some day I shall just quit! I drive us there, and we pile out and everybody wants to eat, so who fixes it? You know darned well, poor tired cramped little me. Before I can calm down with a cup of coffee I have to make it myself first. Oh well, that's the way it goes. Well, we ate and washed the dishes and took a hike, and although it was hotter than the hinges of Hell, we had a lot of fun. And that's the time I found out I had come away without my purse. I had my drivers license and a couple of dollars, and a credit card for Richfield, and us pretty near out of gas! Holly cow! Jere had forgotten his too. So we didn't dare take the car and go about like we usually do, but had to hoof it wherever we wanted to go, and with Penny riding my neck I sure enjoyed myself no end, you can imagine. Well, we decided to go down further where we had been once before and where I remember a stream running through a meadow. The kids had brought their bathing suits and wanted to go swimming, but the lake there had dried up so much it was nothing more than a puddle good for fishing only. So we piled the kids in the car and took off. But when we got there, there was no trace of water, it had all dried up. But we did find a campsite that was much nicer, under a great big old tree, where the branches hung clean down to the ground and made a nice breezy canopy. There was one old trunk shaped like an elephant's trunk that the kids could swing on and have a wonderful time, so we decided to move the trailer down too. That night we built a campfire and sat around it until late at night. The kids, Gary and Cammie, played the accordion and we sang all the songs we could remember, and I even gave a rendition of some of the German songs I knew, like "Lorelei" and "Lindenbaum", boy could we use a good voice! The next day we started for home around one o'clock, and everything was going along nicely, we found that because of the downgrade we probably could make it into Temecula where I remember there being a Richfield Station. But no, there had to be a slow car in front of me, and I had to keep applying the brakes to keep from running up the back of him. Well, the next thing I knew, I'm stepping with all my strength on the brake and yanking on the emergency and the darn old car keeps right on gathering momentum. I tell you, I've never been so scared in my life. Bad enough to have the whole family spattered over the mountainside, but Gary! So the only thing I could think of doing is to try to pull up at a cutout, and I aimed the car straight for a roadside marker, hoping and praying it would stop us. It did. And how. There was the darndest crunch, and there we were hung up and a big boulder, in a ditch yet. Practically the only way it would have stopped us. Jere got out, boiling mad, visualizing a crushed in radiator, or smashed oil pan or something worse, but all we got was a scratch on the bumper guard. Of course we were still hung up, and Jere and a couple of young men on motorcycles, worked like mad, to jack the car up and roll stones into the ditch until they got the car out. Then they had to get the trailer out too, and it was caught on the rock too, but finally we got back on the road, and I told Jere nothing could persuade me to get in that car with the trailer on it. So the kids and I started to walk and he drove off and I walked along thinking if I looked good in black, and how much insurance I could get, and seeing Jere and the car smashed up in a gully, when we met him walking back. He said apparently the overdrive hadn't engaged and here we were barreling down the mountainside in free wheeling. Jeepers! Jere had pulled up around the bend and threw the switch and it was now quite safe. I got in with trembling and trepidation, but I could feel the motor drag right away, and knew it was alright. If I could only have realized before that there should have been a drag going

in first, oh well, some day I'll learn, but times like that I curse all modern inventions and wish I had a plain old regular motor in the car like old Lizzie had. This overdrive business gets me all balled up. But like Jere says, I have the luck of the Irish, and seem to have a special guardian angel watching over me. (Kids, drunks, and fools you know)

Maybe I ought not to tell you of our experiences and just say we had a lovely time, so I'll do the next best thing--I'll promise faithfully on my Girl Scout Honor to drop you a card each Monday following an excursion so you know we're home safe and sound and in one piece. Okay?

In a weak moment I took the cubs fishing from the Manhattan Beach Pier, and Bobby caught a mess of fish, for which I was dully grateful, it being ebb-tide in my housekeeping money. I left them there for the day, and the rest of the time I was in an agony of suspense wondering which, if any, had fallen off into the water. But they got along beautifully, and had a wonderful time. Next thing I knew I was scouring the town for the most inexpensive fishing rods, and incidentally that's where your five dollars went. The rods were the cheapest things of the gear, but the reels, and line! Brother, they added up. But we have happy kids now, and I just hope we will continue to like fish, because they always come home with a pail full. Comes Sunday morning at the crack of dawn and there's Penny slapping me in the face with my slippers as a gentle hint to be up and doing. Oh my aching old bones! That baby is sure growing like a weed and is as active as a flea. She sure enough keeps me hopping to be one skip and jump ahead of her...

Nellie went east to Pennsylvania and I was sorely tempted to go with her, but now we have the trailer to pay for, and she made up her mind at the spur of the moment so it didn't give me much time to think about it. She left me her pregnant cat to take care of, though, and I had a high old time keeping her around the house. Practically every day you could see me hunting through my neighbors backyards calling "Here, kitty, kitty." Well, she managed to birth on a Saturday morning just when we were ready to take off, and the next thing you knew you couldn't get into our backdoor because it was knee deep with kids, their noses not more than six inches away from the process. I should have charged admission. She had four, but the very first minute the mother got out of the box to stretch her muscles, Tarbaby, that bad old Tom of ours, quicker than greased lightning went and caught one of them and killed it. And after that he never paid them the slightest attention. Cats are sure funny critters. Well, Nellie didn't stay away very long, only about three weeks and now she is back and took them away, cat, kittens and all.

I took the car to the garage the Monday following our trip and had it checked, realigned, and the wheels switched. Now we're all set to go off again. Jere has taken another week off, and this time we'll go to King's Canyon again. I hope Saint Christopher works overtime, he looks after travelers, you know, and he'll have a full time job looking after us.

I had given Bobby a birthday party at the beach, with the Cubs, and they had a swell day. No, that was Michael's party, the week before, I took them to Ladera Park, because one of them had a cold and couldn't go near the water, so we decided on the park instead, so he wouldn't always be left out. I no sooner got there and unloaded the car, an ice chest full of soft drinks, the cake, with smeared icing, and the presents and candles and what have you, when we discovered we'd left one of the cubs behind and had to run back and pick him up. It sure is hell to keep track of so many active little imps. We had bought Bobby an 'atomic space gun' (heavens to Betsy, when will he outgrow guns!) and a set of space men and rocket ship, which kept the whole crowd busy for hours on end. Your dollar as usual, was spent over and over again, and he ended up by buying more space men--oh well, it made him happy, and would have done your heart good, and been worth more than the slip of paper, to see the eager anticipation with which he received it.

Cammie on the other hand (you see those lockets are on my mind and more of that anon) I meant hand, settled for a five dollar bill in a wallet, rather than a party, and then turned around and planned a beach party for her friends after all. Sent out the invitations and bought the franks and buns and potato chips and drinks out of it, and all Mama had to do was lug them all up to the beach and spend the afternoon there. The very thing I was trying to get out of. Oh well! You can hardly ever win with kids. She sure counted her pennies and made it go a long ways, and even managed to squeeze out a pair of shoes. Oh she had such plans for those six dollars (yours included), and she really does quite well with her money, and those years of allowances haven't been wasted.

Oh yes, those lockets and watches, they still got them, and wear them mostly on Sundays, and the watches sure come in handy when they want to go off someplace and I want them home a certain time.

I went to a couple of Stanley parties, the sewing club met once, and I had a cub scout meeting, and in between I'm trying to squeeze out enough time to sew for fall. While I was waiting for the car I traipsed around town and found a shop that sold the new bubble pecay, the stuff you don't have to iron, at two yards for a dollar, and I bought scads of material. I even got some gold-print for myself and made a darling dress, that cost me all of two dollars. I love the way the stuff sews up, and looks so nice, gee how I long for one of those new sewing machines that do everything but wash and iron. But don't worry--one of these days---

Well, darling, I guess I'll close for this time, I still have to get the trailer ready to take off Friday afternoon, and it takes a lot of preparation. Will write again next week, no not next week, unless they have a post office there in King's Canyon, but the following Monday, for sure.

Bye now, and don't worry about us, Sweetheart, you know: unkraut verdirbt net. And besides, we all got to go sometime, can't live forever. It doesn't pay to worry about things that might happen, and if your time is up, you'll slip on a banana peel and break your neck in front of your own house. I tried to talk Jere into letting me take the trailer east

next June, but so far no soap. He says it would be lots nicer if you came out here for a visit. More fun for you, too. How're things going with you? Still working hard, and perishing from the heat in between?

The kids and Jere send their love, and so do I, oodles of it. I got to go and clean that darned old stove again, it sure is a vicious circle, I cook, and then clean it, and then it looks so nice the icebox needs to be wiped, I wipe it, and then I see the fingerprints on the woodwork, and so on, and net thing I know I'm cooking again and start all over. I wish I were an Indian and lived in a tent! So back with the nose on the grindstone, and I'll be seeing you (in print),
Love to you both,

Friday, October 2, 1952

Hello, Sweetheart:-

Gee, my conscience bothers me, and if I want for those mythical free five minutes, I'll be old and grey and you'll be in your grave before you get a letter from me. So to heck with the dishes, I've locked Penny in the backyard, disconnected the door bell, taken the phone off the hook and here goes...(something tells me locking Penny in the backyard was not wise, I hear the water running, and shall have to debate whether I should wait until she's good and muddy before I go out and turn it off, or try to rescue my flowerbed before it gets turned into a mud puddle...) Honestly, Mumsi, I'm busier than a dog with fleas, and my good intentions are strictly not legal tender, on other words, no good of me saying Gee, I meant to write, when what you want is cash on the line or a letter in the mailbox..

Right now, and working backwards (as usual) we're getting sidewalks put in and never in my life have I seen such a messy job done, our lawn is now practically non existent what with the gravel and rocks and dirt clods all over it. And now I'm waiting more or less patiently for them to come back and fill in the huge gaps they left between the cement and our so-called lawn. Being a corner lot it would take at least two truckloads of top soil or so it seems to me, to fill it in, and I'll be gosh darned if I'll go to the expense, not after what they are charging us taxpayers for the job. The fruit man gave my son two boxes of soft plums and I spent a hectic day putting up marmalade and jellies, and now I'm trying like mad to give them away. Do you like plum jam, dearie? I had given the cubs my last bit of paraffin and here I was, surrounded with glasses of hot jam and not a smitch of it in the house, and the kids in school. So I stuck it all in the icebox, but not even in our maddest moments can I expect the kids and me to eat fifteen quarts of it in the near future. It's good, too, but there can be too much of a good thing around, can't there?

I had the cubs that day too, and they were busily varnishing coasters, so when Jere came home that night, he wasn't sure, judging from the smells, whether he was going to have jam, varnish or stuffed peppers for supper. Last Thursday I took the kids to the Pomona Fair again, and we had a wonderful time. Came home, dog tired, but full of excitement that hasn't died down yet. Not while that chameleon we bought there lives, anyhow. I seem to be spending the best years of my life taking care of Bobby's zoo. Because if that poor old lizard is going to eat flies, it will sure as shooting be Mama that does the catching. Right now we also have a little white and black rat, and if you were to pay me a surprise visit you needn't be surprised to see me walking around with a rat on my shoulder. In fact I've been reduced to setting him in the window sill and talk to him while I do my dishes, and he makes better company than my no-good family who enjoy the TV. while I slave my life away in that old kitchen. The week that Jere was away I had high hopes of having a little peace and quiet, but it was not be to. That's when they started the sidewalks, and I worked madly for several days carting the sod and topsoil into the backyard to fill in the space under the clothes line where the previous owner's foolishly had gone to a great deal of expense to put pebbles. And said pebbles naturally turn up all over the lawn, and in the house, and I went nuts trying to get them to leave them where they belonged. Thank goodness they are a thing of the past now. The grass has grown

together nicely and it was well worth the effort. Then I had to move the tree in front, and that took care of another day. Boy, I sure worked that week.

I bet you were surprised when you came home and found Jere there.

Good grief, here it is Wednesday again and this letter is still sitting around. Jere stayed home Monday and Tuesday to look at, of all things, the World Series., and how in heck can I get anywhere with him bouncing in every two minutes to give me a blow by blow description of the last bit of play! Yesterday I went over to Nell's in desperation until he phoned me to say the game was over. Monday night I went to a Tupper Party at Myra's. A Tupper Party you say? Don't you know Tupperware yet. My God you haven't lived! And in spite of Jere saying as I went out the door: "Don't forget now, we have the trailer to pay for yet," I went in hock to the tune of seven dollars. I bought the three sizes of juice pitchers, with their no-leak covers, which is just what the doctor ordered for the trailer, Jere is always putting his wine in and getting it spilled on those jouncy rides we take. And I also bought a big whatjamacall it, like a huge three cornered sink strainer with the cover on it, to put my garbage in. Now Jere won't have to yak at me about garbage sitting around in the open. And I hate garbage can under the sink, and there's no place else to put one. Talking of doctor, or were we? Anyway, Cammie's been home from school with a couple of boils on her thigh, and how in heck she got a boil from I'll never know, but they drove her wild, and me too, what with putting wet compresses on it all day, and then she got one right under the eye and closed it up. But now she's okay again, at least, they are healing nicely, though we practically murdered her on Sunday, getting the core out with the help of a hot soda bottle. Suction you know. She screamed so, every kid in the neighborhood came running in. But it worked, and now she has to take some sort of pill to clear her blood and help speed up healing. Honestly, this has been one heck of a year, just one dratted thing after the other. The very first day of school she manages to get her foot caught on the school ground fence and had a deep puncture wound that had to be treated by the doctor, and the amount of Epsom salts we've used around here lately is phenomenal. Soak her foot, soak her leg, then Bobby stepped on a board and drove a splinter into his foot and here we were getting the old Epsom salts out and soaking him, but the splinter popped right out and no fooling it was at least an inch long. Kids! Honestly, when you have more than one, seems like it's always something. Our rat problem seems to have been taken care of by the cat. Anyway, Penny was forever taking him out of the cage, and when I came home from Myra's Monday night they told me the rat was gone, and Tarbaby has been sitting around with the most contented expression on her face and for all of a morning never once hounded me for something to eat, so I drew my own conclusions. Tough to be on the safe side I cleaned up the kids bedroom and closets, and moved every stick of furniture to see if he was there. Anyway, the bedrooms got their spring cleaning, and I managed to throw out a bushel full of junk from each closet. Myra and I went to see her sister up in the foothills, and she gave me a permanent. Came out okay too, but it only looks really well when Myra sets it for me, and I hate to ask her too often because, you know she is still partially blind, and it puts too much of a strain on her eyes. But at least I don't look like a skinned rabbit every other day, when it

gets the least bit oily a curl won't stay more than a half day, but now I look like the bottom end of a mop, unless I put a card full of bobby pins in to hold it in place.

I wanted a little old box camera for my birthday so I could take some pictures to send to you, the ones we get from our new camera are in color and in slides, so it doesn't do me any good, but when I took Jere down to the Union station when he went East, we found ourselves with an hour on our hands so we browsed around Olivera Street and he bought me a hand tooled leather purse, something I've been wanting a long, long while, but never thought I'd get because they cost so darned much, listen, sixteen dollars ain't to be sneezed at, but I guess all that expense money burned in his pocket, and he figured he'd get it out somehow, so here I am with a simply gorgeous purse. Some fine day, before it wears out, I want the shoes to match.

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Monday October 13th

Okay, okay, I know, I've been a bad, bad girl, good grief, I wished I knew where the time goes, all I know is, it goes...I just came back from my training course, I'm taking it every Monday for the next month, when the mailman handed me your two letters. Letters did I say? Hah! Sweetheart, I love you. And so help me I'll get this letter off today or die trying. And let not rain nor snow nor the fact that I haven't a stamp in the house delay me.

Nothing new has happened lately, same old routine. Now that we have the sidewalks everybody wants skates, Bobby I hardly ever see anymore unless he comes in for something to eat. He's grown into such a big boy, and is always out with the kids, playing football and using his archery bow and arrow. Getting real good at it too and one of these days we'll remember to take his bow camping with us so he can have a try at an honest to goodness rabbit or something. Over the weekend we still try to take the trailer out whatever chance we get and while the good weather lasts. Cause when the rains come, we'll probably head for New Mexico and the dessert. When we were up at Crystal Lake the other week, we ran into rain and it sure was cozy to sit it out in our little trailer home. Sure, and it had to start while we were in the middle of the lake in a rowboat, I'd taken the kids out to teach them to row, and they were just getting the hang of it when the first drops fell, and I had to take the oars and row hell bent for shore and make a dash for home. Home in this case being the trailer.

Well, I guess I'll sign off for now, the baby just woke up, and if I leave her locked in her room too long she turns it upside down and it makes more work for me to pick it all up again. Honest darling, I'll try to do better in the future. We're having our pack meeting this Thursday, and my boys have quite a lot to do in it, and I've been wracking my brains for a couple of weeks just how to get it done. They're hosts this time, and I made them make paper corsages for the mothers to wear. We need fifty, and I could get them concentrating only long enough for about twenty, that meant I had to make the rest. Then they're in a skit, and I've had to turn out the props in my spare time. What spare time, if any, I don't know. One of our mothers made the posters for me, after I gave her the idea, and I made an imitation camp fire out of papier-mâché, what a struggle, nobody could tell me exactly how it's supposed to be done, so I had to figure it out for myself. Next month

we're having a booth at PTA to sell things they have made so we've been turning out coasters and hot dish pads by the score. I sawed out the first batch then turned it over to one of our fathers, and the boys were supposed to cut out flowers, birds or what have you and paste them on and varnish the thing. But it meant I had boys running in and out of the house for the last month. Oh well, just think of the fun we have@ The PTA is having a carnival and Myra and I are supposed to be Fortune Tellers. On brother!@ And this neighborhood has a party at Halloween where we all go in costume and of course before the night's over you don't sleep anyway, so you see, there's always plenty doing around here but not anything you can put your finger on or put in your diary. Just doings. Some day I'll join a nice quiet old lady's home, but not just yet, I'm having too darned much fun, even though it keeps me stepping, at least it keeps me on my toes too, and I don't have time to sit around and sign.

Gosh, darling, I'm sorry to hear you're not feeling well, what is it this time, too much work and not enough play? Cold in the head? Getting up too early? or something more serious?

Well, I said goodbye once and kept right on talking, but this time I mean it. Best love to Pop and you as eve

Jan 2. 1953

And A HAPPY NEW YEAR to you, too...

Hi Sweetie pie:

Boy, if I want to keep my new year's resolution about faithfully writing to you every week, I'd better get on the ball, hadn't I? This has been some week! Jere was home on vacation between Christmas and New Years and you know how much you don't get done with him underfoot. The week before Christmas was a busy one, I told you about that. The few days before I madly rushed around on a thousand last minute errands. We opened our presents, and I say 'ours' with tongue in cheek, oh well, Christmas is for the children anyway, and it does give you a good feeling to watch their eyes light up. Baby daughter had her second birthday the Sunday before and I put out a great big teddy bear for her to find in the morning. Honest, every time she saw one in the stores she'd clutch onto it and wouldn't let go, so I finally succumbed and bought her one, now she's happy, the teddy is almost as big as she is and she loves it dearly. For Christmas she got twin dollies, blocks, a toy telephone and picture book and a few odds and ends in her stocking. Cammie and Deedee got skates which made them happy, and of course Bobby you couldn't pry loose from his space academy. There were several games for them all, a nail polish kit (from Grandma) for Cammie and mukluks (slippers) from Grandma for Deedee, and a quiver for his arrows for Bobby (from Grandma--my wasn't she the best grandma ever!!!) We had some eggnog and sat and watched them madly rip packages open and scream with delight. Oh yes, Deedee also got a set of dishes and a wash set to wash them. Christmas day was beautiful, warm and sunny, and I had invited Rose and Jack for dinner. Unfortunately he got sidetracked helping his neighbor fix his car and they were an hour late. I'd about given them up and we had eaten and I was washing the dishes when they came along. I didn't mind, I know how those things happen sometimes, but Jere was a little miffed and spent the day sitting in the sun on the patio. Oh well, we had a nice time anyhow. She brought Cammie a slip and some fancy pants and also a nightgown for Deedee and some panties. A shirt for Bobby and some lovely hand crocheted hankies for me. A big cake and cookies. She's a darling. Too bad she hasn't been feeling well, and I think she'd return home at the drop of a hat. Of course Jack is determined to stick it out until March or April. He is going to see the Rose Parade and get some pictures, they ought to turn out good and I can hardly wait to see them in color. Of course we watch the Parade on television but they tell me the colors of all the flowers and the girls dresses is simply beautiful. Someday I will brave the cold and the crowd and take the kids, even if only once.

Jere has been hounding me to go away in the trailer, but this time I stood firm, I simply couldn't see the sense of going away when we could have a nice cozy comfortable week at home. I won, this time. Then along came the notice of the 1953 license fee and he blew a gasket, nineteen dollars, he screams, for a piece of valuable equipment sitting in the driveway. I told him to hold his steam, when spring and summer come is time enough to go traipsing off someplace every week.

We went on a New Years Party, and oh I don't think I'll ever catch up on my sleep. We had a wonderful time, of course, and I wouldn't have missed it for the world, and for all of my going around saying how little I drink, I drank like a fish that night, but with Jere buying the very best scotch on the market I didn't even have a headache the next morning, except by around one or two in the afternoon my wild oats caught up with me and oh, was I every sleepy, but who can sleep in this madhouse! Myra and I whipped up a concoction of lemon juice and rum and ice in her blender, and it was so good we didn't stop making them until the rum ran out. There was another party going on in the neighborhood and all night long we had people going back and forth from one to the other, boy what a night, it's a good thing it was a neighborhood party and practically everyone was there, they couldn't have slept anyhow.

Did you get the package?

I got a new sewing machine, finally, the kind that zigzags and does everything except wash dishes. I tell you how it came about. I answered the phone one day and answered a question, and was informed that Lucky Me had won fifty dollars towards a sewing machine. I told them I wasn't thinking of buying one right now, but the salesman came out anyway, and the upshot of it all was we went to look at machines and after a lot of dickering on Jere's part they gave me thirty-nine fifty on my old machine, so with the fifty dollars I'd won and the other forty, the machine wasn't so awfully expensive and I'm sure proud and pleased with it, I can hardly wait for some free time to get to work. I did some mending and it is sure wonderful to be able to go back and forth and do the zigzag and the straight stitch, just as you wish.

Oh drat it, Cammie and Gary are practicing the accordion and I can't think straight anymore, so I'll sign off for today.

Darling, the mailman just handed me your letter, Sweetie, I'm sorry. Don't feel sad, I know it is my fault a lot for not writing you oftener, and honestly it isn't because I don't think of you, I do, all the time, and oftener, it's just so difficult to sit down and get going, I wish I had a Dictaphone machine, I'd go along and talk to you into it, and send you the record. Why don't you come out and see us, I'd be the best and most loving daughter a mother ever had...

Bye now, more later.
With all our love, as ever

P.S. Gosh I almost forgot, we got your package, and of course both Jere and I madly dug for the stollen. Ahhhh, it is now just a pleasant memory. Gosh why can't I learn to bake like that...Thanks a million, Pop, what would Christmas be without your stollen. And Mumsi, a million thanks for that lovely sweater, now how did you know I needed one desperately. and it's so very nice and the stockings, gee, you practically keep me in 'em don't you. The socks I gave to Cammie, they were just her size, and the kids loved having the candy and cookies, they are nothing but hollow legs anyway, and never get enough of

the sweet stuff, you'd think they never got a thing to eat the way they pitch into it. Jere says thanks for the tie.

I tried, oh, for a week to bake enough cookies in advance, but so help me, each time I baked a batch it was eaten before it got cool. Even the ones I made for the party at school I had to practically guard with a shot gun, so's I'd have enough. Das Fressende Kapital!
Bye again.

January 25. 1953

Greetings, Family:--

Here I set--in shorts and with the blinds drawn because the sun is so hot and think of those newspapers you sent me, blizzards, sleet and all, well, all I can say, honey lamb, is "It's lucky when you live in California." You can keep that lovely white feathery stuff all to yourselves. Only thing is, when it's so hot I lose absolutely any ambition I might ever have had and inspiration forsakes me as far as this letter is concerned. Rose and Jack were here Friday night to view some of the pictures he took of the Rose Parade. I'd promised to dig up a projector so we could all look at the pictures at the same time, and when I cajoled one of my neighbors into letting us use hers and brought it home and unwrapped it, it turned out to be a moving picture projector. After frantically phoning around, because I expected the Groethers any minute and they were bringing a neighbor, too, I finally came up with the bright idea of renting one. And so I did, why didn't I think of it before, it's really very inexpensive and a lot less trouble. The pictures he had taken were very beautiful, I'd never realized what a riot of color those floats are. Of course he still can hardly wait to go home to New Jersey, honestly, Mumsi, what a viewpoint! They came out to have fun and see what there is to see, so why not do it, and accept the bad with the good...It makes Jere real cross to hear him talk. But I do like Rose, she is very sweet. She showed me your letter. MOTHER, whatever do you mean by saying I don't write. I'm glad you got the package. Like Grapefruit? Huh? I have some more presents coming up, just to drag Christmas out until Easter again...The kids are all at the movie and the baby is asleep, boy, it's peaceful around here. But it's so warm it's making me sleepy, too.

Nothing much new. One day rolls into the next without effort and the groove wears deeper all the time. You know what I mean. I finally got around to using my new sewing machine and I'm just crazy about it, when I get caught up on my mending and sewing,, why I might even experiment with embroidery and such like.

February 15, 1953

Good God, where does the time fly to, and not a peep out of you yet. Oh yes, Rose showed me your letter, so you're going to pout are you? What about those letters Cammie sent you, and the cards from me? Oh well, never mind that now.

It's Sunday afternoon again, and things are kind of peaceful for a minute anyway, so I can bring you up to date. Not that anything tremendous happened, the usual chain of events. The cubs had a window display at a downtown store and we made a miniature camp site for it, and a poster turned out real cute too, and it would be a pity if we didn't win a prize. Last Wednesday instead of having a regular den meeting, I had the boys assemble kites and we went up to an empty field and flew them. Had some cake and Kool-aide, and a lovely time. Boy, after reeling in a couple of kites that were practically out of sight, I felt muscles I never knew I had. Friday, Cammie had a Valentine Party, she'd dreamed up all by herself. After listening to fourteen kids whooping it up for awhile I decided to go and

have a cup of coffee with one of my neighbors to get away from them. Now that the nice weather is here again I can't resist working in the yard, and there's lots to be done, too. and if I had a fence around the whole place instead of just the backyard I'd put bigger and better plants in. As it is, the kids got that croquet set (good grief how DO you spell that anyway?) croquet I should say, anyway, since they play that day and night there is very little lawn left in the backyard, and now that I'm trying to nurse it back to life they are trying their level best to do the same to the side yard. Oh well, they gotta play someplace.

February 21. 1953

Holy Goodnight, this letter is still around. Well, every Sunday a couple of lines, so eventually it ought to be quite a letter, eh? And what's with you? Are you on a strike or something. I bet you are.

Nothing new around here, same old routine. I'm so darned busy with a million small things the days go by so fast I can hardly keep track of them. I've been working out in the yard this past week, now that things keep sprouting up like mad. That's what I like about this place, all the time there's some thing blooming. Whoever heard of picking carnations and roses and snapdragons or what have you in February. I pruned some roses and stuck the ends in the ground and they sprouted like mad. But golly my hands are so rough now, wished I could remember to wear gloves.

I've been doing a lot of sewing too, I just love to fool around with my new sewing machine.

Darling, I can't find your last letter, I know you asked about something and I can't remember what it was. I guess I'd better close now and send this off. The kids are all at the show, and when I go to pick them up I'll mail this off. Nobody can read it anyway. Best love to you both from all of us,

April 15, 1953

Hello, Family:---

Remember me? Gee, it really has been a long time this time, hasn't it? And I have so very much to write about, too, I don't even know where to start. I told you on the phone that Jere is up in Redwood City, since last Sunday. You know Jere, every so often he gets the itchy foot and distant pastures look greener and seems like every Spring he wants to go North with the birdies. Well, he finally talked me into it, and for the sake of peace in the family I consented, but I was quite firm that he go up by himself for awhile until he gets a chance to look around and settle down and be quite, quite sure this is IT. In fact for awhile it looked as if I had the choice of staying here with the kids and lose a perfectly good husband or going along with the idea. Of course you know, when he puts it that way there's only one answer...Well, to go back a little, the week before Easter he had that offer from a firm up there and we packed our little old trailer, slung the kids in the car and off we went. I had every intention of writing to you then, but when we got to the Big Basin, where we intended to hold up for a week, the campsites were still too soggy, and therefore closed to the public, in fact there wasn't a soul there, not even a Ranger, so we had to go halfway up the mountain and park the trailer on a cut-out in the road. And Jere took the car down to Redwood City, which is only about an hour's ride (and what a ride!) away. Well, since it was so muddy from the Winter it seems to me all I did was lug pail after pail of water and wash clothes and dishes and make up the trailer and cook the whole livelong day. Jere got back so late I'd begun to worry about him, and sure enough, he had lost his way coming back and went about an hour's ride out of his way. Well, to make a long sad tale short, the next morning I woke up and looked at Bobby and like to have died. His face was all red and swollen and sure enough--poison oak again. By the end of that day he was a sad sight to behold, with his eye swollen shut and one raw sore mass from the hips down and Deedee was almost as bad. So we packed up and headed for home. All that day the only way I could get some food into those kids was to feed them malted milk with ice-cream through a straw. Well, we got home late Saturday night, and when we got out of the car I thought something was different. The lawn was cut and the front door was not locked. Well, Mami, when I walked into the house I almost fainted dead away. You know how you leave the house when you go off in a hurry like we always do. I'd stacked the supper dishes in the sink and had just dumped the clean wash from the line onto the couch, the bedrooms were a mess, well you know, and when I walked in the house was spotless. Clean doilies on all the furniture, the kitchen walls glistened, the bathroom shone. Jeepers! It seems my good friends and neighbors were talking among themselves and decided to clean the house for me as a surprise. You see, the sewing club was to meet in my house the following Wednesday and we were supposed to come back Tuesday and they knew I'd be too tired to try to clean house, so the seven of them got together and really cleaned, and I mean CLEANED. They washed down the walls in the kitchen and bathroom and the woodwork all through the house, the windows and Venetian blinds and everything. The cub scouts mowed the lawn and cleaned up the yard. And from what I gathered it must have been a beehive of activity that Friday. I was so touched I could have cried. You don't know what it means to come home tired out from driving and know you have to straighten that mess out first before you can go to bed. I wormed out of Gary who had been there and of course, at Easter I left a little

gift on each doorstep without saying a word. Honestly Mami, it will just about kill me to leave these dear and kind people behind and go move away. I will never, never, find a nicer bunch of neighbors again.

Well, the kids were so bad this time it really broke your heart. Poor Bobby, he is so patient about it all, he was so sore, he couldn't have any clothes on so all day long he stood over the heater, seems like the heat kept him from itching, and he knows enough by now that he mustn't scratch it. We tried everything on him but it was almost two weeks before he could go back to school. Deedee went back after the Easter vacation was over, but Bobby's face was still covered with thick scabs and sores and I had to have a release from the doctor before they would let him come back. Well, in the meantime, every single day I'd take Jere to work in the morning and every day around nine he'd call up and come home. And you know how your life is turned upside down when a man is hanging around the house all day. Well, last Sunday morning he finally made the plunge and started loading up the car at nine and tore himself away at ten. I really almost didn't think he'd go. He kept hedging and hedging, you know him, he just hated to go alone.

Well, and now I have a new problem. Penny is runny a temperature and my neighbor informed me yesterday that she thinks she has been exposed to the measles. Said neighbor had a little boy visiting Easter Sunday and he came down with the measles, and Penny and the little girl next door are always playing together and now we're keeping our fingers crossed and holding our breath just to see what develops. For two days now both little girls are running a fever but so far no spots, I expect any minute now to see them popping out. I called the doctor and he said there was nothing to do but keep her quiet and give her a half an aspirin. Day before yesterday is when I first noticed it, because she slept all morning, in fact the girls of the sewing club had a Come-as-you-are breakfast and I went. I'm glad now I didn't take Penny because there were a lot of little kids there, just ran in every hour to see if she was still asleep and she was. But after she woke up she was hot as a boil and when I took her temperature it was 102. Just when I was chewing my knuckles about that the kids came running in to tell me that Camille had cut her foot on something on her way home from school. I started off on foot (this would have to happen because I have no car) when I realized I couldn't very well lug that big hunk of a girl home in my arms, and so I asked Jessie to drive me. She took us to the doctor and he gave her a shot and told me to keep it in Epsom Salt. So all day yesterday I soaked feet and bathed feverish foreheads and cleaned the house. The sewing club was supposed to meet in our house this time, remember the last time I had to switch places because of the poison oak deal, and now this! I had the cubs in the afternoon too but since Cammie was home she kept the baby in the house for me while I had the boys in the backyard. I called all the girls and told them about Penny but they came full strength anyway last night. I didn't get to bed until one o'clock and this morning could hardly pry my eyes open. The kids have been awfully good since Jere went away, and they get up in the morning and get dressed and eat and get washed without me having to hound them at all. In fact Bobby has been simply wonderful, he even combs his own hair and remembered to take the garbage out and brought the pail in without having to be told. It absolutely floored me, because as a rule, I have to remind him at least half a dozen times. And when I tell him to come into

the house at eight he does without a murmur. I heard him tell the kids in the backyard last night, well, fellows I gotta go in now, see you tomorrow”, and he came in and put his pajamas on and they all stayed inside as good as gold. The ladies usually come around eight-thirty, and there wasn’t a peep out of any of them. And don’t think that isn’t miraculous. Yes sir, it sure has been peaceful around here since Sunday.

I haven’t heard from Jere yet, and if I were the worrying type, I’d sure have plenty to worry about. I don’t know whether to keep the house clean expecting him to pull up any minute now or whether I’ve lost him for good! I suppose he’s been busy and hasn’t had a chance to write yet, and if he did I wouldn’t get it anyway until today or tomorrow. Well, I’ll see.

Darling, I’ll make this letter a snappy one, so don’t be mad at me, and write and tell me all that’s new with you. I haven’t seen Rose and Jack since before Easter, and I guess I’ll drop them a line and tell them I’m alone and to come see us. The kids are awfully fond of Rose, she is the sweetest person, and I do wish I had more time to run over to Downey and see her. I’ll write later as soon as I hear from Jere,
best love from all of us, as ever

Greetings, Dearly Beloved:---

THURSDAY, did I say? I'm beginning to wonder if I still have a husband, when that car rolled around the corner last Sunday did you roll clean out of my life? I don't know if, at this point, I should start to pace the floor and wring my lily white hands or trust that you have a good and sufficient reason for not writing to me sooner. Naturally this is the day the mailman is late, too.

Things are sure enough popping around here this week, and one reason why I haven't sent a missing person alarm out yet is that I've been hanging at the ropes with one thing and another. Penny started to run a high temperature Tuesday and while I was wondering what she could be coming down with Jeanie came in and announced that she expected her little Jeanie to come down with the measles. Seems Easter Sunday they had company and the little boy visiting had developed measles the following day, she said Jeanie acted feverish and cross but so far nothing happened, and when we began to compare notes it turned out that Penny had been exposed on Easter Sunday, too. The funny thing is, she has a very high temperature one minute and sleeps and sleeps and the next she acts as chipper as a monkey. Well, Tuesday afternoon just when I'm thinking one more day of this and I'll have to have the doctor, Carol comes babbling into the house saying Cammie has cut her foot and she's BLEEDING something awful up at the chicken ranch. Luckily Penny was asleep and Bobby had just come home so I started to hot foot it up there when I realized I couldn't very well lug that great big hunk of a girl home in my arms. So I called Jessie and she took me up. Sure enough, she was sitting on a sand pile dissolving in tears and blood all over the place. Apparently she had come down hard on a jagged piece of glass and it punctured her foot in two places, quite deep. Running of course. Well, Jessie took us to the doctor and he gave her a shot of penicillin, said to bathe the foot in Epsom Salts, so that if any glass was still in the foot it would come out. An ex-ray would not show it up anyway. So while I was there I asked about the baby, oh, we had quite a conversation, and he said to give her a half an aspirin if the fever got too high and keep her quiet and dark. So yesterday I spent a hectic day bathing a sore foot and sponging a feverish little brow. So far nothing. She is quiet enough and gives me very little trouble at night, sleeps a great deal, but so far nothing. But I expect the spots to come popping out any minute now. Yesterday was the day I had the sewing club, too, and the cubs, what a day! Cammie kept the baby in the house for the short hour I had the cubs, and I really gave them a short thrift, and I phoned all the ladies and told them about Penny, but they turned out full strength last night anyway. We made it a card night, and it was a lot of fun. Just like the last time I had them. The kids cooperated beautifully and Camille even hunkered down to dust the book cases. They went inside at eight with the baby and watched television and not a peep out of them all night.

WELL! The mailman just came by, and that's just about all he did--go by.

Friday Morning.

Wouldn't you just know it...Here I stick closer to the house than wallpaper for almost a week, and the first time I put my nose outside who should call but my Lord and Master.

It sure was nice talking to you, darlin' ---Well anyway, on with the dance. You [probably wanted to know whether I got the checks and what I did with 'em. Right? Well, I paid the house, the note, the phone, water, gas and meat bills, kept twenty-five for the house, bought Frances (that's ME) a pair of shoes and some underwear, all of which accounted for one check, namely \$144 etc. and the other check I deposited in the bank. Feel free to draw on your account anytime, sweetie pie, it's your money, just let me know so I can keep the records straight.

Well, the inevitable has happened, I looked at our baby dumpling in the dawn's early light and lo and behold! spots. But she's not awfully sick, in fact I would say she is hardly sick at all, her temperature this morning is normal, she ate a hearty breakfast and if it weren't for the fact that she definitely has been exposed to a diagnosed measles case, and the sprinkling of spots on her face and neckline, none on her body at all, why, I would say she had a case of rosiola, which isn't serious at all. But I don't want to take the chance of exposing anyone else, so I gave strict orders for no kids in the house. It's a little late for that though, but it does give me an excuse to have a little peace, quiet and privacy. Little Diane Griswold stayed overnight with us, and I've been looking after her all week, because Jessie had been looking for a job and went to work early this morning. She works from eight to one and I offered to see Diane off to school. Jessie by now, is resigned to the fact that measles are in the air and if Diane or the two Dianas should come down with it, why, I just pop them both into bed together and take care of her as well.

I've darkened the house, and I feel like I'm living in the midst of perpetual gloom, you know me, I'd have the blinds fixed so I can look out and see what goes on in the world, and this way I can hardly see the dust on the furniture. Goodie, goodie.

Now as to my Dearest and Best, how is everything with you? How's about sparing me a few minutes out of your no doubt busy life, and sitting down to an honest-to-gosh letter and fill me in on the details. You know, I'm practically perishing from curiosity.

So far I haven't seen hide nor hair of Healy's real estate, nor yet so much as entertained a prospective customer. Madden called Wednesday, I believe, and asked if we had done the things he suggested, and I informed him you hadn't had the time to do anything, except for a few minor details. He said he had a prospective customer he'd like to bring out Sunday, and I had to tell him we'd given it to Healy. He was practically speechless, and then said if that was what you wanted to do, sell the house without fixing it up first, he could have handled it that way, too, but he thought you were interested in selling it quickly (which we are) and he told you what he thought was best. I said I was sorry but I didn't know anything about anything, and you were handling all the details. So if he really is interested let him get in touch with Healy himself. Didn't I hear you say you didn't want it to go on the board, or something? Does that mean it would have to be Healy's or nothing? Well, we'll see what happens this week-end.

Pack night last night went off very well, one of the best nights we've had. Bobby, Denis, Dickie and I walked up, although Vi Withrow offered to drive me, but I thought it would

be fun for everyone to walk for a change, and it was. We had a very impressive ceremony for the new little bobcats. Of course I wrangled Spenser (the Scout master) into letting me be parent for Dennie. One of the fast and hard rules laid down, incidentally, was no parent, no award. But Cecil was still out working and Jeanie had the baby sick, so they let me make an exception. Anyway, the new cubs and their parents went outside, the hall was darkened, and only a council fire, which Mr. Withrow had made and very effectively, too, was burning, and Spence made a speech, and we filed up the aisles with the other parents lighting the way with flashlights. He then had a Wolf, Bear, Lion and Webelo respectively give a little speech and then asked if they would accept these new cubs into the pack. They assented, and then he made a speech to the new cubs the parents pinned on the bobcat pin on their son and then Spence asked them if they would do all they could to help their son on the scouting trail. Very, very effective. Then we had some Indian dances by the older scouts and brother, it practically scared those little fellows out of a year's growth. They danced and danced and all of a sudden brandished their hatchet and gave with a yell. Boy, they were really good.

Monday Morning
April 20, 1953
My own Darling:-

Faithful Penelope, that's me, and I can tell you one thing, by the time my Lord and Master has come back from his seven year's odyssey, he will find Jack the Odd-job and I-fix-everything Man has muscled in on his territory. Why, oh why, must the old furnace give out on me every time you turn your back, and of all times how, when the doctor's order specifically stated "keep her warm and quiet". I even crawled under the house clutching a flashlight in my hot little hand, and looked at the thing, but for all the good it did me I might as well have kept my jeans clean. I felt about as useful as when Lizzie coughs and sputters and I raise the hood and look in its innards with a practiced 'hah' eye and with an air of great wisdom poke at the carburetor (or what I THINK is the carburetor) Oh well, I did the next best thing, I picked up the phonebook and looked up somebody who might just conceivably know something about thermostatic heaters. Meantime we depleted our wood supply and I'm about to saw up the furniture. It isn't bad during the day, but early morning and at night we do need some heat. And it would have to be Saturday when you can't get a hold of anyone. As it is I spent all day Saturday and Sunday a-sitting and a-rocking, with a little fuzzy head on my breast and "The Silver Chalice" in my hand. It is an excellent book I'm told, and someday I'll read it again when I can do so without any disturbing interruptions.

1.P.M.

Bunny had called and asked me to come and help her thread the sewing machine she rented. Oh, my reputation as Miss Fix-It is solid in this neighborhood, little do they know! Anyway, I went over and since it was something I was a little more familiar with than a floor furnace, I managed to fix her up. Well, anyway, while I was there the mailman came and of course I hotfooted it for home, and sure enough, Christmas came early this year, a nice fat letter with that familiar handwriting. But looking at it I knew, I just KNEEW, Camille managed to screw up the address you gave her and God alone knows where that letter I wrote you is wandering around now, but I bet dollars to doughnuts you're not getting it. So I'm sending along the copy I have to fill you in on the details. Better read that first...

Darling, I wouldn't say this to the kids, but was I ever glad to have that phone call Thursday, even though I wasn't here to receive it.

Well, to get back to our tale of woe, the man came to fix the furnace, and poor Guy, he was under the house for a couple of hours trying to get it to work, and I kept being glad it wasn't you--the air would surely have turned blue. It would start alright and then it wouldn't shut off, and when that part worked the pilot went out and wouldn't go on again, oh more fun! Finally he said he would take it over to the shop and work on it. By that time, after turning the thermostat on and off for the trillionth time YOU KNOW, I was ready to burn the old homestead down and start from scratch.

Penny is practically down to normal again, not that she ever was as sick as Jeanie next door, she never did break out over her stomach and legs except for a sprinkling of little dots, but she seemed not to want to leave my lap, and you know that can become very wearying after a time. And she persisted in wanting to go outside, and I was so desperate I about nailed the doors shut. I'll let you know in about two weeks whether the Dark Angel has passed the other kids by.

The neighbors have been really swell about helping me get about, but I feel just a little bit independent and would rather ride the bike. I've been taking the shopping bag and going into Hawthorne practically every day, and even went to the library in Lenox. Saturday I went to the Meat locker and then stopped at Groves on the way home, and found myself with quite a load to lug home, I would buy more than I'd figured on, but I managed to get it home without scrambling the eggs on the sidewalk.

Last night I woke up and it was just pouring, naturally I had the line loaded with wash, but I thought to myself "what the heck, it'll dry again" and turned over and was just on the point of going to sleep when I remembered those darned rats on the patio. So I dragged myself out in my shortie nightgown with a coat flung over my head, you should have seen that apparition! and rescued them. I should have let them drown, doggone it, poor things were just wet bundles of fur and their cage a sodden mass. There I was at three in the morning with a lap full of wet rats and didn't know what to do with them, so I dumped them in the tub and shut the bathroom door. One of these days they will find themselves sold down the river, I'll take them to a pet shop and let them worry over 'em.

Nellie took me to the bank to put in that other check, you see how I'm rambling, but I can't sit down in peace for five consecutive seconds without that small burr of ours in my hair. I shall lose my mind yet over her. Anyway, that check was quite a surprise to me \$295 dollars, imagine? That will keep us for a few weeks, eh?

Darling, I will answer your letter more fully when the kids are in bed. I just can't concentrate with all these interruptions, so I just shall take this off to the post office so you won't have to wait too long to hear from us.

Memoria in eterna et fidelis

(in eternal remembrance and fitfulness)

Tuesday, April 21. 1953

Hello, again, Darling:

The mailman just dropped a little reminder from Madden in the mailbox, about the balance of our insurance debt. Guess he's mad at us. However, that got me to figuring, and the end result is that my joy in that nice fat bank balance is short lived. Cripes, if I pay him, and the house payment in a couple of weeks, and the tax you mentioned in your letter and the doctor, and straighten out my books with the Cubs and the Swing Club, I'll have about thirty dollars for two weeks, and then I'll go over the hill to the poorhouse. Or get a job. I can only hope that Ampex doesn't hold more than a week back for you. But holy cow, does that money you took with you hold out that long for you? A speedy return requested.

On thinking it over I realized I haven't given you any exact figures on how the money went, only where. And knowing how vitally interested you are in figures (female?) I better back track and start all over again. Here it is, and you will probably tear your hair out, as usual because I'm not there to explain my bookkeeping.

house	75.
note`	3.50
gas bill	7.08
phone	4.79
water	5.95
meat balance	10.44
clothes	8.00 (and I just simply had to have 'em)
	<hr/>
	124.77
that left me with	20. for food for the week

	144.77

It was such a wonderful feeling to have those bills paid I wouldn't have it otherwise, and the impulse, on receiving Madden's bill was to rush right to the checkbook and mail him one. No doubt that's what you will tell me too do anyway.

I also got a letter from the National Auto Club to the effect that the Motor Vehicle Bureau has returned our trailer fees and requests a return of our validated portion of the registration (whatever they mean by that) and that they would issue a corrected registration, and they want a remittance (!?) but didn't say how much or what. I tried several times to call them but so far the lines have always been busy. Maybe I can get someone to take me into Inglewood this afternoon and I'll try to straighten it out. Will let you know what it is all about.

The man about the furnace came back again this morning, after fruitlessly trying to make it work yesterday afternoon. It would work sporadically, he had it at the shop to clean and look over and said there it worked fine but the minute he hooked it up here it just

wouldn't function right. So this morning he brought another fellow, and the upshot was they had to replace the Ye Gods, already I forgot, but on the bill it says B-60 and the pilot light I whatever that is. He said something about a pressure valve being missing and too much gas being forced out, which would mean that eventually the metal would burn out in the heater and would have to be replaced.????? Do you know what he's talking about? He also suggested finding the manual rod so's you can turn it off by hand when it gets out of control. The labor was eight dollars.

Sweetie, I'm so glad things worked out so well for you. See, I told you once you get up there and talk things over it would be alright. Just the same I'm also glad I insisted on staying on down here until June, gives us just enough time for you to settle into your new job and know whether or not it will be permanent, and for us to have a breathing spell. I do wish I could be sure that Healey is working on this sale. Up till now, I was rather glad no one came to look at the house, I'm sure the measles sign would have frightened them away, but now that Penny is her own normal ornery self again, I would like to see some sort of activity. I talked to the lady that bought Slaughter's house, and she feels that every so often there is a slump in the real estate business for no reason anyone can figure out. There was that ad in the paper, but I haven't noticed one since, and I looked the papers over from stem to stern. Another realtor came by the other day and asked me about the price, of course I referred him to Healy, and he probably thinks I'm stupid--I know from nothing.

Well, sweetheart, I shall leave you now, to your birdsies and treesies, I hope you had a lovely weekend. Did you do some scouting around? How did your room work out, still bothered by commercials? Bye now, write soon again
and all our love to you, as ever

Thursday afternoon
April 23, 1953
Ave, imperator! morituri te salutant.

And Boy, I'm not just a-kidding either. I had everything figured out so neatly on paper and every time the mailman comes by he drops another bombshell in my lap. Now get the latest--the State of California gives us notice that they'd like us, nay, they insist we do, come across with \$52.43 for the taxable period ending Dec. 1950. Didn't we file that year either? That lops off ninety dollars right then and there from my nice fat little nest egg. Plus the forty-eight to Madden, plus the seventy-five for the house. And the new phone bill came in--thirteen dollars alone for your calls to Redwood City. I'm dead!

If and when the answers to those letters I've been bombarding you with come through I shouldn't be looking for the mailman in vain, like I've been doing, at least for awhile. You dog, you. You mean you didn't set yourself down over the weekend and dash off a nice long loving letter to your Dear Ones at Home? Shame on you, now you get that Redhead right off your lap and start missing us.

I dragged your picture out of the mothballs and displayed it prominently in the living room. And Bobby of all people, came out with the amazing statement this morning, that whenever he sees it he starts to miss you something awful. Your faults, dear, are completely forgotten, and all we can think of is that all of us together make a family, and that's the way we like it to be. For better or worse.

Darling, all these bills that have just come in I haven't paid yet. Because I wanted to hear from you first, about soon you'll get your first paycheck, and whether the money you took along will hold you over until you do. So, please, write me just as soon as you can as to what you want me to do. Nothing has come through so far, about the tax form you just sent in, but no doubt it will come in just when I'm at ebb-tide so I'm keeping it in mind.

Newsflash! The twins have the measles. Oh Joy, oh glory, poor Myra is having her hands full because they are quite sick. Guess we just live right because I must say Penny wasn't bad at all considering. She did eat, and she managed to let me sleep nights, and except for those two days over the weekend when I sat and rocked her all day and half the night she wasn't too bad, oh she was sick alright but she was very good about the whole thing. I guess we just live right!

Yesterday was Cub Day again, and I was knee deep in birdhouses, and covered with saw dust. I went up to McElhose and asked them for some odds and ends of lumber and Ray Marting started to pile a whole load on me and when I informed him to please cease and desist, I couldn't carry all that on the bike, he clutched his head and moaned "oh you women!". I took some of the cub's money and bought six hammers, and screwdrivers, nails and paint, and oh brother, I had no idea that tools were that high. But anyway now we don't have that fuss over a couple of tools all the time. And all of which reminds me, I took one long look at the garage and Kid, do you honestly expect me to do all that

packing all by myself? The very first thing I did after you left was to haul the record player(?) out to the garage and gathered up all the stuff on the bridge table and floor. Now at least you can go into that back bedroom without breaking a leg. The jars are still sitting there, I guess I kept hoping you'd come back and decide it wasn't such a bad place after all. Whatever will we do if we don't sell the place?

Something is wrong with the extension for the lawnmower. Every time I plug it in I blow a fuse, and though I've examined it from beginning to end I can't find the trouble. I know it's old and frayed in spots but nothing is obviously wrong. And after those two days of rain it sure needs cutting. Guess I'll have to go out and chew it off with my teeth. 'It' being the lawn of course.

The kids are coming home from school, so I'll sign off for today. Bye now, dearest, with all our love, as ever

F.

P.S. Jack and Rose were here last night and left the enclosed snaps, the colored slides were lovely, I wished we could have a copy of them. They are leaving for New Jersey at the end of the week. They were up in the Yosemite's and Sequoia a couple of weeks ago. There was snow up there yet and they didn't see as much of it as they would have like to. Kings Canyon was completely blocked off yet. Boy, if I had the car here I'd take the trailer and run off to New Jersey, too. Kids and all.

They send their very best regards and thanks for everything(?).
Bye again.

Wednesday
April 29, 1953
Light of My Life:

It's a little difficult to write when your fingers are chewed clean up to the knuckles--and this suspense is killing me--DID Jere pick up that Marine and DID he arrive safely and WHAT TIME? And was he half dead the next morning? and HOW did his job go? Tune in in two weeks and get the answers to these burning questions. I should live so long!

Well, let's see what happened in our little groove since you left. Monday came and went without leaving a ripple. It rained and you know very well what it means to have a rainy day around this mad house. I worried a little about the kids but since they have neither rubber boots nor raincoats nor yet an umbrella, worrying didn't keep them dry. The two Dianes managed to get home without more than a slight dampness but Cammie was good and soaked, but a change of clothes and a towel over her hair did the trick.

Yesterday the baby scared me plumb to death by developing a slight fever again and complaining about her eyes hurting. Naturally I could hardly wait until nine to call the doctor and sound the alarm. Poor man. He couldn't find the house. Around noontime the nurse called me and after giving her explicit directions I settled down to wait again. All this time the heavens were wide open and the rain just poured down. Finally in the afternoon the doctor showed up, checked our small fry, and said it was nothing to worry about. Nose, ears and eyes were okay, and he thought her ache was mostly the headache settling over her eyes and she was too small to tell the difference between an ache over her eyes and her eyes themselves. He gave her a shot of penicillin and left a prescription, but he did take a urine specimen but it was nothing. By that evening she was as right as rain again. Carleen's two youngest had their adenoids out and she called me to say that Valery had hemorrhaged and she was scared to death about it. So I went over to give her a little moral support. Oh yes, we had open house at school too, and since Camille had written that play and was in it I felt honor bound to go to school and witness this colossal drama in three acts. "On to Oregon", remember? I left Bobby home with the baby and of course the television would have to act up. I could get the sound but the screen was pitch black. However, whatever I had done wrong by the time I got back Bobby had managed to right, and he was happily ensconced in front of it. I had mentioned it to Flo on our way over to school, and next morning she called up to say her husband would come and look at it, but it wasn't necessary anymore but I thought it was awfully nice of him to offer, you know how he is.

The sewing club had planned to have a barbeque but due to all that rain we called it off and I was right happy about it, who in the heck wants to sit outdoors in this weather to freeze for the sake of a hamburger. Incidentally is there ever an evening when you can around here?

I got your credit card through the mail from Salinas. But I suppose you know that by now.

Thursday

Went to the sewing club last night and we had a lovely time--just sewing. Four sewing machines whirring away like mad turning out little hospital gowns for children. We're doing it for the Hawthorne Hospital through their Woman's Auxiliary. They are cute, little colorful flannel gowns, dozens of them to be turned out. We got quite a few of them done, too. Harriet came, too, with a friend, but she hadn't a word to say about the house. After everyone left and Carlene and I were talking about it she mentioned that they hadn't come to any decision yet, and I greatly doubt that they ever will.

I finished mowing the lawn and trimming the edges yesterday, it seems to me the rain made everything grow like magic. It looks nice and green and pretty. But so far no callers about the house.

I shall wait for the mailman today before I mail this letter, Sweets, and if I don't hear from you I shall most certainly burn the wires up tonight and call you. You louse. But like the reasonable girl I am, I keep telling myself that in your own good time you will get in touch with me (I hope).

Later

Hurrah for our side, the mailman handed me a batch of mail and after shuffling madly through a pile of bills I came up with that dear familiar handwriting. Thanks, sweetie. I'm sorry you had such a miserable time of trying to get a traveling companion, but you see, all's well that ends well.

Mary Ynthorn called me up just now and gave me the dickens for not coming out to see her before you went and took my only means of transportation away with you. Sure, I'd look good trying to get to Long Beach on a bike.

Nothing much else happened, I'm being kept as busy as a bee trying to keep the house neat and tidy (bearing in mind what my beloved had tried to impart) but I'm telling you, it's MURDER. I spend all morning polishing and cleaning and by a supreme effort of mind over matter, putting everything away as I go along, and five minutes after the two Dianes come home from school I spend the better part of my energy nagging them into putting things to rights after they get done playing. And Penny, well, words fail you. But this morning my efforts were rewarded. I was just done, and after scrubbing the bathroom decided to work my way through the woodwork, and stood back and admired my handiwork when some real estate people came to look the house over. But no customers. Oh well.

Darling, I think I'll sign off for today. I can't get into the mood for writing right now, too many interruptions from the kids. Incidentally they were disappointed when they came back from the show and found you were gone. Don't forget to try to drop Cammie a card. Bye now, sweetheart.
with all our love, as ever

Monday morning, bright & early

Mary 4, 1953

Hello, My Darling:--

Here we go again, bringing you all the news that's fit to print, and I get to wonderin', would you rather have several letters a week or have one long 'diary-style' epistle once a week? We (us girls, naturally) were talking the other day about getting mail from our nearest and dearest, and several said they never could find anything to write about to keep a chain of letters going every day. Not me--give me five minutes and my trusty typewriter and I could talk your ear off, with nothing very consequential. D'you mind? Of course, I have no breath taking scenery to describe but things do happen here during the course of the day, and you must be pretty bored by now to hear me mention the kids etc. etc. etc. But here we go anyhooooo

I took the bus into town last week to buy Deedee a pair of shoes (and that's another Leitmotiv that will run through my letters from now on--one or the other is forever needing shoes!) anyway, Deedee and I took the bus, but little did I reckon that I should have packed a weekend grip and taken three square meals along on that journey. Ye Gods and little fishes, that durn old bus took me clean around the mulberry bush. We got on at the Felton Market, and went over to Aviation way past North American to Douglas on Imperial before it turned and came back. It took me the better part of an hour to get into Inglewood. I bet I could have walked it quicker. But Diane sure enjoyed it, though for myself I could have done without all that time consuming merry-go-round. Well, we got the shoes and strolled through the five and tens and finally came home all loaded down with bundles. Then this Saturday I got a look at our Son and Heir's feet and almost fainted dead away, his sneakers had gotten wet and he wore his only other pair of shoes and what I thought was a piece of old dirty rag hanging from the end turned out to be the toe part of his new pair of socks, or what was left of them. Naturally I snatched him up and off we went to Sears. Jessie had to go to the May Company so she dropped us off at Sears, and we got him a very nice pair of shoes with those spongy foam rubber soles and a light tan upper. Yep, Bobby, he picked them out himself. And to date he's almost worn out a box of shoe polish trying to keep them in a pristine condition, he's that proud of them. We took the five-car home to Hawthorn where I left him and Diane off to go to the show, (Camille had gone with Judy) and Penny and I started to walk home. Oh boy, THAT's when I began to miss Our Golden Chariot. It was a very warm day, and though our youngest held out pretty good, eventually I had to carry her, and with each step she became heavier. I'd say "walk to the corner, and then I'll carry you again", and that way I managed to drag ourselves to Vi Withrow's house on the way home. And the sweet little angel came to our rescue with some nice cold orange juice. After awhile I had the strength to stagger the rest of the way. Later on, Floenda called and said she had to go to the library and did I want to come. Of course I did, and we made the rounds to the Lenox branch and then to Hawthorne. Just as we were about to pull off I heard a childish treble cry out "Wait Mumi" and here came our two sprouts. Guess they can spot their Mumi two blocks away and in a crowd. I was kind of glad to see them get a lift home, it was getting late. That's the nice thing about people here, they always offer to take me, whenever any of them go to town. Unfortunately I hardly ever need to, or want to go, at precisely that

time, and only rarely do I feel like calling them and asking to be taken anywhere. It has to be really something special. Like shopping. Flo always shops at Market Town over the weekend and go with her, thankfully and gladly.

Nellie has come by several times and taken me places, like the bank or to Inglewood. Only thing, she makes a special trip for me, and that way I don't have to wait around and waste time, which is the only reason I don't much care to go with anyone else. I have some special thing to do and she doesn't mind driving me and waiting that little time.

My English is atrocious and my thoughts all jumbled. I'm keeping one eye on the hose in front of the house and the other on Penny busily trying to ear the house apart, which leaves me only my fifth sense to try to make sense with. Here we go again, double something or other, oh durn.

The mailman just came up the street and I met him with high hopes and he or rather you, didn't disappoint me. Thank you my own sweet, and now to answer your letter.

Now that I know we have some money coming in I'm paying all our current bills, such as telephone, electric and doctor bills, which will leave about eighty-three dollars in our account here. I think I'd rather write a check to the bank (for the house) to the new account and leave me the balance to draw on for the housekeeping and other small bills that keep coming in until further notice. Are you planning on coming home this weekend? In any case the bank can wait until the end of this week to give you a chance to either get my signature into the bank up in Redwood City or write one yourself when you get home. I'll pay the thirteen fifty on the 13th through this account, and that will give me enough to live on (I hope) for two weeks.

We had the most beautiful sunny downright hot weekend, in fact the kids dragged out the old swimming pool and fixed it up and spent practically all day out on the lawn in the water. Me, I just sat in my nice cozy rocking chair, in my nice cool house and read. Real lazy-like, as usual. So far, we've managed to stick to the sort of schedule we've always had with dinner at six during the week and on noon on Sundays, so our life is pretty much as it was when you were with us, as far as routine goes. I thought sure someone would come by to look at the house, but no soap. I had the dishes washed and the house picked up neat and tidy just on the off chance, and with the kids playing outside it stayed pretty much that way, so I cold afford to be lazy and read. "Bells on their Toes", the follow-up story of "Cheaper by the Dozen", and I got so carried away by their schedules and systems and time-saving theories that I sat me down and composed a work chart for the kids, too. Now if they will only learn to look at it when they come home from school and check off their chores it ought to work out just fine. We'll let you know how it works.

Darling I cleared all your things out of the bedroom feeling like a traitor all the while. Honest, I felt as if with every box I carried out to the garage I was pushing you out of my life. I sure am well trained. But now it looks like a bedroom ought to look, believe me, even the sewing machine setting on top of your green desk looks a lot more normal than

the pieces of wiring, the nuts etc etc. that was cluttering it up. You'd be surprised how much of a difference it makes. I took all my sewing out of Cammie's room so that room is uncluttered and neat looking all the time (once I make Cammie pick up her clothes) and now that most of my mending is caught up there isn't too much standing around even at that. I kept my resolution of sweeping out every bit of small stuff I find on the floor in the morning, such as cards and papers and all the whatnots Bobby has been in the habit of dragging home and consequently even Bobby's room has taken on an aspect of austerity. Yes sir, I'm right proud of myself. Here come the two Diane's and my peace is a thing of the past, so I think I'll just say bye-bye for today and go out to mail this off. all our love to you darling, till later

Monday night 9:00 P.M.

S.O.S. S.O.S. S.O.S.

Here it is Superman night and after a week of threatening the T.V. has finally given up the ghost. All sound and no fury. Up till last night, it would take about five minutes to warm up and then 'boing' the picture would snap in. But tonight no matter how we twiddle the buttons the screen has remained dark. The kids have all farmed themselves out among our more fortunate neighbors, due to agreement on our part--clean kitchen--Superman! And like the good little soldiers they are they all trouped home on the stoke of nine. Darling! Sweetheart! Husband and Daddy! You've just got to come home this week-end. As for myself I don't care, I've got a flock of books to read and there's nothing wrong with the radio.

I forgot to mention in my letter today that Mrs. Lewis has been coming to the house to give the kids their lesson, it's great help to me. And a man came to see me (honest!) from the Lyons Moving Company. I guess Bud Hahlbeck (George's daddy) had told them we were planning on moving. He estimated it would cost us about two hundred dollars at the rate of \$3.34 per CWT of approximately 6000 pounds. They will furnish boxes and barrels at a certain rate half of which is refunded on unpacking. If I should like them to pack (IF I SHOULD LIKE?????) it would cost us \$3.50 an hour. Just thought you'd like to know. There is a two day service from here to Redwood City. He says.

Correction please, I gave the old movie box another going over, and so help me, I still don't know what I do to make it come on, but here it is. So you don't have to come back as the T.V. expert, but we still would like you to come home in your capacity as husband and father.

Penny is driving me to drink, and heaven help your sauterne if she keeps up these shenanigans. Comes ten o'clock and I would really like to get some peace, and that little twerp is still twerping around. Last night I simply put her to bed and she made the welkin ring until the Cinderella Hour anyway. Actually she never left the room but she stood I the middle of the bedroom and shrieked and stamped her foot and carried on something fierce. I felt like a heel spanking her but I did, and a fat lot of good it did me, she just howled bloody murder. How did I ever let myself get into this rut anyway. Seems to me she ought to familiarize herself with those baby books and rule number seven which

states distinctly bedtime for two year olds is 6:30 P.M. I thought with you out of the way I could get her broken in, and it looks like, at the rate we're going, it's going to be Mama that gets broken. A nice nervous breakdown that is. Say bedtime to her and she looks pathetic and moans "Doggie bite me". Now what do I do? Create a complex so that in future years she looks at her loving husband as if he were a mad dog whenever he mentions bedtime, or surrender to the inevitable and wait till the sandman closes those indefatigable eyes? Why oh why, didn't I stay a bachelor girl and bring all my children up likewise. I'm going to bed myself, see you in the morning, my love.
Tuesday morning 10:00a.m.

Another warm bright sunny day. Something tells me before the day is out I would amend that by saying it's downright hot. What a day for the beach if--yea, if!

I'm waiting for Nellie to come and take me and about fifty million, well anyway, two and a half, bicycles to the repair shop. I'm bound and determined to put us on wheels and go places and do things, even if it's just to the park with a nosebag.

By the way, I've painted the mantel, and I must say, it sure looks a heck of a lot better. I tried my level best to sand it smooth, but didn't succeed too well, but the paint covers a multitude of sins, and you'd have to practically know what had happened and look for it to see the damage. You should have seen me, Darling, after I'd finished, I stood with a paintbrush in my hand and a speculative look in my eye. The itch to paint everything in sight was certainly strong. At the drop of a hat and having the paint at my disposal I'd surely have gone to town with a vengeance.

Cammie is home from school today. She developed a swelling around the eye, I think it's purely a cold, but I thought I'd better keep her home and apply wet boric acid dressings. For my money, she's going to regret it, I'll just work her to death, besides getting the baby off my neck for a bit. We've had our work chart in operation only a day and undoubtedly the novelty will wear off, but it worked wonders yesterday and today already. I left a lot of blank spaces in which I fill in with chores as they occur to me.

We got the note back from the bank and I put it in the steel file. There was also a tax statement or what have you, from Northrop, I put that in your desk. (It's still your desk on the inside)

I guess that's that for the day. I shall now send our eldest off to mail this for me, plus the usual monthly slip from the Book of the Month Club for books we don't want. I wish you'd write and tell them not to send anymore.

Nellie is just coming, Bye now.
Love from all of us, and don't forget to write
Your loving family.

May 12, 1953
Greetings, Lord!

There's no getting around it, Light o' my Life, if you expect to get a letter before the middle of the week I'd have to practically send it off before the thunder of your Jovian Wrath has faded from our ears. I called Madden yesterday and they told me he was on vacation and expected back today, so this morning I called again and he said he'd just got in from a couple of weeks fishing. He would stop by and talk to me just as soon as he gets organized and caught up with his work. During our conversation I mentioned his house up the street and he told me that the only thing holding up the sale was the large down payment, something like 3500, and people don't have that kind of money it seems. At least the people that would locate around here. I'd appreciate it if you put it down on paper for me, and just as soon as possible, just what you expect to sell the house for. And what you would accept.

Monday morning I got so desperate about Bobby's contrary behavior that I finally blew my top and told him if he didn't want to pull his share of the load and that if he felt he was too imposed upon to consider himself as a separate entity, as far as the rest of us were concerned there was no Bobby. I wouldn't ask a thing from him, because there was no B0obby, and proceeded to ignore him from then on. I'm afraid that was not the proper thing to do, because sometime around eleven or so maybe even after lunch, I forgot, anyway, his teacher called me and said I'd better come in for a little chat. He had driven her beyond endurance too, and she had lost her temper and spanked him. I told her not to worry about it, that under the circumstances he no doubt deserved it but that I would be in to see her anyway. To make a long story short, we had a long talk after school, and the upshot of it is, the same old story, Bobby is apparently laboring under a heavy burden of inferiority, and he has to try to assert himself at whatever cost. He brags, he teases and doesn't know when to quit. He's got to be the firstest with the mostest and in his book the whole world is out of step but him. His teacher has had to give up praising him because of his bragging and then he said right out loud that she never called on him for an answer because he knew it all, although she tried to explain to him that she knew he knew and she was trying to draw out some of the others and get them to participate. Well, she had to speak to him about one thing and another several times during the morning and then when he went to his seat at her request she said he had the most sneering supercilious 'superior' look on his face. Anyway, you must get the picture by now. I sure wish I knew how to get it across to him that while he is not the only people on the beach he gets his fair share of rewards and punishment, and that everyone, at home and outside, gets according to the need, and that there is a difference. I tried to tell him that babies get more attention and tolerance because their helplessness makes it necessary, and girls and boys and younger and older people all have their special needs and differences and you treat them accordingly. At the same time I told him if I heard no further reports of his teasing and obstreperousness at school he would have all privileges curtailed for the rest of the school term. And that means no allowance, no movies, and no fraternizing with George. He certainly is a chastened little boy today. I hope it lasts. He is still trying to earn a dollar and by gum, he did, too. He washed windows for Myra and mowed the lawn

for Lucille and is now a dollar and 60 cents richer. He still wants to buy that model airplane motor and the wires and batteries that go with it.

Camille has been a wonderful help to me, each night she washes the dishes and cleans the kitchen spick and span. She makes beds and tidies the house and earns every bit of that dollar extra she gets. We've decided not to pile so much responsibility on Deedee, but to treat her like the seven year old she is. She goes to bed at eight with Penny, come Hell, High water or "I love Lucy", and does only the lightest of chores, such as the cans and garbage and picking up her own messes. There is no reason why she should compete with the two older ones anyway. She is after all, only seven, and in a different class than the two older ones. There is a difference, too, between Bobby and Cammie, which has nothing to do with age, and I must allow for those differences, whether they like it or not. Well, we'll see how it works out this week, but it won't be easy. I know Bobby feels he must assert himself with the girls, but after all, he has to live with them, I can't drown them to suit him, so he'll just have to learn to like his role as the only boy in a family of females without getting his emotions all tangled up. Like is not the word I should have used, 'accept' is more what I had in mind. He must learn to accept things, even the unpleasant ones such as failure or coming out second best, or even losing. But how do you teach him that. I wish I knew.

Sometimes I wonder why I ever wanted to become a parent.

Nothing else new, except our finances. You sent me only two check blanks, I wrote one for \$74.38 to cover the house payments, and the other for fifteen dollars to pay Airport Medical, whose bill came in the mail yesterday. We finally got a bill from Richfield, \$42.26. (I just got to have this &(&)& typewrite overhauled before I lose my mind over it. Anyway, be sure to deduct \$89.38 from your checkbook, and send me some more blanks. I've paid the note so that leaves me a balance of \$20.

There had been an ominous calm and on investigation I found her quietly sitting on her bed surrounded by a mess that defies description. Our precious youngest had gotten the big box of band aides, the mercurochrome, the can of B.F.I. powder and applied first aide all over herself. What a mess! Her legs, hands and pretty sun suit completely ruined. Excuse me while I go and have a nervous breakdown. Now not even the medicine chest is safe from her marauding little hands. All this, because she got a tiny little 'hurt' on her leg.

Well, I cleaned her off as best I could, fed her some lunch and put her to bed. Now I can finish this letter and get it off, no use trying to add anything, my mind won't function. How would you like to trade places with me, and let me go up by myself to nice quiet peaceful Redwood City? You lucky Dog, you. Bet you can hardly wait to get back to the turbulent bosom of your family.

Bye, sweetheart, be seeing you
(in a straight jacket)
your loving spouse

Friday, May 15, 1953

FRIENDS, ROMANS, COUNTRYMEN, lend me your ears----

No, I'm afraid when the medals for public speaking are given out, I won't be among the chosen few. My heart still pounds and my knees quake when ever I think of last night. It happens this way---I went to the cubs committee night, Wednesday, and among other things we decided to give out charter and certificate (suitably framed) to our sponsors, the PTA, and when it came to appoint some lucky person to do this presenting, naturally every eye was turned in my direction and I was IT. Mr. Withrow had done a really bang-up job of framing, and we were all downright proud of the result, and now the very least they can do is to hang them in a prominent place up at school. We figured if they were framed they couldn't just stuff them away among a lot of papers the way it's been happening to the charters of the past. Anyway, it didn't give me much time to think up a few well chosen words, and you should have seen me yesterday--going around mumbling to myself, and then practicing out loud to all and sundry who would stand still long enough. Well, I got all dressed in my best big and tucker, with my Den Mothers badge on my sleeve and when the time came I stood up with those two frames clutched in my hot little hand, and after that is a blank. I couldn't for the life of me tell you whether I said every word of my nice little speech or not (though everyone tells me I did just fine) well, I did it, but I hope I never have to do it again. The school gave their annual spring play, this time the opus was "Snow white and the seven dwarfs", and I must say it was a big success. There was a lot of thought and effort given to it, and the kids did just swell. I got such a big bang out of them, and I'm sure so did everyone there, and the auditorium was filled to capacity with standing room only. I had taken the baby along, but it was such a long play, by around nine o'clock she got restless and I took her home.

I got your letter, dear, and thank you. In the same mail was a stern letter from the National Automobile Club to the effect we better pay the difference by the 19th or Sacramento will deal with us direct.???? There was also another coupon book from the Bank of America and a statement, all of which added up to the fact that from now on our payments have been increased to \$77.38. Ah, me! Nothing but bad news.

Myra is in bed again, the bad girl has not been sticking to her salt free diet, and now she's paying for it with swollen ankles and tummy and all the pain and discomfort that goes with it. The doctor ordered her to bed and to stay there until her metabolism has regained it's equilibrium. The sewing club has bought her a gorgeous azalea with the proper card, and I told her if she ever does it again we'll drum her out of the club.

Today is kind of cloudy and cool, just the kind of day to be chained to the ironing board. Guess I'll sign off for today and give this to the mailman when he goes by. Have a nice weekend, dearest, if the weather gets a little warmer I'll take my brood out for a picnic on our bikes.

Meantime, all our love as ever

Y'r humble and obedient servant

F.

Hello:-

Just a quick line to let you know I've been to the bank today, and the money has been deposited in our account. Just sign the enclosed slip, which is a mere formality but they want it to authorize the deposit. The banker told me that the interest terms have gone up and no matter how he figured it--on the basis of ninety days it came out the same. Something about seven percent anyway, it's more than it was a year ago and that's what threw you off I guess. About the date, the note is due on Sept. 14th, which is exactly 91 days, they allow for the extra days and the interest is figured in.

I have to make this one short, the baby broke out today, I thought she would, she slept almost all day and made no audible protest when I left her in the car while I went into the bank. On my way home I noticed the pustules behind her ear. Well, now I'm in for a siege anyway, and I couldn't come up this week even if I wanted to, on account of those two little guys there. I can only hope it will take no more than fourteen days. Otherwise we'll just have to take off and stay in the middle of the wilderness somewhere away from everybody.

Bye now, I'll see you.

P.S. Did you have a good flight? Or was that your plane we noticed was being held up while they went to work on it? It was hard to tell, anyway I hope you got back okay.

F.

Monday Night, June 1st, 1953

Hiya, Sweetie:-

Well, I brought 'em back alive. Though it did take a bit longer than I had figured on. We pulled up to the old homestead at three-thirty and by the time I disentangled the kids from the debris and stuffed them in bed, had me a cup of coffee and a look at Lil' Abner in the Sunday comics it was four o'clock. I wasn't exactly dead but certainly in no shape to ride the bike around the corner. I picked up Jessie at five, after feeding the kids some hamburger etc. and we had very little traffic to contend with. I don't know whether it was good timing or whether the rest of the holiday crowd had gone to Nevada but anyway, I was darned glad about it. Jessie whipped up enough courage to relieve me of driving, she jolly well had to, or Baby Dumplish would have driven us made with her whining and crying, she wanted her Mama's lap in no uncertain terms. We stopped at the Mission at San Miguel and put the kids into the trailer and settled Diana and Penny in the backseat and I took the wheel again. There has been a lot of construction going on along the way, especially along that long stretch between San Luis Obispo and Santa Barbara and after we had negotiated the Goleta Pass and had all that behind us she took the wheel once again and drove till just this side of Oxnard. From there on, having had me a nice little catnap and gotten my second wind I whirled us the rest of the way, hell bent for leather. I guess I did give the kids a rocky ride around those turns, because when we got home all the boxes and packages that Jessie had gotten from her aunt and stowed away in the trailer were helter skelter all over the place. But the point is we made it, and that's what counts. I went over to see Benton this morning and the news about Myra is not good at all. She has been rapidly going downhill these last few days. Vomited for the last two days and they have been giving her intravenous feeding and dosed her with morphine. I called the hospital and they told me she was under an oxygen tent, Benton went in the afternoon and she was semi-conscious and hardly knew him. I would have gone down tonight but on checking the hospital again at six they advised against any visitors. I feel so shocked and sick about it, I can hardly talk about it. I know it is not a surprise under the circumstances, but I had seen her before I left and she looked so well, and she has always snapped out of it before, I can hardly believe it, not Myra, who laughs so easily and loves life so well. I'm not much for praying but if a heartfelt prayer can help I feel I can do no more right now. I want so badly to see her.

I went over to see Benton's mother and left my phone number and told her to call on me at any time and for anything I can do to help her, with the kids and the household.

To get back to us, Madden had been away over the holidays too, and no one came near the place. Today another real estate agent brought a couple of women and babies to look the place over, but nothing was said in my hearing. At least now I feel that somebody might come by and look once in awhile and that way I feel eventually someone will come along who feels this is just the place he wants. Found your letter when I got home, also the water bill, always we have one or two bills in the mail it seems, and Pop and Mami send you a birthday card. They never forget do they?

Bob Keene and the milkman pushed the trailer back in place for me and people have been coming and phoning all day to find out about our little jaunt. I feel as if I should put out a bulletin. They ask about Myra too, as if I had the inside track. I suppose because Benton will talk to me more than to anyone else besides Doris, and they knew I tried to see her. Always I get back to her, don't I? Well, darling, I'll take this to the post office, and will write you again tomorrow.

I sent a thank you note to the Corl's, and I'm wondering if a straight 3 cent letter will get there as fast as airmail. Bye now, sweetheart, see you soon,
love from all of us

Wednesday, June 3, 1953

Greetings, Light o' My Life:--

Staff Sergeant Casagrande reporting, the meeting will please come to order while the treasurer makes his report. I mailed a check to Richfield, made out another to the Bank of America for the house and cashed a fifty dollar check to pay the electric and phone bill. The ten dollars you gave me barely took me home since I had to buy Butane at Palo Alto, buy the kid's supper, and then filled the tank once more. That left me with exactly nothing. Bobby's shoes were worn and I wanted them re-soled before they were too far gone--\$4.00, and I turned over the sewing club money to the newly elected treasurer, which meant I had fifteen dollars to make up. I had to have money for the kids lunches this week and bread and milk. The way I buy bread and milk you'd think they lived on it, wouldn't you? Anyway that leaves me thirteen dollars and I will try to stretch it as far as possible. Don't forget to deduct \$169.64 from your checkbook. We got another bill from the doctor for seven dollars and I think I'll pay it, too. So you might as well add that to the above figure. I'll break it down for you so you know where you stand:

Richfield	42.26
B.A.	77.38
electric	8.97
phone	5.22
shoe repair	4.00
sewing club	15.00
Dr. Wiest	7.00

	159.83

that left seventeen dollars for us to live on as long as possible. As of right now and including today's provisions I have, as I said, thirteen dollars left.

Now the social secretary will make her report.

Myra is much worse again, and I just finished talking to Benton. He tells me she has quit fighting and is apathetic and indifferent and firmly convinced they are letting her die. That's not like Myra, and it worries me more than her condition. She never gave up before. Benton and I think that far from letting her become excited or even exhausted from a visit, it would be far better for her morale to let me see her. He's going to check with the doctor and maybe I'll go down tonight. I think if I can see her and chatter (the way I usually do) about the neighbors and my trip and inconsequential things like that it would take her mind off of her troubles. Her sisters and mother have taken turns staying with her continuously, through the day and night because the nurses are far too busy and when she has a relapse or goes into a coma she can't ring for help. And that oxygen mask she's under is sort of complicated for her to manage right now. Incidentally, and just to add to the problem, one of the twins got the chicken pox and no doubt the other one will get it too. Flo's youngest, Larry, has the chicken pox so bad he runs a high temperature,

he has it under his eyelids and in his throat. It wouldn't surprise me one bit if Penny were to break out in spots. But I'll worry about that when the time comes.

I got a letter from mother a while ago, and of course, and as usual, too, she's peeved with me. She doesn't think much of the idea of us moving again, and said now she'll never get Pop to come out, he wouldn't think of driving to S.F. He's heard too much about how they drive up there, I guess. She decided she'd rather fly to Germany. But the way she keeps changing her mind, I never know what she's going to do. She got the fender of her lovely new car dented, just standing still and is she burned up about it. Somebody banged into her, and it's the first accident she's ever had. Joe had a fire at his house in Rochester and they consider themselves lucky that they got out without loss of life. They are busy right now trying to repair the damage, which confined itself mostly to the cellar and the apartment downstairs. Ye Gods, what next?

You are probably breathlessly skipping through the letter, by now, to find out if there is any mention of those little bitty chores you asked me to do. Well, let me tell you right here and now--the next time somebody knocks a hole into the wall, I am going to hand a Van Gogh over it, even if people think me a bit eccentric if they have to stoop to look at it. In case the house collapses they will find a few extra pieces of two by four by six lying between the walls, but I finally managed to support one long enough for the Duco Cement to set and the piece of plywood went on easy enough, but then my troubles started. The darned patching plaster kept bulging, and as fast as I pushed it in place it would bulge out someplace else. I shoved it away under the edges and finally the phone rang, and by the time I was through gabbing with Vi Withrow it had hardened enough so I could put more in and smooth it over. I should have thought of that in the first place. Anyway, it's done. And so is the blind.

Darling, I just see the mailman coming up the street, so I'll say bye-bye to this letter and start another one right away.

With all our love, as ever

Friday
June 5. 1953

Hello, Sweetheart:-

I didn't get a chance to tell you in my last letter about that loan from the bank. I was hoping the papers would come through by now so I could send them along for you to sign. I made it out for ninety days, since the interest is only about a third of what it would be at a hundred a month, or over a twelve month period.

I told you that I would try to see Myra, well, I drove down last night and met Benton at the hospital. We went up and I was so grieved and shocked to see her, looking so weary and tired. She opened her eyes and looked at me and recognized me and gave me one of her old bright smiles. Before I could do more than raise my hands in a boxers salute her mother shooed me out and said it would upset her too much to have me there. I privately thought not, I was sure she would have liked me to sit quietly by her side for a little while, however, you know how her mother is, and after all, I was only a friend and not one of the family so I could no more than leave as quietly as I had come in. Benton told me he would wait for the doctor and would see me after he got home. He called me around ten and he was so wound up I stayed with him until almost two in the morning. Both he and his mother felt they wanted someone else around so that neither of them broke down. You see the doctor had very little hope and said it was too late to call in a specialist, she was so weak they wouldn't even try to remove the poison from her diaphragm with a stomach tube. She kept bringing up gases that burned her mouth, and her heart was weakening from the strain. I kept telling Benton not to give up, while there is life there is always hope, but he kept insisting that the end was near, and I guess at that he knew more than I did, although I kept firmly believing that she would pull out of it. This morning around ten he came up and told me she had just passed away. They had called and told him he had only about an hour left, she was in a coma for the last four hours, and before he could get dressed and out of the house, they called back and said she was gone. Oh Jere, I feel so badly, she was so dear to me, I've enjoyed knowing her so much, and a part of me just can't and won't believe that she is really gone. This has been such a hectic day for me. He told me and left for the hospital and I had to tell everyone else, and each time I started to talk about it I could hardly do it, except somebody had to. Then I went up to stay with his mother so she wouldn't go to pieces.

All day long the phone kept ringing, and people came in and out. Just to keep myself busy I washed and cleaned and did dishes and answered the phone and waited for Benton to come back. The funeral will be Monday. Poor guy, let no one ever tell me he doesn't care, he is so broken up about it, although he knew better than we did that she was never coming home again. I'm so very tired now, and my mind goes round and round. I'll write you again tomorrow.

Goodnight now, dearest
with all my love

Friday, June 12. 1953

Hi, Sweetie:--

Let's go back to last Saturday. It was the scout's Scout-O-Rama down at the Coliseum, and of course I was a part of it. Operation Birdhouse, remember? I was to take the afternoon session, from two to five, and be in the booth with the boys putting together birdhouses and getting people to vote for the best birdhouse. I took Vi Withrow and her youngster down with me, and honest, we had more fun! Of course, after the boys had put together two or three of those pre-cut houses they were pretty hard to keep in the booth and I let them take turns going out and looking at the other doings. You might know that my own sprout would be gone every time I turned around. But there were plenty boys around and only four hammers. Well, I put some of their handiwork up front and the next thing you knew people wanted to buy them. Vi and I looked at each other and I decided that since there were boxes and boxes of them standing around a quarter wouldn't kill anyone and be a little extra money for the pack. Well, what do you know, they went like hot cakes and we couldn't put them together fast enough. I said at the time if they judged by active participation we'd be a cinch to copp a ribbon. And sure enough we did, the only 'outstanding' blue ribbon for cubs for all of Centinella Valley was given to us. We're so darned proud! I took some pictures and they all came out fine. I came home around six, tired, oh so tired, I could have dropped in my tracks. Deedee and Camille had gone to the Hawthorne Park Girl Scout Fair and Gary minded the baby for me, since he had to keep his little sister anyhow. So I had all the kids accounted for. After I came home and fed the kids I wanted a little peace and quiet so I took the older kids to the movies, and on the way home I thought I'd go and see Myra. I'd never gone to a funeral parlor before and when the attendant came up behind me and said "come with me, please" I jumped clean out of my skin. Oh Jere, when I saw her, lying there so all alone, no one had been there yet, Myra, who never was alone, even when she was sick in bed, I just cried and cried. Good think I was alone. She didn't look like herself, they had her hair, her beautiful hair, dressed so severely, and her dress was a drab print, that just didn't look like her at all. Well, Sunday, Jean came over and asked me to take her there, and the both of us went. I saw Benton Sunday afternoon and told him about it, and I guess he went up Monday morning before the funeral because when I filed past the casket after the funeral service I looked at her and then I really bawled like a fool, then I knew finally and drastically that she was really dead. They'd fixed her up just the way she used to look, even changed her dress, and it really hit me. Jessie had almost backed out of going because she thought she couldn't take it and then it was beg brave Frances who shook like a leaf and wept, a good thing too, I was driving the girls back home, and a responsibility like that snaps me out of hysteria quicker than anything else. I'd borrowed a hat from Nellie. Honestly, if I could have told Myra about that sh'd laughed herself to death. I never dreamed I had to have a hat, and the only had around here is what Deedee plays around in, and I looked like Sadie Thompson in it. Well, what with my own black dress the borrowed had and a pair of borrowed gloves from Floenda I looked downright chick pretty enough to go to a cocktail party, so they told me anyway. I really ought to invest some of your money in a hat and gloves etc. etc. and maybe my husband would be

proud to take me out???? If I seem to be so extraordinarily taken up with clothes for such a solemn occasion, please believe me, we were only whistling in the dark. I would have done anything for Myra while she was still with us, and I felt it was the last evidence I could give her of my affection, though I would rather have been shot than go. The girls of the sewing club sent flowers through the club and then instead of each of us individually sending flowers we took up a collection of money through the neighborhood and collected over a hundred dollars. Benton was quite touched, you see there was no insurance and his expenses were quite heavy during these last weeks.

I went to see Madden about the house, and he told me it was the down payment that stopped it each time. People just don't have the money and when they do they'd rather have a new house. He brought someone around today but nothing was said and he didn't call back so I guess it didn't go. He told me people didn't want to put that much money down on a house and then have to spend money to fix it up too. Did you say we'd decorate to suit if there was a sale? He seems to think the people who buy would have to do the fixing.

Do you really want us to come up the minute school is out? Who's going to water the lawn and would I have to come back to pack and see about the sale? Do you want us to come up for just a week or so or what did you have in mind. I couldn't just go up there and stay. Oh drat it all, I wish it were settled one way or the other, they way I have all the uncertainty and worry and I don't know here I'm at.

Incidentally I have no more check blanks. I cashed a fifty dollar check today and paid the note that is due tomorrow. Five dollars I had borrowed to give to that fund, I figured a wreath would have cost me that much.

Wednesday night was committee night and Lil Fredericks had a barbeque in her backyard I honor of all out-going members, me included, and we had a lot of fun. That was the night we couldn't find the Baby's blanket and I like to have lost my mind before I got her to go to sleep. At midnight I was going around with a flashlight looking in all the backyards and bushes and the trailer and everyplace I could think of. No blanket. Finally I put the lights out and handed her an old flannel nightie and she gave a big sigh and sob and went right to sleep, but oh when she woke up in the morning and found out what she had, she had the funniest look and felt almost double-crossed I guess. Well, I had the kids clean out their closets and put everything either away or throw it out, and we found both of them among Deedee's play clothes, oh Joy, oh Joy.

Well, bye for now, sweetie, see you soon,
Love from us all

June 13 1953

Greetings, Parents:----

At long last things have simmered down enough so I can sit down in peace and write you a letter bringing you up to date on all the Casagrande doings. Darn it, now I don't know if I should start from now and work back or start from away back and work my way up to the present. Things sure have been confused around here. First of all Jere called me up about a month ago and said something about a house he found and for me to fly right up and have a look at it. Well, I wasn't too happy about that because we had decided to rent for awhile until we had a chance to look around and I had my arguments all set up before I even got the plane ticket. And incidentally that's an experience I wouldn't have missed for all the rice in China, never, NEVER in my life have I enjoyed anything quite so much, YOU know, Mumsi. Well, I got to San Francisco and Jere met me and took me out to the house, which is the one next door to where he has a room. And honestly, Folks, if I'd sat down and tried to blueprint a house that would suit this family I couldn't have come up with anything nicer. It's got three large bedrooms upstairs, each one with a gorgeous view of mountains, parts of the bay and the tops of trees, another one downstairs, an enormous modern kitchen, and a room next to it that could be the family living room, and a large living room with a fire place off the central hall, where you don't have to traipse through it to go to the rest of the house, and more closet space than you could possibly use, a service porch clean across the back of the house with a large pantry type closet with built-in shelves. Modern bathroom with stall shower and glass door, (don't mind if I sound like a real estate ad) and then there is a double garage plus a space for a work shop with an extra door. They even built a drinking fountain out in the backyard! For the kids. The yard is spaced off into several areas, so the front is by itself and the rear is partly patio and walks, and in the rear is one corner with a big tree in it all fenced off with a gate for the kids or the dog or what have you. It's big and airy and sunny and just exactly right for us. The price is right, only twelve-five but the down payment is the big rub. They want three thousand five hundred down in order to complete the house they are building up in the hills. At most we can only get two fifty down on ours, and would have to make up the difference. I guess we'll have to put Lizzy in hock again, because we just don't have that kind of money saved up. So far we haven't had a nibble on the house yet either and school is almost out. I'd hoped things would be all settled so we could get moved at this time. I took the kids and the trailer up there over the Memorial Day holidays and we had a wonderful time. It sure was fun going without Jere, I can tell you. Nobody bossing me around and I could stop when and if I felt like it. Course driving was a chore but I did it in easy stages and we stopped and slept in the trailer overnight.

When I got back I heard that Myra my very dear friend and neighbor, you must have heard me speak of her, she's diabetic and for awhile last year was blind, remember? Well, she had another spell and was in the hospital. Once again the neighborhood rallied round to take care of her house and kids, and I spent all of my spare time over there helping her husband, Benton, over the rough spots. He sure was in a bad way, firmly convinced that this time she was not going to make it. I guess he knew what he was talking about

because last Friday morning he came over and told me she had passed away. I felt simply terrible. I'd gone to see her the night before, although they had told me NO VISITORS, her mother and sister stayed with her night and day, but Benton thought it might cheer her up to see me, so I went, but they would only let me in a minute to see her. She recognized me and smiled, before they shooed me out, and I could have wept to see her, so tired and weary and almost in a coma. Well, she did go into a coma that night and never came out of it. Benton almost went to pieces, and I stayed with him and his mother, who is an invalid, for two nights in a row until almost two in the morning. There were the twins to consider, too, Benton's mother had had a stroke and is not very well, it's hard for her to get around so I've been going over to tidy up the place, wash clothes and dishes of course, it doesn't take long, their house is so easy to take care of and they have a woman come in once a week to do the cleaning. Well, all in all it was a very trying time and one I wouldn't care to have to go through again in a hurry. The funeral was last Monday, and I guess after awhile Benton will get a housekeeper. All of us in the neighborhood have been taking turns cooking their meals and taking it over there. Honest, this sure is a swell neighborhood. We took a collection too, rather than each of us sending flowers, and it came almost to a hundred and fifty dollars. He sure could use it, since Myra couldn't get any insurance, because of her diabetic. Her kidneys went bad on her and she got uremic poisoning which weakened her heart, and with one complication after another I guess she just gave up. Poor baby, she had so much to live for too. I remember her saying she was just living on borrowed time, but she so wanted to see her twins grow up.

Well, on top of all that I've been almost going crazy trying to keep this house looking neat and clean, expecting people to come in a look at it but so far all that came was mostly sales people. Maybe I ought to invite all the neighborhood kids in and let the dishes pile up, oh well, then they wouldn't want to buy it either.

Well, I'll let you know what happens next.

Thanks for your letter darling,

Tuesday

I got sidetracked again, 'cause Friday night Jere popped in again. Honestly, it seems to me every time I turn around he's back again, and he can hardly wait for school to be out and for me to bring the kids and myself up there. Well, as of today he will jolly well have to wait a couple of weeks, yesterday Penny came down with the chicken pox too. Glory be, what will it be next. Anyhow, I will now have plenty of time to catch up on my ironing and letter writing, I can't go out and I can't have anyone in, and before we're through with this, I'll be ready for the sanatorium myself, I'm sure.

I just got a letter from Rose in today's mail. She said you were sick again, Lambie Pie, what IS the matter with you? Better come out to sunny California anyway and let me take care of you. It certainly is no harder to get to Redwood City than it is to Los Angeles. And you wouldn't have to go to San Francisco or through it either.

Darling, let me just finish this letter and mail it off, and I promise o my honor as a scout to write you another one right away.

Love from all of us,

June 22, 1953

Greetings, Lord!

How did you send your last letter? Slow Oxcart? I didn't get it till late Friday. I've been trying since Saturday morning to get hold of Madden, and not until this morning was I able to reach him. He said he'd called some of the prospects he had had in mind and some had already bought and some couldn't be reached but that he had a family coming out from the east Wednesday. Remember me saying he had a man looking at the house one day and they raced through and out the backdoor and I hardly knew that they had gone? Well, it seems the deal he had with him had fallen through (and it wasn't our house he had tried to sell either) and he would see if he could interest them in our house, now that he could offer them a better deal. So I shall call him again Wednesday and see what happened. Anyway it seems to me that weekends would be a real estate agent's best days, and here Madden always takes off over Saturday and Sunday...

But to get back to me and my little problems--your youngest daughter is fast driving me nuts. Must be she's practically well again. I ask you, what else can they catch now. Last year they loused up our summer and now it's chicken pox. I feel like a hermit, cooped up in the house. Everybody has small children and I can't go out for fear I might carry a germ along, I can't take her either, and the only person I see is Jessie once in a while. Friday night I got desperate and because the kids had been so good about helping me with the house I took them to a drive-in. Remind me never to be so foolish again. I ended up by sitting in the backseat craning my neck to look at the screen, with the baby cradled in my lap. The kids insisted on my leaving at practically five o'clock and we had to wait until after seven before the line even moved into the place, and then it was one without a playground and I nearly lost my mind keeping them occupied until dark. Oh well. It was in a good cause and I did enjoy the pictures.

The big T.V. is gone A.W.O.L. again. Sound is okay, but no picture. And it's so darned uncomfortable in Bobby's room. Whatever will we do once we get into that house and put the T.V. in that room off the kitchen and then have no chairs to sit upon? Squat on the floor? Put up the cot? Boy, Jere, you had better forget about going off north on a camping trip and save the money to buy a few gewgaws with it. Another bill came in from Richfield, to the tune of \$33. I was seriously thinking about those two weeks you're going to get off, maybe you had better come down here and help me get packed and moved. How about it?

Well, nothing else new, so I'll sign off for today. I feel lower than the low man on a totem pole today.

Yours, desperately

The Hermit of 122nd Street

Tuesday, August 4. 1953

Greetings, FRIEND:

Well, are you going to get that goose quill sharpened and give the US. mail service some business, or do I take you off the list? How's about it. Don't tell me your good intentions of quitting the job have 'gone with the wind' again. I have hopefully rushed to the post office for two weeks now and all I ever find in my little old box (number if 581) is bills. No, I take that back, I got a letter from Jean Burke to brighten my life, but not so much as an ink blot from faithless Jessie.

Well, I've scolded you enough, now let me get down to the second chapter in the Life of the Casagrandes. As you could probably have guessed from the fact that this letter is typewritten and not painfully hand printed, we finally made it and at long last I'm surrounded with my familiar belongings again. It was the darndest week of a "Comedy of Errors", it has ever been my misfortune to encounter. After one weekend of sitting around an empty house, Jere got a bit impatient (you know Jere!) and decided to take the ball and run for a touchdown. The builder was out of town, so he got the address from the real estate agent and we went to track him down. He has a cabin on a lake near Gilmore, and by dint of much expert sleuthing and diligent questions we finally found him. It was getting dark by that time and we got there none too soon. However, to make a long story short Jere reached an agreement with him to move in before the escrow was completed. So what happens? The new Belmont City Inspector decided the driveway is too steep or too high up from the road or what have you and they had to tear it out. At least two hundred dollars worth of cement driveway going down the drain, and to make it even worse, they broke the sewer line, which ran underneath the drive. But we were going to move in come Hell or High Water, so we went out ourselves and got the pipe free and made a channel for the waste to drain away, and next day, last Friday to be exact, I piled all our belongings back into the trailer and hauled it up to the house. Of course, the trailer had to be parked in front, but the road is little traveled, and used only by the handful of people that live on Monserat Ave., so that was no problem. I hounded the Gas and Electric Company into installing service and I did succeed with electricity so we had light anyway, but we ran into the darndest bit of buck-passing where the gas was concerned. And no gas, no heat, you know. It seems in a new construction there has to be an inspection and the stove has to be in place, properly connected with the flue, before they will turn on the gas, or at least with a valve and cap if there is to be no gas stove. Well, the builder had promised to have all that done, two weeks ago, but promises are easily made. Anyway, we scrounged for wood and used the fireplace in the den, ad it wasn't too bad, at least we were camping out in our very own house. The only drawback was that every drop of hot water we needed had to be heated on a hot plate, borrowed from George. (Good old George). Next morning bright and early the movers came with our stuff. It had to be carried from the truck on the street clean up to the house, and girl, I mean UP, and then up the stairs. However with the kids and me giving a hand with the small stuff, it wasn't too bad, but it sure added on to the cost. And three-hundred and forty dollars is not to be sneezed at, I can tell you. oh well, a house became a Home. I

called the gas company again and told them the stove was in and would they please come and turn the gas on. (Jere tried to do it himself but was stymied, the meter was there, everything seemed to be in place but no gas came out.) They came, it was dark already, and said 'no can do', there was no inspection tag on the meter, nor a seal. Whatever they meant by that, I practically went on my knees and pleaded a sick baby, but no dice. No seal, no gas. Get the City Inspector he said, and have him okay it and we'll come back. By that time Jere was fit to be tied, and for two cents would have told them what to do with the house. Boy, he was MAD! We went to see the City Inspector and it's being a weekend of course he wasn't at home, nor at the office. Sunday dawned, grey and dismal and soggy. It rained, a fine drizzle that discourages any feeling of cheer and goodwill, and we rushed downstairs and huddled around our fireplace. Then, just when we thought that here is the end, this is what we left Hawthorne for, and I was beginning to wish fervently I'd never even heard of Redwood City, never laid eyes on this haunted house, Don Howard, the builder came by to see how we made out. He looked at the meter, and lo and behold there WAS a tag, nailed just above it on a two by four, and completely overlooked up till then. So once more I rushed to the telephone and went through my song and dance act again. This time the story was that since it was Sunday they had no men available to send out to us. I almost wept with frustration, and I guess the guy at the other end had a little of the milk of human kindness left in him, because he promised to see what he could do, and before you could throw another piece of wood on the fire he was there and Gloriosky, the furnace was on, the house warmed up, we had hot water a-plenty and the clouds rolled away, and all's right with the world. Hurrah for our side. This is a lot more like it. I love the house, I love the view, it's good to be alive. Of course, it will take me at least a month to get organized. I've been unpacking and trying to find a place for things for two days now, and slowly but surely creating order out of chaos. Yesterday there was a steady procession of workmen, they laid a new sewer pipe, and took care of the bathroom fixtures, leveled the driveway and fixed the forms for the new cement, they planed the sticking door and put on hardware where needed, and things are really looking up. Jess, this is the loveliest house to take care of, and ME of all people is turning into a fanatical housekeeper. The floors are so new and shiny I practically follow people around with a cloth, the moldings are smooth and curved so a dust mop doesn't push the dirt into crevasses, the doors are all in one piece and a blond wood finish, the walls are a hard stippled finish that's easily wiped, and today I discovered the wallpaper is washable and a good thing too, providing you wipe it instantly. Yes siree, we're going to be very happy here. The kids have gone off somewhere, and there is a lot of space to go off in to, they really do alright. The garage is wonderfully big, and the baby loves to ride her little trike around and around in it, the older ones skate in it, and they have no objection to confining their playing and horse playing to downstairs. I fixed the den up just fine, and there is a corner for everyone and everything. Happy Days!

So on this note I guess I'll sign off for today, I have a chocolate cake baking and mustn't forget to keep my eye on the clock. I have to pick Jere up at a quarter to five, and that will take some getting use to. If I can fit my working schedule in just right, have to get started on supper at four, well, things will work out alright, given time, and I'll even have plenty of time to do all the things I like to do, like readin' and writin' and such. However, I must

have an incentive, too, and it's not much fun to old a one-sided conversation, is it? I took a box at the post office, because right now it's too much trouble to put up a mailbox at the crossroads, and for that pittance they charge I can get mail up till eleven at night and any hour of the day, rather than one delivery in the morning.

So goodbye for now, and my very best regards to all of you
from all of us Casagrandes

Deedee is still patiently waiting to get a letter from Diane.

Wednesday, Aug. 19'53

Hello, there:-

Well, at long last Jessie took time off from a nervous breakdown to drop me a line. I ought to at least let a month go by before I answer your letter, but you know me, the original Sunshine Girl--I like to spread happiness around me--and besides I can't keep my mouth shut, so sit you down and pour a cup of coffee and have a chat with me. For once it's peaceful around here and I might as well make the most of it. One of the local theatres here gives a free kiddy show every Wednesday and I practically break a leg to get them down there to ensure myself a few peaceful hours. Sheer bliss! You think you have trouble with Diane, hah! Camille has found a girl her own age to pal around with and show her the ropes, even Bobby after hanging around me for a week finally found some playmates and is busily building a scooter. And though I thought he'd drive me slightly insane with his demands "Mother, you got an old broom handle" "Mum, please take me to the junkyard for some old wheels," etc. etc. etc. even that was a small price to pay to see him busy, but Deedee--there is a horse of another color...Even though there are several little girls her age she moans and cries she has no one to play with and I might even believe her, if said little girls weren't forever raising Cain in the garage just waiting for her to get over her sulks. But she just can't get over Diane, and time and time again she has cried quietly (I almost said in her beer!) and wished she were back in Hawthorne again. It's pathetic, really, and I wish I could help her, but that's something she'll just have to do for herself, I can hardly wait for school to open while I still have a shred of sanity left. Maybe that will do the trick.

Did I say something about 'peaceful'? Holy jumping Jehosephat! I've gone to the door now three times since I wrote the above chapter, to tell the kids that mine are at the show. I tell you, Jes, kids swarm around our house like honey bees. The garage has worked out ideally, they skate there and from the looks of things we're in the roller skating rink business, they build things, and they go in a big way into making doll's clothes out of the scraps I luckily carried along with me. If I close my eyes and judge from the noise, I might's well be back in Hawthorne. I suppose kids are great icebreakers, and once I get lonesome I will only have to look up their mamas and I'm in business again. But frankly, having such good friends and neighbors to leave, I'm a little reluctant to start out again. Though I know I mustn't crawl into a shell and stay there--remember that song? "Make new friends, but remember the old--one is silver and the other gold". It's been a struggle getting settled but it's only a question of time before I'll feel that there's no use making pretty curtains if there is no one to show them to, except the family.

Heaven knows, it isn't that I'm not busy, just cleaning the house up every day takes a good part of my time, though I must admit, it is a joy to keep up and I'm still thrilled about it, and though I've spent every available minute trying to down that pile of ironing, so far I haven't made a dent. I've had to make curtains too, I was a little tired of living like a goldfish in a bowl, no shades, you know. Not that it makes any difference, living on a hill the way we do, but still, it looked so bare. But my windows are a nuisance. They're

the broad, narrow casement type in the bedrooms, and I hate to shut out the view, but I managed to solve the problem neatly. Come up and see it some time! The picture window is still bare, and I and the budget will have to come to an understanding about draw drapes.

The day we moved out of that house by the railroad tracks someone gave the kids a little kitty, oh, a cute little fluffy thing, and over my protest and what they fondly thought was behind my back, they smuggled it with them. I said Daddy won't let you keep it, and they vowed they'd keep it hidden and feed it, and have it spayed with their allowance (it's a female, god help us) and what happens? Daddy gets a look at it and says "oh, let them keep it, the baby loves it and it will give her something to play with". All I can say is "Murder", because that little cat has been nothing but grief to me. So far it has expended three of it's nine lives already, and all my hopes that it might run away or something, were in vain. It was so little and helpless when we got it that all day long I had to rescue it from Penny's clutches, and one fine day Penny found a hammer and experimented with it, and when I came upon them--there was the kitty, stretched out flat with Penny standing over her with a hammer yet, in her hand. We couldn't get her to tell us exactly what she had done, and miraculously the cat survived. Next day the dumb little bunny lay in the hot sun by the picture window and when I picked her up she was as limp as a dishrag, sunstroke no doubt, so I doused her with cold water (asking myself all the time why I bothered) and once gain it rallied round. Today I heard the water run and when I asked the apple of my eye what she was doing she informed me she was washing the kitty. Lordie Me, she about drowned the poor little thing. But it seemed to be none the worse for the experience, and probably a whole lot cleaner and minus about a million fleas, so I guess it was okay. But what next, I ask you? By now, the kitty has found out it has claws and from now on it, I guess it will be able to hold its own better, and my baby dumpling will learn to leave her alone, or treat her more gently.

We've had perfectly gorgeous weather, clear blue skies, a lot of sun and enough wind to keep it from being uncomfortable. And some of the most colorful sunsets it had been my good fortune to see from my own windows. Every night we see the fog rise out of the sea and it hangs like lace curtains over the valley below us and over the hills, but so far we got very little of it. It's simply delightful to sit on the couch and watch a living picture unfold under your eyes. We're up on one hill and have a little valley below us and then the hill rises on the other side, very restful. Yessiree, we might as well let the kids have the trailer for a play house, no sense traveling for miles when we have all the things we want right here.

Well, Jess, as the hen said as she got into the nest, I guess I'll drop it here. Take a little time off from enjoying your new vacuum cleaner and make with the words, remember I miss most awfully those coffee breaks I used to enjoy and all I have to look forward for right now is a stuffed mail box.

With best love to all you
from all of us Casagrandes

Box 561
Belmont, Cal.
August 19. '53

Hi, Parents:-

At long last I finally get a chance to sit down and write you an honest to God letter with all the latest details. As you can see by the fact that this letter is typewritten and not painfully hand printed, we finally made it. But it was the darndest fiasco of "A Comedy of Errors" it has ever been my misfortune to encounter in buying a house. I can't remember whether I'd written you about this before, but when we arrived here on the nineteenth we found that the loan we had applied for and thought was all taken care of, had not gone through in the amount we had been led to believe. So we had to apply at another company for a higher amount. Of course that meant we wasted two weeks, it takes about that long for it to get approved. But Jere being the impatient type, just wasn't going to sit around for another week-end listening to Choo-Choos shake the foundation of the house, that could only end in a straight jacket or an a murder. So we tried to get a hold of the builder to ask him to let us move in before escrow was completed. I think I wrote you that they hadn't done any of those last little details that were still lacking to call this house complete [.....] As for me, I love it here. It's beautiful country hereabouts, reminds me a lot of Dover. Our house is on a hill and overlooks a little valley and the other side of another hill, and I never get tired of sitting in the living room and looking out of the picture window at the landscape. We've had simply grand weather too, except for that one or two rainy day. The skies are clear and blue and the sun shines brightly, and there is just enough wind to keep it from being too uncomfortable for me. There are some big old trees next door on the hill and the kids have a heavy rope hung from it on which they swing by the hour in the shade.

I've been busy for the last couple of weeks trying to create order out of this chaos of boxes, and it seems to me that every other one I opened contained clothes to be ironed, and no matter how much time I spend at the ironing board I haven't been able to create a dent in it yet. The backyard is still one yawning raw hole in the ground and the front yard slopes so much I don't think I'll attempt a lawn. The girls from the sewing club had given me a lot of plants that I nursed along all this time and finally got into the ground for better

Belmont, Cal.
August 25, 1953

How-de-doo-dy...

Okay, you can get up off of your knees now, all is forgiven. Just for Heaven's sake, and my peace of mind, don't neglect me so shamefully again. After all, that's all I've got to look forward to these days--a bulging mailbox.

Girl, you think you have trouble with your brood! All I can hope for is that the last shred of sanity holds out until school opens, and it can't be none too soon. At least yours are on home ground and mine have to make new friends. Most of the time they're alright, Cammie has found a girl her own age to pal around with and they use the large double garage for a skating rink (when they aren't messing up my beautiful clean kitchen making fudge) and there are two or three little girls Deedee's age. However, she still mopes after Diane Griswold and hangs from my skirts moaning she has no one to play with. I could believe that if they weren't making enough noise downstairs for a dozen, waiting for her to get over her sulks and come play. Bobby was driving me daft all last week because one of the boys came along with a scooter and he had to build one like it. I might as well have dropped everything and built it right along with him, because incessantly he demanded one thing after the other. A large wooden crate, an old broom handle, he wanted me to take him to the junk yard for some old wheels, then he needed hinges, etc. etc. etc. But at that it was a small price to pay to see him busily engaged at SOMETHING. Then he took off on a hike with the boys and the minute I saw the red blotches on his face I knew we were in for another siege of poison oak. Naturally everyone shuns him like the plague and once more he is driving me slowly to drink (coffee) being underfoot and tormenting the girls. Only the baby is her own sweet ornery self, up to her ears in mischief from the word 'go'. All day long I go around removing the traces of her busy little hands. There may not be a dull moment around here, but neither is there peace. One of the large markets in Redwood City gives tickets for a free kiddy matinee every Wednesday and believe you me, I practically break a leg to get them there every Wednesday. Though the last time when I thought at long last I'd have a couple of hours to myself after putting the baby to sleep, I spent the best part of the afternoon going to the door to tell all the kids that practically battered the door down that by brood was at the show.

Our bikes still aren't fixed, and it sounds like such a good idea I'm going to have to do something about that. Though I bet you dollars to doughnuts, that after I do, they will complain bitterly about the hills and won't use them anyway. Gee, Floenda, with all the wide open spaces around here you'd think those kids of mine would want to go off exploring or something, I know, I used to, never was home except for meals, but no, if I were to go along, yes, but on their own they show absolutely no initiative. So all I can pray for is for Sept. 10th to come along.

Life has pretty much fallen into a groove now, and by now I have days when I roam around like a caged lioness and with all my tasks staring me in the face I feel a bit bored.

Maybe I should get over my natural inertia and try and make friends with my neighbors, borrow a cup of sugar or something. Kids are natural icebreakers, and mine would only go and play in someone else's yard for a change I could go after them, and that way get to know the mamas. The two houses across the road are occupied by people without kids and though everyone I see smiles and nods at me when I go flying by in the car, and I'm still as much behind the wheel as ever, still no one so far (with one exception) has made an effort to be neighborly with me. Probably my fault. Oh well, there is no Myra here to take me out of myself, and anyway, I'm still a little sentimental about the gals back in Hawthorne.

I do love the house, and never cease to enjoy the view from our living room window and I get such a bang out of driving down to the stores. It's such a winding, pretty road through the hills and the stores are all clustered around the foot of it where it joins the main street, El Camino Real, and it's such a small town, the postmaster calls you by name, and the store people get to know you and are very friendly.

Did I tell you that Jere gets a ride now and takes his lunch? That makes the day stretch ahead of me without a break and all I have to watch the clock for is to start supper on time.

Monday morning, bright and early.

I got sidetracked again, so while the kids are still sleeping and I got a few quiet minutes, I'd better get on with this epistle. I worked like a Trojan over the weekend trying to get some semblance of garden into our front lawn. LAWN, did I say? Only an optimist would attempt to cover that slope with grass. I had all the kids in the neighborhood including my own, gathering rocks for me, and believe me, that's one thing we have plenty of hereabouts. I terraced the front into beds edging each terrace with rocks to keep the soil from washing away, and I do believe it will be alright when I get done and things begin to grow. I stand in a deep trance and envision beds of bright color ivy and geranium along the edge, masses of petunia and marigold and some roses. Oh yes, I have plans...Your plant doesn't look too good right now, but I'm still babying it along and hoping for the best. Of course the bulbs are doing fine and maybe I can get them to bloom before the rains come. Of course I have no idea how things fare here in the wintertime, but I'll find out, and then I can plan properly for next year...

Well, kid, I may be a slow starter, but you can't say I don't WRITE when I finally get around to it.

Things have finally fallen into a groove, and my days are pretty well filled with a number of chores to take up time. I clean, and wash and trot down to the post office around eleven to pick up whatever mail comes my way, do some shopping, feed the kids, and when it gets too warm upstairs I go down into my nice cool quiet den and iron and sew a little, and before you can say 'scat' it's time for supper. And whenever the mood strikes me or I get to thinking too hard about the friends I left behind I sit down and write a little. Of

course, you understand, it's a little awkward carrying on a one-way conversation (hint, hint) and it helps to have a litter to answer!

The kids are getting up, and I better sign off for today and see what mischief they're stirring up now.

Goodbye for now,
with best love, as ever

September 1. 53

How-dee-do-dee:-

I'm tickled pink you didn't let the lack of a fountain pen stop you fro dropping me a line, nor the fact you're busy, busy, busy. Gee, don't you ever take time out to read a book? Like me, f'r instance, I nosed out the public library before the car had even a chance to cool off, and judging from the stacks I bring home every week my mind must be improved so much it's wonder I can descend from my lofty highbrow perch long enough to chat with you lesser mortals...We saw "Shane", too, the other night. How did you like it? I guess I enjoyed it at the moment, but when I got home and thought about it, it struck me as another "High Noon", very dramatic and all that, but nothing but another Western in Technicolor. Guess I'm getting into my dotage or something. Nothing entertains me quite so much as the Man from Mars and Walt Disney.

How did the boys make out in their driver's test? Qualified to cut a few notches in the steering wheel?

Life has sort of fallen into a groove by now, and if I'm not careful, by groove I do mean GROOVE, or rut to you. Just as in the good old days in Hawthorne, I start out each morning with a bang and next thing you know I'm sidetracked again. Honestly, there are so many things to be done around a house and all are crying to be done at once, so that I usually through in the sponge and take the line of least resistance and do whatever happens to be at hand or seems easiest. It's such a hopeless proposition to catch up with yourself and the llllllllllllllllllll list of Things to Do Today gets longer and longer and carried over from one day to the next, always with something added to it. Take today for instance, I leaped out of bed like a ball of fire and remembered I had to take the car to have the wheels aligned and 'boing' the whole morning was shot while I sat and sat AND sat at the garage, you guessed it, reading a book. I made the mistake of finding a salvage place and coming home with some play clothes and shoes for Deedee because someone got into the trailer and tore up all of her dress up things. Now Camille has been haunting me to take her there so she can pick out something for herself. For the sake of peace in the family I suppose I must.

That trailer! If it holds together long enough for us to use it again next year it surely will be a miracle. Every day something else goes ‘phlooey’, they broke the fuel line to the butane tank, cracked another window, and managed between them to wreck the table again. And naturally nobody knows who done it, wish those gremlins would go back to the plants and do their mischief there instead of hanging ‘round our house.

Last week a fellow came knocking on our front door and made noises like a neighbor. How ere we to know he was only interested in selling us weather-stripping for the doors and insulation for the attic? He came back that evening and brought (a) a suitcase, and (b) a box of beautiful drinking glasses which he presented to me with a flourish. Four house later he and Jere were still at it, hammer and tongs, and my eyes were drooping and I

could only stay awake by a supreme effort of will. If he had only said so in the first place instead of making polite conversation about the house and Belmont and vicinity and fooled us into thinking he only wanted to pass the time of day, he'd have saved himself a lot of fruitless persuasion. In the first place we aren't interested in insulation to the tune of a couple of hundred dollars, and in the second place, although I greatly admire his weather stripping, and no doubt we'll need it one of these days, right now the poor old budget is overstrained trying to outfit three kids for school. Now I've got a dozen glasses that I've hidden away in the back of the cupboard because I feel guilty each time I look at them.

Jere went out to visit a local lodge tonight and I can only keep my fingers crossed and hope he finds a few congenial souls and is willing to go again. I don't think it's a good idea to stick so close to the house all the time. Our constitution (the kids and mine) just can't stand the strain of having him underfoot so much. The first few weeks herein the new house he almost drove me to a nervous breakdown, he was so darned fussy about everything, the kids hardly dared breathe or come in to go to the bathroom, mealtimes were an agony, they must needs act like ladies and gentlemen or else. And so help me, if he said one more time words to the effect of turning over a new leaf, I'd have strangled him. I finally blew a fuse and said this was a home and not a museum, and though I'm as willing as the next guy to keep a neat house that's no reason to act as if he'd never heard of soap and water. With Penny, you know, you always have to keep one jump ahead of her with a mop, she gets into the darndest messes. Well, anyway, I guess he saw my point and he doesn't ride us so hard anymore, and life is a lot more peaceful. He enjoys his fireplace and his view from the picture window and drops his pearls of wisdom into my not unheeding ears and everything is peachy-keen. As for me, if I don't take my mending or a fresh-baked pie down to my neighbor soon, I'll be talking, or rather, mumbling to myself. I see her every day when she goes by for her mail and I'm outside watering my flowers, such as they are, and each time she asks me to come down and I say I will. I also say come and stay for a cup of coffee some day, and she says she will, and there we are, unable to break the ice further. Ah well!

My front yard is coming along nicely. I planted a pepper tree and a Princess Bush, and the seeds I put in are making an appearance. One of these days those masses of bloom I visualize will actually come to be. Did I tell you I terraced it into three beds, edged with rocks, and when I get done I think it will be the best looking slope on the street (I hope). It's been a lot of hard work, but I do believe, with constant watering and cultivating, the soil won't be too bad to work with. It's certainly a lot better than that awful 'dobe-gumbo back in Hawthorne.

Well, I guess I'll round up the kids and shoo them to bed and curl up in bed myself with a book. The wonderful world of insects, say, which I brought home because I thought I could find out what to feed those millions of ants that seem to think this house is Paradise Regained. So help me, I bet this house is built on an ant hill. I've gone absolutely mad and laid about me with the spray gun and used buckets of ant powder and the devilish insects come back for more. I leave the kitchen spotless at night and come out I the

morning and find them marching in formation all over the sink and up and down the walls and for some reason they find our bathroom every bit as fascinating as I do. I sure wished I knew what they had done to the house on 122nd Street to make it so positively insect proof. One of these days I'll forgo a nice juicy steak and investigate an exterminator. With inquisitive, sweet loving little Penelope around I don't dare put out those syrup jars. I'd rather have live ants than a dead baby.

Well, goodbye for now,
with best love to you all,
as ever,

Belmont, Cal.
September 15, '53

Hello there, Light of my Life:---

There's nothing like losing your front tooth to make you feel like an old hag and the mood to turn blue. Boy, how I miss you today, Sophie Mae, old friend. I'd give my good right arm to turn our Golden Chariot towards Compton, of course that letter of yours was most welcome. Letter? did I say? Girl, you wrote a book, and what a fascinating account of your travels, it was, too, I was with your every minute, and enjoyed your vacation as much as you did.

I woke up yesterday morning with a swollen snoot, and a face that felt as if it had been kicked by a mule. One look at myself in the mirror and I swore off the bottle! I stood it just long enough to get the kids off to school and then got out the phone book and looked up a dentist. He took one look at me and said I got new for you. It's got to come out. Oh well, forty years (I'm cheating a little) is long enough to keep a tooth anyhow so I resigned myself to the worst. This dentist has his office right in his home, and for a space of a heartbeat I was a little leery--he's an old man and his office equipment must have been new just about the time I was born, however, he IS a good dentist and certainly knows his job. And for once in my life I didn't have to plunk down ten dollars for an x-ray first, he got right to the root of the matter and before I could say Jack Robinson, the job was done. Didn't hurt a bit then, but oh, when the Novocain wore off! Murder! That's when I appreciated my oldest girl no end. When Cammie came home from school she took over, fed me Anacin, made me coffee, kept the baby off of my neck, and with a little direction from me made supper, and very tasty it was, too. Then she washed the dishes and cleaned the kitchen spic and span. Jimminy, how do I deserve such a wonderful child? Have to go back to the dentist tomorrow to have impressions taken for a bridge, and until further notice I'm in retirement, I hoot and whistle when I talk and to look at myself is worth five cents in any amusement center...Naturally I hadn't done a lick of work in the house except make the beds, and wouldn't you know that that was the day when I get visitors. Ever since the kids went back to school I've had moments when I wandered around the house like a caged lioness, and despite all the tasks staring me in the face, waiting to be done, I'd be bored and restless and would have given anything for one of those welcome interruptions I had back in Hawthorne. I'd sit over my solitary coffee cup and smoke a pensive cigarette and even a Science Fiction Magazine (my secret vice) couldn't pull me out of the doldrums. But the day I don't feel like talking to someone there were three visitors in a row. Hohum. One of my neighbors is an English war bride, her little daughter is Deedee's age and goes to the same class room, and for weeks now I've seen her pass the house on her way to the mailbox and she'd say 'come and have a cup of coffee with me' and I said I would, and I'd ask her to stop, and she said she would sometime, and THIS is the day she picked. The other lady also has a daughter a year older than Deedee and stopped to pass the time of day. Kids are sure great little icebreakers, aren't they? My third visitor was the gal that sheltered us the first day we came to Belmont, and I've gone up to see her a couple of times, but she has two little bitty children, and is expecting

another, and she seems always so very busy I feel like I'm interrupting her, so I rarely go anymore. However, here she was knocking at my door bearing an armful of geranium slips.

The thundering herd has just come and gone for lunch and now the house is quiet again and I'm limp, wait a sec while I collect my scattered senses---

When we first came into our new house Jere drove the kids and me frantic with his fussiness and perfectionism, why the y hardly dared come in to go to the bathroom and mealtime was pure agony and so help me if he one more time said words to the effect we're turning over a new leaf and 'what I say, goes' and so forth in the same vain I'd have slit his throat cheerfully. Finally I blew my top and said this was a HOME not a museum, and had he never heard of soap and water? and that four kids don't automatically act like little ladies and gentlemen and finger prints on our new nice walls is something we just have to reckon with. I'm as willing as the next guy to keep a neat house, but with Penny being what she is, I'm following her around from morning till night with a mop and cloth trying to keep up with her messes, and have little energy left to listen to his dictums. He finally saw my point and life is a lot more peaceful. We have even regained some of the tranquility of our early married life, now that I'm not on the defensive all the time. This eternal battle of the sexes has ceased and we can begin to enjoy a sunset together or a walk at dusk without rehashing the children's refraction of rules and regulations. Our weekly jaunt to the movies has become a 'date' again and not an armed truce. We saw "The Seven Deadly Sins" the other night and it was the best picture I've seen in a long while, and not because it was a foreign film either, as a rule I find it tedious and boring to have to read English captions while trying to follow the plot. You know the sort of thing, they make a speech and the English translation says bluntly "yes". However, this one was good, and I didn't mind after awhile once I caught the drift of the plot, no wonder they rated it so highly. It certainly was a welcome change to go to a show and see just one picture, the one you go for, and not have to take a grade Z western or comedy along with it. Besides we got home fairly early, though it did take the kids by surprise, and they got bundled off to bed before they knew what hit them, while papa and mama indulged in a deadly sin or two themselves...

Thursday morning

Gosh, how time flies, and yesterday was just another one wasted as far as my work was concerned. All I did was make the beds, swish the mop around and get the wash out. Whatever became of my good resolutions to catch up on my ironing and finish my sewing? You know something? I'm beginning to think a big house has its drawbacks, too, it takes me all morning just to do the necessary tidying up, better get me a good system...

You speaking of Gerda reminds me I'd better hustle out and find me a good accordion instructor before Cammie forgets the little she's learned. Here we have two instruments gathering dust, and we never think to remind her to practice. She came home the other day and told me she's going to be in the school band, well, that will keep her on her toes. And speaking of toes reminds me of the promise Jere made her to take dancing lessons.

I'm sure my junior elephant could do with some instruction in the Light Fantastic. She'll never learn it from me, my dancing ability is strictly antiquated, the good old two-step. One-two-three-glide!

It's cold this morning and my fingers are much too stiff to behave properly on a typewriter, so I guess I'd better sign off and take this down to the post office with me.

And now, as the hen said when she got into the nest--guess I'll drop it here.

Bye now, and best love to all of you
as ever

P.S. I sure got a bag out of that last page of your long, LONG letter. Where does a tender sprout like you pick up those stories anyway. I got a couple for you too but they'll have to wait till next time, when I get unfrozen.

F

Monday Sept. 21. 53

Dear Jess:

There's a million things I ought to do, but it's such a dismal day and I can't seem to get started, so the best thing for me is to sit down and visit with you for awhile.

I heard via the grapevine that you had gone on vacation and I've been keeping the house polished half expecting you to knock on our door, but from all accounts you had a better time where you were. Imagine, Jessie the out-door girl! But I bet you had yourself a time, you lucky girl, you, I can just visualize you bending over a hot camp fire cooking your prize. You should have had that fish mounted, it would go so well with the decor of Grandma Moses! But no kidding, I'm so glad you had a swell time. I should know, God above, I've done it often enough myself, though nowadays we confine our outdoor life to taking a nice long walk through the hills. You know, it's wonderful up here and much nicer than I ever dreamed it would be, if we feel in the mood to commune with Nature we walk over the hill and are in the middle of nowhere. No house, no sign of life, only an occasional rabbit or a hawk wheeling overhead. Just perfect.

I just had to rush to the rescue, we had a carnival here in town last Saturday and natch I took the kids down, they had so much fun we decided to go again after supper and while the kids were madly throwing their pennies away trying to win a baby chick I put my dime on a number in one of the booths not expecting anything, and hardly even paying attention, and well, you could have knocked me over with a feather when the man gleefully shouted: "Number twenty nine, the lady wins a bird", and by jimminy I got the bird alright! A lovely lime colored parakeet and he's making noises in the kitchen right now, while Tarbaby sits around licking his chops and making an abortive attempt now and then to leap up on top of the refrigerator. I took the white rat out of the cage to give Lucky (that's what we called him) a home, for where could I get a cage at that time of night! and the next thing you knew that bad cat of ours made a flying tackle, knocked the shoebox that made Lucky's temporary home, over and had it in it's teeth. But I can move fast, too, if I have to, and had his teeth pried open before the mouse could even squeak, and the poor scared little thing escaped with only a few punctures in his hide and a bad scare. He's okay today, she I should say, darn it I get my livestock all mixed up. So now we have a bird, and I guess I'll have to take a little time to teach it a few tricks, too. How's yours doing?]

Last week I woke up one morning with my snoot swollen and one look in the mirror convinced me I was worth a nickel in any amusement center. [.....] And just to make the whole picture complete, Jere came home and told me we were going to the minister's home Friday night to be 'instructed'. I can see your eyes boggle at the word. Well, kids, just put a halo on me and call me 'sister', I am now a full-fledged member of the Methodist Church. How do those things happen to me anyway? All this because I thought it was a good idea for Jere to visit the local lodge and get out of my hair for one night. He met the minister there, and he sure is a ball of fire, the church is new, right now they are

meeting right in back of us on Cipriani Center and the kids have been going there to Sunday school. They are building a new church down aways from us, and we had been invited to the ground breaking ceremony but didn't go. So there I was at the minister's house and not opening my yap all night. A good thing, too, or I'd have been snapped up for the choir, like Jere was, and me who sings like a crow. Oh, I can make a joyful noise alright, but there's no place in a church choir for the likes of me. Anyway, to make a log story short, last Sunday I dresses the whole family in their best bib and tucker and My Better Half (I use the term loosely) and I stood forth before the congregation along with several other people and were officially welcomed into the bosom of the Carlmont Methodist Church. Next thing I know I suppose I'll be going to the Women's Society and swill tea and hope to keep my mouth shut some more. I hope. I hope. Got my teeth back too, and feel like a new woman. Twenty at least. See, I feel like twenty and that's the number I chose when I won the bird. Oh well, it could be worse, belonging to a church I mean, I met the friendliest people and it's good for our soul to be under the discipline of attending church on Sundays. If it's good for the kids it ought to be good for us, too, and it makes you feel like you belong to the town.

Jessie, would you do me a great big favor? You know I'm still a secret pal to Mabel, and I find it harder than heck to be a 'secret' pal over this distance without giving the show away. WOULD you mail these enclosed cards for me, spacing them a few days, so she won't think her pal has forgotten her. I swear I don't know what to do about the traditional birthday present, I could get something from Sears, I guess, and have them mail it for me.

Good gosh, the afternoon has fled and the kids are back from school, and I haven't done a lick of work yet. This could become a habit! I was going to ask you to join me in a cup of coffee prepared on our De-Luxe brand new coffee maker. Jere had been on the point of divorcing me because the breakfast coffee didn't taste quite right. And it sure enough didn't, even I had to admit it. So after frantically trying out new brands of coffee and scrubbing the pot until my fingers ached, getting new cloths and going to all sorts of contortions, he came home one day with a leaflet on a Chemex. COFFEE BREWED THE CHEM WAY, it said so. Anyhooo, I spent the best part of Saturday, after leaving the kids at the fair, to hunt up this mythical coffee maker and finally located it in San Mateo. Cost? Tuff, what's money when you can get a decent cup of coffee. And by golly t works too, makes the clearest best tasting coffee ever even though I'm still experimenting with quantity and with or without bottled water. I do think distilled water makes a difference.

Well, as the cream said to the milk, this is where we separate.

Best love to you and your family,
from all us Casagrandes.

Tuesday, Sept. 29. 53

Greetings & Salutations:-

I half expect to drop this letter into the mailbox with one hand and take one of yours out of my box with the other. Anyway, with a half dozen tasks staring me in the face I'd rather sit down and visit with you for a little while. It's a lot more fun than swishing a dust mop around the place. Honestly, Soph, judging from the amount of dirt I sweep out every day it's a wonder there's any left outside.

What's the good news from the Stork Club. Boy or Girl for Gerda? Well, how does it feel to have most of your sprouts in school, does it leave you with a lot of extra(?) time on your hands. I'm laughing, I have mine gone and still and all there never seem to be enough hours in the day to do all the things I want to do. So I generally end up by puttering around and the "List of Things to do TODAY" gets longer and longer. I get up in the morning full of vim and vigor and start out like a ball of fire and like as not I end up by watering the garden or writing a letter, like right now. I was going to tell you all about our new parakeet which was the joy of my life for all of a week and now is but a beautiful memory. Jere tells me I'll either have to get rid of Tarbaby or forget about birds, it's like trying to have a snake and a mongoose for a pet at the same time. Very frustratin'. I won the bird at the Country Fair, Saturday a week ago and was so excited about it, I'd never won a thing in my life and hadn't expected to hit the jackpot this time. I only put my dime down because I was bored and waiting for the kids to get done squandering their pennies trying to win a baby chick. What would we do with a baby chick anyway? And you could have knocked me over with the proverbial feather when my number came up and landed on that infinitesimal small red strip in the middle of it. I had such fun trying to tame that bird and had just gotten so I cold put my hand in the cage without him going into convulsions. But it was just too good to be true. There was a crash and Tarbaby knocked the cage off the icebox, of course we flew to the rescue, but the seed dish had a piece knocked off the top and while I went off to the store to get another one the bird apparently got out. I don't know what I could have been thinking of leaving the back door open, it was just an invitation for him to fly away into the wild blue yonder. Anyway when I got back--no bird. I hunted madly all over the neighborhood but couldn't find so much as a yellow feather. Met a lot of interesting people, but of that silly feathered creature not a trace. Oh well. Now if I could get the cat to eat the rat and the dog to chase the cat and get lost in the process, why, my life would be a lot more simple.

Did I tell you that Jere and I are now full fledged members of the Belmont Methodist Church? How do those things happen to me anyway? Jere met the minister at his lodge and the next thing you knew he was knocking on our door and persuading us to join. The kids have been going to Sunday school there ever since we came out here, they are holding services right in back of our house at the Belmont Community Center until the new church is built, and we figured if it's good for the kids, it ought to be good enough for us, and anyway, nothing knits you to a community closer than a church affiliation. So, two Sundays ago we dressed in our best bib and tucker and stood in front of the

congregation and were formally taken into the bosom of the church. Everyone is very kind and neighborly and friendly, but I still have a few vestigial twinges left over from my catholic upbringing and I guess I miss the pomp and circumstance of a Mass, I just can't feel (yet) that I am [unintelligible Women's society] and you could find me crouching timidly in a corner, feeling like Sadie Thompson who has blundered into a Missionary Tea by mistake. And me in slacks and a black gold embroidered sweater! I should have known better, I suppose, but a proverbial impie inside of me made me push aside a perfectly suitable day suit and choose to wear an outfit more suitable to a cocktail party. Of course there was never a peep out of me all night, while all this goodness and light washed over me. I feel like a heel, everyone is so wonderful and each of the ladies went out of her way to make me feel welcome and at home. But I guess a Woman's Society is just not my dish of tea.

Wednesday morning

Jere came home after I finished the above line and now I have lost my trend of thought. Well, take a deep breath and start over again. They're having a church bazaar next month and of course I've been asked to contribute to the different booths so now I've been wracking my brains what to make for the baby booth, the food booth, and the apron booth, and have I still got a white elephant lying around someplace. Then somebody cooked up the idea of asking three friends to send a package that can be sold for a quarter, and they intend to sell the packages just the way they come from the post office. It ought to be fun!!!

Yesterday I had a birthday again (from now on I'm starting to count backwards!) and since nobody remembered I was firmly resolved to let the day come and go without saying a word about it. But you know human nature. No matter how indifferent you claim to be, that certain little core of Ego that makes you YOU wants you to make the most of that special day, that birthday, that gives such importance to your life once each year, and no matter how hard you try, you want to shout to the world "Today is my birthday", as if anyone cared beside your own immediate family! Anyway, Jere was cross with me about something at breakfast, some trivial little thing and I can't even remember what it was, anyway, I started to hum "Happy Birthday to Me", just like Lucille Ball, remember? And of course I won my point hands down, there were no presents (we're too broke for that) but I had the happiest birthday anyway, my family was loving and thoughtful all day, Cammie baked me a cake and after supper my two darling daughters went into the kitchen and forbade me to enter, and by gum and by gorra, they had that kitchen sparkling. Even washed the icebox, stove and cabinets and washed and waxed the floors. I was stunned, no kidding, and it was the best birthday present I ever got. Besides I can always go out into the yard and admire my pepper tree, which grows and flourishes and gets nicer all the time. I struck gold, too, at the post office, and there was a pack of letters and cards from my friends back in Hawthorne. Bless them. You know, Sophie Mae, that's something that never fails to delight me, the way everyone has written--long lovely letters from some, short notes and cards from others, and people I never been too intimate with have been sending me the friendliest letters. I knew I had sunk my roots down deep in that community but had no inkling that others felt about me the way they do. And I feel

that we were the better for having come to know all those folks back there. Everyone I knew there has in some measure made my life richer and fuller for having had their acquaintance, sharing their life and sharing mine with them has made me feel less alone. You know in the last analysis each one of us just an island surrounded by loneliness, and words are the bridge we build to communicate with each other. The urge to share our experiences and thoughts is just a desperate bid for recognition of our Selves. Without it our soul drowns in loneliness. Of course we need all of us sometimes to draw up the bridges and be by ourselves to collect our resources, sort out our thoughts and evaluate experiences.

Darn it, just when I get carried away on a philosophical strain, my baby dumpling comes in and distracts me. Oh well, a mother first last and always, and a philosopher in my spare time...

Back to the treadmill for me. Maybe I'd better try to do my correspondence when she's having her nap. As it is, it seems to me I spend as much time these days writing letters as I used to having coffee with the neighbors and gabbing away. Which is okay by me too, I wouldn't have it otherwise. Anyway, I'll see you later.

Bye now, and best love to Harvey and the kids
from all of us, especially Me, Frances

October 17. 1953

Greetings & Salutations:-

I HATE Horses. None of this “Old Faithful Pal of Mine” for me; as far as I’m concerned all horses are good for is to cast them in bronze and stick ‘em on the mantel. It’s one thing to gaze dreamily out the window at the pastoral scene up on the hillside and at grazing horses in their corral, and it’s quite another thing to have them neighing under your bedroom window at night and trampling my flower garden and eat what little grass there is. I woke up last night dreaming I’m surrounded by a herd of them, well, two of the big hulking brutes is a herd for me, and Jere called me and said I’d better chase them out of the garden if I expected to have a few flowers left and I dug deeper into my pillow and said as far as I’m concerned they’re welcome, I couldn’t see myself going out into the night and making like a cow hand.

I just realized there has been slim picking’s at the post office lately, could it be because I have been slow in answering the many lovely letters I got? This has been the darndest week, though, it started off just peachy-keen by losing Candy, the pride and joy of my heart. I thought and thought about it and came to the conclusion she must have been in the car with me last Saturday when I took the kids to the show. She has such a bad habit of sneaking into the car when I’m not looking and I never think to check when I jump behind the wheel and take off like a bat out of ‘you know what.’ I missed her when it came time to feed her that night, and spent the best part of this week searching through town and haunting the animal shelters between Palo Alto and San Mateo. I bet by now they wish I’d just take one of the orphaned dogs they have dozens of and call it a day. But I don’t want any old dog, I want my Candy. Jere came home the other day and asked me would I like a fox terrier puppy. Of course the kids just whooped with glee and all Penny can talk about is the puppy she’s going to get.

Later

The people just brought that pup and WELL! that’s the darndest ‘fox terrier’ I ever saw, it looks exactly like Candy did when I got her as a pup, black with a bit of white on the chest and chin and obviously it’s ancestry is more Cocker than terrier. A female yet. WHAT have I done to deserve this? It cries all night and whines all day and nothing seems to make it content. I shall absolutely lose my mind...

Sunday Afternoon

This is going to be diary style again. But oh, hasn’t this been a hectic week for me, between brooding about Candy and running from one animal shelter to the other every day...but it finally paid off yesterday. I took the kids out with me on my rounds and after awhile they got tired of riding and I wasn’t going to the one in San Mateo, too difficult getting back onto Bayshore Highway again since they’re working on it making kind of clover-leaf approaches I never seem to find my way back onto it again. However, I yielded to an impulse to go, and honest injun, my heart did a somersault when I spied my fat little black heartthrob in the very last cage I peeked in. Worth every bit of the five

bucks they charged me. It seems a tourist had picked her up on his way to San Francisco and dropped her off at the shelter. Boy, oh joy, she practically leaped over the fence, fat though she is, when she spied us. So now we have two dogs, heaven help me. But little Pumpkins has settled down to being a sensible member of the Casagrande Clan so I guess we'll keep her.

You know something, Soph, I think we must be mentally attuned to each other's frequencies. Every single blessed time I think about writing or am in the process of writing I get a letter from you. I started out to tell you what's kept me from dusting the furniture lately, well, one blessing in disguise that Room Mothers-get-together, the house got a good going over. Good gracious grief, what a sentence! But honestly, kid, who can concentrate when I have to keep one eye on small fry, who is up to her usual mischief. Let's take a deep breath and start all over--somehow or other I got roped into being Room Mother, so I got all my mothers together last Tuesday, with the idea in mind of turning the job over to the committees I intended to appoint. Worked, too, and now I have nothing further to do except stand by in case of a last minute broken leg. It was rather nice getting them all together like that, we had fun and I met a lot of people and the only thing worrying me was not enough cups and saucers. I solved that neatly by using paper cups and plates. Let 'em lift their noses at it, who cares. Well, then there was a plastic party I attended, rather reluctantly I must confess, because I really don't like to buy anything. But I ended up by ordering a tablecloth anyway, only to discover one almost exactly like it at the super market for one fourth the price. Well, I can always send it to my mother for Christmas. The neighbors have taken to dropping in on me a lot lately, and goodness knows, that I like, but it sure gets me behind in the daily chores. Then Cammie was invited for a birthday party and the silly goose refused to go 'because she had nothing to wear'. Just like a woman, she found out the girls were all wearing fussy, frilly party dresses, and hers are more the Sunday School type, and none of them brand new, so she sat in her room and cried and like a softie I promised to make her one especially for such an occasion, and am busy right now whipping up a confection of pastel taffeta. I really ought to have my head examined, I just know, she will outgrow it before she gets proper use out of it, but anything to keep them happy...To get back to this school deal, I honestly never ran into anything so elaborate before in my life. You're expected to contribute fifty cents for each child, and they give them four parties a year, complete with ice-cream, cake, drinks and favors yet. Now I got a notice to the effect there will be a picnic next week, and besides your own food you're expected to bring enough for another family(?) the first, second, and third brings the rolls, butter, cream and sugar, the fourth and fifth a casserole, the sixth the salad, and poor me has a child in each category, why, I'll feed the whole darned school! Then there is an assessment of ten cents a month for each child, to be used during the year when needed, holy cow, do they think we have our own private mint or something? We had a curricular meeting last week, one on Tuesday night and two on Thursday, and since I couldn't split myself in half I went to Cammie's class. They have a behavior problem in that class, all the boys are completely out of hand, and the discipline, Cammie tells me, is non-existent. I frankly think they are being too good to those kids, they ought to concentrate on learning instead of "progressive education".

Quote and unquote.

Well, Soph, I gotta get back to work, I seem to spend all my time hanging out clothes and bringing them in to fold and put away. I'm being snowed under with wash. But it's such a beautiful day I decided to do all the bed linen, and now I have to go and make up the beds before Jere comes home. See you later.

I'll have to call it a day, I'm plumb running out of inspiration and can't keep my mind on the job at all. Will write a little later in the week when I've caught up a little on my work. Next time around, by cracky, I'll be born a boy, and do just eight man hours of work every day. No more of this around the clock deal for me.

Bye now, and best love to you all

November 5, 1953

Hi, Bunny:-

I'm blushing as pink as this notepaper for not having written to you sooner, I can't imagine where the days fly to. Honestly it doesn't take long to get caught up in the same old merry-go-round, does it? Same old routine though--clean, cook, run to the post office and shop and get properly side-tracked by having someone drop in for coffee and a bit of gossip. That I like best of all!

Has anyone told you that I've become respectable and honor the local Methodist Church with my presence every Sunday? Oh yes, where else would I get a chance to wear something besides my shapeless old jeans? And once a month I dutifully and meekly join the Women's Circle and sit quietly like a mouse in my corner and work frantically on my crocheting or knitting, all the time just yearning for one puff at a cigarette. I'm just a confirmed sinner, that's all. They're cooking up a bazaar and when they found out I love to make things they let me 'enjoy' myself by working like a fiend making potholders, aprons, baby things and doilies. How are you old "sew and so's" these days? Gee, I'd give my eye teeth to sneak into YOUR circle and find out what you have all been doing...

My mail has been kind of slim lately, but still they trickle in a letter at a time. The only one that let me down with a thump is Floenda, what's with that gal anyhow? She can't be that busy, and the camping season is over now. Or is it? Coming to think of it I heard Jessie Griswold ran into her someplace up in the mountains. Jessie gave me the surprise of my life by dropping me a card to tell me she was in San Jose and how could she get out to Belmont. I practically broke a speed law to run and pick her up and I swear I don't think we stopped talking for four solid hours. It was a real shot in the arm for me, and when she left I felt twice as orphaned.

My children must be growing like weeds, seems every time we get a dress ironed and back on the it's too short. So I've been working like a little beaver sewing clothes for the girls. But that and gardening I don't consider 'work', rather it comes in under the heading of relaxation. But why, oh why, must people always pick the day when the house hasn't been touched and looks like a bunch of monkeys have been let loose in it to come a-visiting? It's so devastating to my ego. Here I go for days polishing up this gem of a house until it gleams all over and outside of Ruby, the gal up the street who drops in every day, sometime or other, and anyway, friends don't count, nobody special comes to call. But let me get started on sewing, at which time I don't touch a dish or make a bed, and 'boing' that's the time a PTA member comes, or Jere brings home a friend and conducts a guided tour through the debris. Emily Post has yet to come up with a satisfactory answer on how to behave at a time like that. Do you surreptitiously kick the kid's pajamas under the bed or walk with head elevated and act as if it were part of the decor? Beats me.

You know, Bunny, when you have kids there is no chance or excuse to withdraw into a shell and live like a hermit. In no time flat you're asked to be room mother and meet scores of nice, interesting people at teas, and your child is a brownie and next thing you know, you too, are a Brownie by proxy. All you do is track down your errant son and heir once or twice and your neighbor and you sit over coffee and discuss their behavior problems. And the days fly by on velvet wings and you have neither the time nor opportunity to miss the past or bemoan a loss, but still there are endless times when you remember the folks you used to know and won't forget.

Has anybody heard from Ingrid yet? Bet you miss that trailer in the driveway. What's obstructing your view now? Keep a sharp weather eye peeled for the neighborhood doings and don't forget to let me in on all the comings and goings. But of course, if your youngest is anything like Penny, you won't have much time to stand and peek out the window. Little three-year olds are such fun (it says here in my baby book) but at least you have the good sense to keep Stevie penned up, while I race madly to keep up with my darling daughter's mischief. The more I think of it the more I become convinced it was a mistake to buy a brand new house, we should have gotten a barn, I'll either lose my mind over it, or resign myself to having the house look, quote lived in, unquote. Papa blows his stack periodically, but one look into Penny's trusting, liquid brown eyes, and he, too, melts like butter.

Bet your lawn is showing signs of loving care by now and all that back breaking labor wasn't wasted.. Weeds! Shucks, that's nothing, how would you like to look out your window some fine morning and find a bunch of horses blithely trampling your gladiolas and browsing on tender young sprouts? It's one thing to look out the window and think how much grazing horses in their corral add to the scenery, and it's quite another to have your husband call you in the middle of the night and ask you to get up and chase those horses out of the garden. ME, make like a cowboy? Not for my money, as far as I'm concerned I'd rather go out in the morning and tenderly stake my poor flowers and erase their hoof marks and tell myself they're welcome to the grass, saves me cutting it! Nowadays I never even bat an eyelash when I hear them whinnying like ghosts under my window. There's one called Go-Go right across the street from us, he belongs to a kid a couple of houses up the street, and I used to enjoy watching him play with that horse as if it were a dog and teach him all kinds of tricks, he does everything but fetch and carry a ball, and Bruce tells me right now he's trying to teach him to carry a pail, so a ball ought to be child's play to him. Anyway, horses must love company, this morning there were two of them prancing around just outside his corral and Bruce came out to catch them. Well, give me a dog anytime, at least they come when they're called, and I can be a real hero with even the biggest of them. But those horses, well, it took him quite awhile before he got a hold of one, and he rode it bareback while the other one meekly followed behind. Either horses intelligence is greatly overrated or they are a heck of a lot smarter than we humans give them credit for. As for me, the cowboys can have their old faithful pal. I'll take a turtle anytime. Or even a snake. One thing about living practically on the fringe of the wilderness, there is never a dull moment where livestock is concerned. Bobby ranges far and wide and comes home with the oddest assortment of pets, we even

boarded a couple of snakes for a week or so. But I finally persuaded him to let them loose. They kept getting out of their box in the den and I could just imagine Jere's face, and he is not the naturalist that I am, if he should bend down for a piece of wire and come up with a live snake instead. Why, I'd lose my happy home for sure...Right now our backyard is the focal center of interest for all the little boys five miles around. Bobby dug out a fix hole or what have you, and covered it over with boards and dirt. He brought Papa's extension cord (I wonder if he knows he donated it) through the window for light and they have a regular ball back there, pirate flag on top, cookies in a box and I'm sure a password, too.

Like I say, never a dull moment. And the best part of all, no neighbors to get upset about their shenanigans. My backyard is nothing but a hole in the ground with a wash line in the middle anyway, and so long as they stay away from my precious front garden I really don't much care how many holes they dig there. The front looks just beautiful now, all the gladiolas are blooming and SUCH blooms! The geranium the girls gave me all grow and flourish, and the bulbs are coming up, though I still won't know what they are, tulips or what. And even the chrysanthemums took root and are showing buds now, so all in all my labors have borne fruit, the packages of seed I tossed in have all come up and most of them are in bloom, it's really the riot of color I visualized. I do wish I could remember to bring home some film I want to make some pictures to send back and show you the Casagrande mansion.

Well, Bunny, I guess I'll sign off for today, I hear Ruby's dulcet voice, she always signals at the bottom of the driveway and gives me time to put the coffee pot on. Be seeing you, and don't forget to drop me a line again, though I betcha it will be a Christmas card!

Bye now, and best regards to everyone
as ever

November 18, 1953

Hi, Parents:

Got your letter today, Mumsi, and might as well answer it right away. Say, didn't you get the scarf? You didn't mention it, and I did put it in, or did I?

Okay, here are your answers. Didn't I write and tell you all about the house? I sure thought I had. Anyway, of course we got the loan. Else would we still be hanging our hats around here???? We had to take a second mortgage with the builder, to be paid off within five years and an additional thousand down at the end of the year, over and above the monthly payments. However, the second mortgage on the house we sold in Hawthorne will take care of that thousand. Then we had to borrow another eight hundred to make the initial down payment and all the expense involved in buying the house, so we have quite a hunk of our income going out each month just meeting all these payments, but after a couple of years that will ease off and we'll just have to pay the seventy-five a month on the house. It isn't too bad and we haven't minded it, but you can see where I have to turn every nickel around three times before I spend it right now. I do have a rather tight budget right now, I've bought a half of beef again and I'm paying that off too, but still and all there is a little over for extras and incidentals like movies and shoes. SHOES! Boy, how that takes me back. I can still hear Pop groaning every time he had to shell out for another pair of shoes for me! That's the hard part. Keeping us all clothed on the twenty dollars a month I allowed myself this first year. Good thing I sew, but the shoes and jackets, ugh! Well, the first year is almost over and I'm keeping my fingers crossed that our health holds out and Jere's clothes. After that we'll be fairly in the clear. As for his job, he loves it, and is getting along very well. Matter of fact he came home last night and told me he had gotten a raise. Glory hallelujah, we can sure use it with Christmas coming.

I ordered one of those cute walking dolls for Deedee I only hope it's as nice as they picture it. I priced them at the stores and they run anywhere from eight to twelve dollars, and I can't see myself paying that much for a doll. This one is 20 inches high and only costs six! including the shipping charges. I also got her a new wig for her old doll, the one she loves so much and which has been glued in a dozen places. This wig she can comb and curl to her heart's content. I also made her dollies some new clothes, and that was all she asked for. However, she needs a sweater, so I'll either knit one or buy a brown one, to go with her Brownie outfit.

We had our bazaar and it was a huge success although it really rained that night. Oh brother, how it was raining. I found out that rainstorms up here are something to reckon with. We had gone to the bazaar for our dinner and a very good dinner it was, too, I had heard of these church suppers, and now I know. Anyway, the kids had themselves a time buying out the white elephant counter and when we got home I found the rain coming in through the windows, and had to run around mopping up and putting clothes and glasses down to catch the worst of it. The kids had bought me a couple of green vases and believe it or not, I emptied them twice before it stopped coming in. It's the wind that drives the

rain in. We luckily had put up our weather stripping on the doors and that solved that problem, they were nice and tight. I was worried about my garden, it had been coming along so nicely and the gladiolas were all blooming, also the snapdragons, but after the rain let up I went out and staked them again and there was very little damage done. The pepper tree was flattened, first one way then the other but didn't break and flourished as well as ever. I must have done a good job on my terracing, because no soil washed away and the stones held firmly in place. Since then we've had a lot of rain and the hillsides are beginning to show green and fresh, and all the plants I had gotten I have taken a good hold. Lucky for me the wash dries nicely in the furnace room so I don't have the problem that others have, who have no basement like ours. It certainly worked out just fine and I'm as pleased as I can be with our house. One good thing about living on a hillside the way we do, the rain water runs off fast and soaks into the ground so it never gets too muddy, maybe instead of cursing the stony, shaley ground I ought to be grateful.

I took the kids to San Francisco last week for a treat, we planned to go and have lunch on Market Street and then go to the zoo. We had our lunch alright, and when I got back to the cars I couldn't find my car keys. Oh murder! I called the Automobile Club to ask them what I should do but all they could suggest was towing us home. Hell's Bells, I didn't want to be towed all the way back to Belmont when we came down to make a day of it. So I called a locksmith, and he obligingly came and made us a new set of keys. To the tune of six dollars. Jere just blew his top when he heard about it. But what the heck was I supposed to do? Sit there? It took the fellow an hour and it's the labor that counts not the two bits of metal they use. Anyway we went to the zoo and had a wonderful time. It's so easy to get there from here I decided we ought to go more often when the weather gets nicer again.

Forgot to mention, after the bazaar was over they had several pieces of nice material left over that had been donated to them and they sold it to me for a dollar. One piece made a beautiful swing skirt for me, and there is almost three yards of lavender dotted Swiss which I'll make into a Christmas dress for Deedee, and another good piece which will make a fine skirt for Camille. All this for a dollar. Lucky me. I went out Saturday to get some stuff for Jere and while I was walking around hunting for the place I ran across a rummage sale, now rummage sales are my meat, I just can't resist them so I went in and looked around. I really struck it rich. Picked up a almost brand new raincoat for Bobby, that apparently a boy had outgrown and which I could not buy elsewhere for less than four dollars, a yellow top coat for me in perfect condition and which had just come from the cleaners, three beautiful dresses for Cammie and several blouses, skirts, two hand knitted dolls sweaters, and a camera which was stuck and Jere fixed and lo and behold it works! And all this they let me have for three dollars. And I was tickled to death. You know I can't afford to be proud when we need so much all the time. Oh I forgot, there was also two pairs of trousers for Bobby and a good jacket which only needs to be sent to the cleaner. I got to talking to the woman in charge and she found all these things for me, you know they always put the good stuff aside, and all these things were in perfect condition, but when she saw my four Indians I guess she figured I could use a bargain.

Monday morning

The sun is shining again today for a change so I guess I'll get on the ball and wash all the bed linen and hang them outside to dry. So I'll cut this short and say bye bye.

Be good, sweetheart, and have a good time in Germany. When are you leaving?

December 9, 1953

Greetings:

To some folks I just send a card,
but for you I'll go one better.
I set me down and dash you off--
A SPECIAL CHRISTMAS LETTER!

Just came back from the post office with your letter. You dirty dog! It would have served you right if I HAD died of suspense then you'd be picking out a nice condolence card instead of a cheery Christmas one. Christmas present she says. WHAT Christmas present thinks I, a full time maid? (see I wasn't too far off) then after my eyes skitter through the whole darned letter she comes up with the answer in next to the last paragraph. Gee, some people have all the luck, my brown eyes turned positively green with envy. Every time I mention a dishwasher to MY lord and master he grins and look suggestively at my four sprouts. Darn! and double darn.

Let's see now, what's new around Belmont. Did you know that 'Belmont' means beautiful mountain? and it sure enough is. Especially now that the hills have sprouted a tender green practically overnight. With all the rain we've been having it is no wonder. And girl, when it rains here, it really comes down. The first experience we had along those lines I spent a frantic afternoon holding back the floodwaters that came gushing in under the back and front doors. So I rushed out and got some weather stripping and two heavy brass strips for the two doors in question, but the man in my life had the mistaken notion that his little woman would make with the nails and hammer, anyway he put it off and put it off. For a rainy day no doubt. The only hammering I did was at him: "When are you going to put on that weather stripping etc. etc" until one day he did manage to at least put those brass strips on and not a day too soon. We opened our bazaar to the tune of raindrops dripping off the eaves and it got steadily worse, until it had all the proportions of a hurricane. I stood in the window and watched helplessly my poor little pepper tree being flattened first one way then the other, and it rained--and rained--and rained. After school I took the kids to the bazaar and watched them clean out the white elephant counter. Among all the 'junk' pardon me, treasures, they picked up was a pair of green glass vases. The very last thing I got rid of when we left Hawthorne was a pair just like it, but no house should be without at least one pair of green glass vases so now we're equipped with another set which will sit around gathering dust until I can quietly ease them out of my life again at the next rummage sale they throw around here. However, I brought them home and set them on the window sill temporarily, and oh boy, did they ever earn their keep, it rained so hard it came in torrents right in under the frame of the windows I had parked them at, and would you believe it they filled up twice. I came back from the bazaar to get more money for one thing, I had only taken three dollars that was supposed to be my limit. (Hah!) and my heart just broke to see the water pouring in along the wall and collecting in puddles on my bee-autiful hardwood floors. Well, I mopped it up and distributed rugs where I thought they'd do the most good and went back again. We surely had the best time, in spite of the weather there was a very good turnout. Of course

that was the night that Jere didn't come home at the usual time and I was frantic with worry. No phone, and none of the neighbors with phones home either. And poor Go-Go (the horse) out in the shrieking torrent, nickering and neighing his little black heart out. He wanted to go in his nice warm, dry stable. So I put my fear of horses where it belongs, in the ashcan, and went out to open his stable door. For a minute I thought it was the last charitable act of my life the way he came tearing up to me. And let me tell you, they look huge under those circumstances. So I opened the door and stood back, and he dashed in like a homing pigeon, with my heart pounding like a sledge hammer I shut the door and practically collapsed from the nervous strain!

When it got to be six and no Jere yet I decided to go after him. I just hate the Bayshore highway on a rainy night. Everyone goes like a bat out of hell, regardless of the weather and it rained so hard the windshield wipers could hardly keep up, and it was difficult to see the white lines in the road. When I got there the fellows couldn't get the audio system working so they had to try to locate him with no luck. I couldn't imagine where he could be, but couldn't think of anything else to do except go home again. I no sooner pulled up at the house then another car came up and let him out. The dirty louse, he never, no never had stopped to have a drink before in his whole life, and this is the night he and the boys decide on the spur of the moment to have one for the road. Well, I slung the family into the car and went back to the bazaar for supper. Well, Soph, I've heard of church suppers and this was my first experience, and they are really something. For your dollar you get so much to eat you burst out of your skin. The kids were fifty cents and the baby nothing. In the middle of this confusion and hubbub Bobby came along with his friend and of course I couldn't let the kid go hungry so I had to pay for him too, I forgot to say, he wasn't supposed to come, he had a cold and I had fixed him something at home, but cold or no cold he and Jimmy HAD to come prancing through all that wet. I can't get them to go outdoors for something simple but they have to go and get sopping wet, oh well. Oh yes, I bought one of those packages, like I told you about, and it was a pair of the loveliest crocheted scarves you've ever seen, and certainly worth much more than a quarter. I didn't feel like asking my friends to send something, goodness knows I worked like a slave, made baby bibs and jackets, potholders and hot pads galore, some doilies and what have you, so I felt I'd done more than my share. Anyway, it was a huge success. The Ladies WSCS has split up into small groups, some of which meet in the morning, some in the afternoon and two of them at night. I belong to one of the evening groups and was made the treasurer. Ugh! That means I have to go to all the meetings. But it isn't too bad, this way we get better acquainted and they surprised me to death at the last one, when the chairman, after the business of the day and the devotion etc. was got out of the way, pulled out her package of cigarettes and calmly lit one. WELL! this is a lot more like it. Now I can enjoy myself.

Forgot to mention after the rain let up I went out to inspect the damage and much to my surprise I had done my landscaping well, not a bit of soil was washed away and after staking up the gladiolas, which incidentally have bloomed something gorgeous to behold, and the marigold and such, everything just burgeoned and blossomed like mad. I dug up

some business out in the hills and they seem to come along just fine, too. I put them up as windbreakers along the driveway.

Gee, here it is getting closer and closer to Christmas and I can feel the reindeer breathing down my neck already. I had done a lot of window shopping and had a pretty good idea of what I wanted and where to get it. So yesterday I drew out twenty-five dollars and I the twinkling of an eye had quite a few packages stored in the closet. I ordered a walking doll for Deedee the beginning of November and am getting kind of worried if it will come before Christmas. I just can hardly believe that you can buy a 20" doll that sells in the stores for fifteen dollars for only six, I simply will have to see it to believe it, and now I'm worrying if it will ever come. I have never send away like this before. Anyway, I wanted to make some clothes for it, and how can I? without the doll to go by. I did get a new washable wig for her old doll, the one that is the pride of her bosom, and which has been patched and glued in a dozen places, but for some strange reason, all she wanted was a new wig and clothes for this doll, nothing was put on the list about a new one. Small girls are so mystifying some times. I did make a complete new wardrobe, bought a dress stand and hangers, and a whole slew of pots and pans and cooking utensils and a package of cookie and cake mix, dishes and things like that. For Bobby I got a microscope set, and set of soldiers and guns in a box and he will get rubber boots, the kind you wear without shoes. Camille asked for a phonograph and records of her very own, and I was lucky enough to pick an RCA up at the salvage store which Jere could fix up. It looked to be in excellent condition but there was a short in it, but now it's as good as new. The difference between five dollars and twenty-five is not to be sneezed at. For the baby I got a raft of Holgate toys and a telephone and things like that. She goes for quantity and not quality. I sent away for some inflatable rubber animals. We used to have an elephant that Penny just adored until it collapsed from the rough treatment it got. This deal should be okay, five large vinylite animals, and I can give her one or two at a time and wait until they are ge-busted. Me, I am going to ask Santa Claus for a pencil sharpener. Don't laugh, kiddies. To me it is no joke. Every time I look for a pencil I find one without a point and I loathe those ten cent ones, always, but always I have wanted one that goes on the wall, and this year so help me, forget about 'Tabu', never mind the black nightie, don't give a thought to that mink stole, so long as I get my pencil sharpener. Jere just about rolled in the aisle when I told him my secret desire, he thinks he married a nut. Could he be right? Guess we'll throw in a permanent, too, or an oscillator or something.

My mother is flying to Germany. I ought to be mad at her for not coming out here, but fortunately I am what is known as a 'reasonable' woman. I know she feels she'd like to see her sisters one more time before they put her in the old ladies home, and I truly can't blame her. It is a bit disappointing, she's been promising to come out for years now, and she never has seen the baby. She is a character, though, in one letter she writes, never mind a present for me this Christmas, I won't be here, just remember your father. And the very next letter has a stern admonishment to the effect there had better be a little 'something' for her in the mail before she goes off on her jaunt. Women, bah! Well, after wracking my brain what I could send her that she hasn't already got a dozen off, I came

up with a travel mending kit. Hope she likes it. Bought a corduroy shirt for Pop and left it on Jere's bed. He came home, saw it, and hinted that he'd not mind finding something like that in his sock. How many pencil sharpeners can you buy for six dollars????

I've just recovered from the granddaddy of all sore throats. Took to my bed Monday a week ago all ready to be coddled by my family and waited on hand and foot. hah! That night Jere came home and said he was leaving for Texas next day. Well, maybe it was all for the best. If he had stayed at home it would have taken me two weeks longer to recover. But I think this is the first time in his life that he packed his own bag, anyway he laid his stuff out and the kids packed it for him, with the inevitable results--one tie and no jacket. He told me he had to borrow one. Anyway, I enjoyed my illness. Ruby (bless her little heart) came up to look in on me, brought her hot pad, called the doctor, took Cammie to the store, picked up my mail and medicine, and without her I just don't know what I would have done. The doctor came and said I'd live, had a streptococci infection he shot me full of penicillin, surrounded me with boxes and bottles of pills big enough to choke a horse, and which half killed me every time it came to take one. Cammie stayed home from school a couple of days to look after me, and she did a fine job. All I wanted to do was sleep anyhow, but she looked after the baby, cleaned the house and cooked. Then I got so darned hungry I could have eaten a cow, hoof and horn, and all I could get past my throat was an egg beaten up in milk. She tried a soft boiled egg, but egg without toast seems inconceivable to kids, and every time I looked at that scratchy bit of bird bait she insisted on serving me I cold have turned my face to the wall and quietly passed out of the picture. Finally Ruby persuaded her that jello and mushroom soup might be more acceptable, and as you can see I survived. Last Saturday was the first day out of bed, and because the kids had been so good I promised to take them to the movies and did. Well, you might know Jere would come home while I was out getting them, and was he ever miffed. Here comes our wandering boy home from the sea and there is no welcome mat spread for him. No Faithful Penelope standing at the door wreathed in smiles, no family lined up to welcome him. He felt let down. Poor guy, it was too bad. He did phone from the airport but when Ruby brought the message up there was no one home but Deedee and she a sad spectacle with poison oak. Well, I tried to make up for it and sat at his feet and let him tell me all about this here fabulous Texas. Take it from Jere, it's everything you ever heard about. Texans don't die, they drop dead! He says everyone, rich or poor, high or low 'you-all's you to death. I really was quite fascinated about all he had to tell me. He was out at an oil field, something that Ampex cooked up that has to do with the oil business, and he is quite carried away with the whole thing.

Bobby and Jere joined the Indian Guides. They are both having the time of their lives. It's run strictly for males, Big Chief and Little Braves. My two warriors came home and told me from now on they are known as Big Roaring River and Little Roaring River. Brother, how apt! I just call them the Big Roar and let it go at that. In a way I feel a little sad and left out. For two years now while Bobby was a cub I've moaned and cried "I want out", and now I feel like a squaw that's been pushed into outer darkness. Bobby has taken a step forward into adulthood. He wants a job as a paper boy, and all on his own called the paper and asked for a job. To listen to him he's just rolling in dough, and my, does he

ever dream big. He already is the proud owner of a 21 shotgun (without the telescopic lens, that comes later) and buying his own clothes. Kid, I feel like an old woman. When your chick begins to scratch for his own feed, why, then you know the silver cord is loosening.

Well, Sophie Mae, the afternoon has fled, and me with no dish washer. I've got to earn MY keep by the sweat of my brow, you know. You might know I couldn't get through the day without losing my mind over Penny. Yes, Penny. I keep telling myself it's my last chance to enjoy a baby and to ENJOY her, but oh my aching back, all those rhapsodies don't mention the lipstick on the wall, the dirty pants just when you think you've got the toidy problem under control, the pot lids strewn all over the place, and the WHINING that's the last straw. I could cope with practically all her naughtiness, but that whining (how the duce do you spell it anyway, too tired to look it up) she just exhausts me. She tugs at my skirts and fusses and is usually at her worst when she knows she's done something. Then she beats me to the punch and moans piteously: You're always mad at me, why are you always mad at me? or she'll cry You just don't spank little babies. Where on earth does she pick that up anyhow. To listen to her you'd think we beat her ALL the time instead of just once in a day! She'll peek around the corner at me and say: Don't look at me, and then I spring into action, that is generally the forerunner of some of her worst behavior. And then as a last resort just as the wrath of God is about to descend on her she looks like a little cherub and twinkles I Love my Mumi. WHAT can you do with a soft soaper like that? Go and wipe up the lipstick, I guess and swear to go with a naked face in the future.

I'll see you in the padded cell, bye now
with best love, as ever

December 31, 1953

Hi, there:-

I just threw on my glad rags (said rag being furnished by curtesy of Madame Burke) and I have an hour to kill before I can take myself, my finery and my better half to their New Year's Eve party we've been invited to. So how better can I make use of this idle hour than to write to you. Besides, I owe you a letter anyhow. (I think) Say, what's with you Burkes anyway? Poor Gary, gee, girl if you want to get rid of your eldest son that bad, why not let me have him. No sense wasting a good boy by tossing him in the street. I do hope he has quite recovered by now. What else is new up your alley?

Did you have a nice Christmas? It sure as heck didn't feel awfully Christmassy here, the only way you could tell is by the mad rush in the stores and the way all our windows were so 'decorated' by our kids, you could hardly look out anymore. But we finally dug ourselves out from under all that tissue paper and snarled-up ribbons and I hope I don't have to look a turkey in the eye for quite a while. Ham for us tomorrow. You know having a picture window you're practically obligated to have the biggest tree in the lot and so lit up you can see it for miles around. The weather has been so beautifully warm and sunny the poor tree didn't last and it was a relief to take it down again. Now Christmas is packed away for another year and one part of me says 'thank goodness' and another, the sentimental one, says "gee whizz, ain't Christmas wonderul."

I took the kids down to San Francisco awhile back, I had to get some maps for Jere and we meant to make a day of it at the zoo. But you know me, EVERYTHING always happens to me. We had lunch and when I got back to the car I couldn't find the car keys [...]. Well anyway, you can imagine my delighted surprise when I received the lost keys in the mail. Remind me to write a letter of heart-felt thanks to the disabled veterans, who were kind enough to return them to me. You see, I carry my miniature license plate on the ring, and apparently whoever had found them returned them to them, and they, in turn sent them to me. Who says there are no honest people anymore.

It sure paid me to have a mailbox these last few weeks though. I struck it rich each and every time I stopped by for mail. It's wonderful to have so many friends. And by the way, guess who my secret pal turned out to be? Mabel, of all people...

Pardon me while I answer the phone---such a delight, believe me, after being marooned up here without one for so long. They finally broke down yesterday and probably flipped a coin and said to themselves: Guess we'll let the Casagrandes help out on the new Rolls Royce. Of course the way I feel about it I would have settled for a wall type that you have to crank to get the operator. But not my Lord and Master. Heck no, he gave me strict instruction not to accept it unless it was the new type with a small box. The fellow told me it would be a four party line and we probably wouldn't get a private line until June sometimes. Then he ran into a snag and after consulting with the oracle at the home base, came back and told me we could have a private line now. What gives? I bet they could

have a private line now. What gives? I bet they could have done this five months ago. Be that as it may, in case you should ever be in the mood our number is LY-tell 3-8778...The word got around fast, and so help me, it's ringing all the time. And something tells me I ought to fine the kids a penny each time they use it. And it better not ring in the middle of Dragnet either. It's the kind that you can fix the bell either quiet or loud, very very snazzy looking, too.

It would certainly have been mighty handy to have a phone about a month ago when I was laid low with some kind of infection in my throat. I had the grand daddy of all sore throats, and naturally that would be the night Jere came home and said he was going to Texas [...]The doctor came and said I'd live, gave me a shot in the 'you know where' and surrounded me with enough pills and medicine to choke a horse. Said it was some sort of bacterial infection that was making the rounds hereabouts. All I wanted to do was sleep and after a couple of days I was so hungry I could have eaten a cow, horns and all, but couldn't get anything past my throat except an egg beaten in milk, and that was an ordeal. It took me a week to get over it and now it seems everybody I talk to or about has it or has had it. Ruby was next on the list, and I have a sneaking suspicion she got it from me, she certainly didn't think I'd be returning the favor so soon, but there I was--washing HER dishes and running errands for HER. Then our kids got sick one right after the other, same thing, fever, sore throat general lassitude. Right now Bobby is home. But he wasn't awfully sick, just got a fever. Gosh, Jeanie, sometimes I think it was a mistake to come up here. Seems Bobby has one bad case of poison oak after the other, and he missed more school this past few months than in the several years we lived in Hawthorne. But that fool school nurse is forever trying to tell me those scabs are impetigo. As if I didn't know poison oak by now when it hits me in the eye. And for the first time in a donkey's age Jere has a cold, and of course to listen to him he's dying. Hah! Men!!!!

We had a wonderful time at the New Year's party. Played canasta and made enough noise and merriment to keep the whole of Belmont awake. Next night Ruby invited us up for a turkey sandwich (turkey, ugh) and a sing-song. And me so hoarse I cold hardly sing 'do-re-mi' so of course the next morning I couldn't talk above a whisper and had to send the kids a note when I wanted to scold them...

Nothing else new, except I finally have a few snap-shots of our house to send you. What do you think of the Old Homestead? The camera isn't so hot, but it's better than nothing, I'm tired of waiting for Jere and his hundred-dollar camera to get a picture. Bobby picked this one up at a Church Rummage sale for all of fifteen cents. What's more it actually worked much to our mutual surprise I climbed the hills to get a good view of it, and you can see our whole street on the one, our house is the one next to the big oak trees.

Drat that phone, every time I settle down to something it starts to ring. Don't tell me I'm going to be so-o-o-r-r-y.

Well, Old Pal, I guess I'll sign off for today. Do break down again and write, how's about it?

We wish you all the best of everything in the new year,
from all of us to all of you
as ever
Frances and Co.

Belmont, Calif.
January 8, 1954

Dear Madam Secretary: (that's you, Verna.)

Think it's about time I gave another chapter in the Life and Times of Frances Casagrande to the girls in the Sew and So, and who better to send it to than the newly elected Secretary-Treasurer. (have fun, kid!) I swear to goodness there are days it doesn't pay to get out of bed, and this was one of 'em. I went down to the post office and found your letter Verna, the only ray of sunshine in this haunted day, and let me thank you from the bottom of my heart. The envelope alone kept me amused all the way home, my eldest child read it to me en route, bless her little pointed head. Well, I had no sooner rolled to a stop when the car in back of me, who I thought had been haunting me, stopped and informed that my gas tank was leaking a mile a minute. Nice going! While Jere stood by with the fire extinguisher I lifted the hood and switched on the ignition. It was leaking all right, so Paper, who is quite a mechanic in his own right, took the broken pipe to tinker with it, the kids slammed the hood down and we haven't been able to pry it open since. This being Saturday afternoon we couldn't get a mechanic or anything, and though we tried to open it by loosening nuts and bolts and practically taking it apart it definitely remains closed. Now it's six and I'm covered with grease and oil and frustration and ready to trade our golden chariot in for a horse. Can't drive it and can't get at it to fix it. It's what's know as "Quite a Fix".

I had all our bikes fixed up, too, hoping to get the kids off my neck for awhile during their vacation. Honestly, there ought to be a law against kids having more than one week's vacation at a time. Mothers just can't stand the strain. I did persuade them to go off on a picnic one day and even fixed enough lunches to feed all the small fry within a radius of five miles. They left at nine and came back at one and naturally Bobby broke out in spots the day after. Don't bother to guess, it was our arch enemy--poison oak. This time it left a faint pink mark on his face that's a long time fading away and one and all keeps asking about his 'birthmark'.

Oh, I almost forgot the most important thing that happened. Congratulations are in order. Al long last we got our telephone. It's a mixed blessing, though. Not only does it ring in the middle of 'Dragnet' and I have to bolt up the stairs to answer it, but like as not it's for one of the kids anyway. Our church had their bazaar to the sound or rain drumming [...]Now they're cooking up another dinner in order to raise funds for the new church that's being built. And you'll never guess who was elected to cook part of it. My darling, bless him, attended a meeting when they discussed it, and recommended my red cabbage so highly and offered my services so freely that now I find I'm going to cook red cabbage for two hundred people. I lie awake nights and do mental gymnastics like, "If one head of cabbage takes two spoonfuls of vinegar and feeds six how many heads and spoonfuls does it take for two hundred" See what I mean? The very thought jangles my nerves so much I can't even type anymore. If you never hear from me again you'll know they've taken me away in the padded wagon and I'm still mumbling, "six goes into two hundred

how many times'. Then Ruby came up to our house laughing her little head off, with a newspaper clipping in her hand. And you could have heard my anguished yell clean down to San Diego. Said clipping mentioned, very nonchalantly, that "Mrs. Jere Casagrande will cook the pot roast and noodles and red cabbage for the church dinner etc. etc.'" Oh no, she won't. Not if she has to break an arm before January the 22nd.

So Jerry had herself a baby boy. Congratulations. I feel a little big guilty about Jerry. She is practically the only girl I haven't written to and all because my address book was never brought up to date. I haven't got her address or birth date or anything. Do something about that, will you, Madame Secretary, or do I address myself to the president?

Well, this has been quite an epistle, hasn't it? I guess I'd better sign off, before I get writer's cramp. All my white corpuscles are crying "Go to bed, gal, tomorrow is another busy day." That little bout I had left me sort of weakened, and the doctor discovered I had anemia, and here I thought I got tired so easily because I worked hard!!! Well, I shall take my little pill, little did I say? It's beg enough to choke a horse, anyway, I shall take it and say adios for this time. Bye now, and my very best regards to each and every one of you,

as ever fondly
Frances

February 13. 1954

Greetings and Salutations, Old Friend:---

Christopher Columbus, WHERE does the time go anyway? I'm more than a little behind with everything and no wonder my mailbox has slim pickings lately. Me and my big mouth! Whatever happened to my good intention of sticking in my own four walls and tending strictly to my own business. The business of cooking cleaning and raising a family. Hah! and double Hah! I thought of catching up when Jere had to go to Houston again the week before last (good grief, has he really been back a week already?) but I found myself in the same old rut and not even the ironing got taken care of. This has been the heck of a busy month for me. Before Jere left he thoughtfully enrolled me in a Christian Educational Training Program, he ought to know by now I never have the chance to be either lonesome or bad when he goes away. Not with a bunch of kids underfoot. They all thought this an excellent opportunity to have overnight guests, and I had one batch hop-scotching in the garage and one playing army, and Deedee and her friend playing house in the living room and Penny unable to make up her mind which gang to bless with her presence. Monday night I went to this here school equipped with pad and pencil and my thinking cap screwed on tight to see what information I could pick up to keep little ones on the straight and narrow. Did I tell you I got roped into teaching Sunday School? The nursery class, yet! Tuesday night the PTA asked me to go on the Mother's March for the march of dimes, and I grabbed my little old peanut butter jar and walked up and down endless flights of stairs. This is hilly country remember? Wednesday I helped Ruby with the Brownies, Thursday Cammie and her friends went square dancing (I took them and picked them up again) and Saturday I went to pick Jere up at the airport. I'm not even mentioning the fact that I went every single afternoon from Wednesday on to meet the plane because my darling had said he'd be home Wednesday night. The week before he left the Men's Club had their little dinner, I bet I never mentioned that The Light of My Life raved so much about the way I cook red cabbage and offered my services so freely that I ended up cooking red cabbage for about two hundred people and nearly lost my mind over it. But at that it wasn't too bad, I went around for a couple of weeks mumbling to myself: if one head feeds six and takes two spoonfuls of sugar and vinegar how much would it take to feed etc. etc. etc. and how many spoonfuls for twelve heads etc. etc. Then Mac asked me to fix the flowers for the tables and I went out to look at my posies to see what I could do and right in front of my bugging eyes one of my prize hollyhocks, I got only two out of the batch anyway, waggled in the breeze and disappeared down a gopher hole. Gophers yet, good heavens haven't I enough trouble. I tried drowning the little dear but after the water ran and ran and the bill ran up and up and he just moved his operations into my chrysanthemum bed I tried traps but he just sprung them and laughed at me, now I got some poison. I'll fix him, by golly, or die trying. Anyway, I picked what I had left, mostly stock and snapdragon and good old geranium and really managed to get the nicest arrangements fixed for the three long tables. I sure worked my fool head off that day, let no one say it was the MEN's dinner, us wives did all the work. I washed dishes, dried dishes, waited at table, cleared tables and had more fun than I could ever tell you. I am now an honorary member of the Men's Club! The

week before THAT our circle gave a Tupper party to try to raise some money and of course living so close to the center they asked me to set up the place and make the coffee and of course the inevitable cleaning up afterwards. But I shouldn't kick they gave me the cutest china ash tray for my pains. The week before THAT (boy I sure am going back in history) we had our general meeting and birthday and the Ruth Circle (ours) was hostess. Guess who went over to clean the place, set it up, furnish the flowers, get the cake and make the coffee? Yea. Me, and Norma one of my neighbors. They took our picture for the papers. Pretty good too. Some of us gals in the neighborhood thought it would be nice to form a sewing circle and get together with our small fry once a week for lunch and a bit of sewing. It was my turn last week and actually my house works out just fine, with the big bare floor expanse for cutting out and I can set up the sewing machine and ironing board and we really got quite a lot done. The kids didn't bother us as much as we thought, they had a lot of fun with Bobby's army fort and played outside under the tree. Of course that was the day the kids were too late for the school bus and I took them and picked up a flat tire by the way. When I got home all hot and bothered Jere called me up for a little chat. Ordinarily I love the idea of him thinking of me but this was definitely not the day. When Ruby came over she found herself with a broom in her hand and helping me to get the worst of the daily mess out of the way. Like you used to, remember? Honestly, Nellie, the days fly by so fast it seems simply incredible. Last night the choir had a box social. Did I tell you that Jere sings in the choir? And not too badly either. Anyway, it's the first time I've ever had to fix a box. They were to be decorated, contain enough dinner for two, and be sold at auction, the lady having to eat with whoever bought her box. For some 'strange' reason practically every girl there managed to have her box bought by her own husband, including me! After supper they gave an entertainment, and sang some songs and we finished off with community singing and all in all we had a perfectly wonderful time.

Wednesday night

Gollies, at this rate this letter never will be finished, I discovered it when Cammie asked me to type out some of her homework, well, I guess I'll take YOU out and do that first and maybe get back to chatting a little longer. Jere is going out tonight and it's raining again, and how! Boy, oh boy, we really do get it up here, when it rains it generally pours--right through the windows and under the door, the weather stripping notwithstanding...

March 21, 1954

Gosh, Nellie, how forgetful can a gal be--here I would have sworn on a stack of bibles I'd mailed your letter and sat and waited patiently for an answer, and here it turns up again amongst my papers--still unfinished.

Well, I might as well use up some of the stationary Jere brought back from Texas to talk to you some more. The Shamrock Hotel will never miss this handful not at the prices they charge by the day, anyway, (even though the company footed the bill) but I can tell you one thing, my better half better not get used to this gay living---

How are you feeling these days? Pretty awful? I have just been going over your letter again with a fine toothcomb (and a magnifying glass) to see when you expect this new little sprout on the family tree to put in its appearance. Gee, Nellie, there are times, especially when I've just been mothering Ann's little baby girl (it happens every Tuesday when we get together to sew, and I never get anything done because I can't keep my hands off it, and can't bear to have it cry) when I positively envy you. Penny is getting so big and independent now and hardly seems like a 'baby' anymore, she is now a spoiled brat, thanks to her father's soft heart and head. Although I notice that in spite of the many spankings and scoldings she gets from me, it's still my arms she runs to and wants whenever things don't go just right for her, and Jere comes in second best when I absolutely refuse to pamper her. Jeepers, your little brood is sure growing, I guess pretty darned soon you will just have to get into bigger quarters and not be like the old woman who lived in a shoe (box). Do what Ann did, they just built another room onto their house and made it into a boys dormitory. All six boys in the one room, but it's really quite cute and large enough, actually. Better yet, move up here into God's country and really spread yourselves around.

Girl you aren't just akidding when you ask me "How many operas etc has Jere taken me to". It may not be the opera but we've gone to two performances of Gilbert and Sullivan's Operettas and I honestly enjoyed them immensely. The other week we trotted down to San Francisco to see "The living Desert" only to find that it came to San Mateo the week later. So why run old Lizzie hot going down to the city when we can just wait awhile and see it right to home. Next week we're scheduled to go to a couple of lectures. Oh, yes, we're getting cultured alright! Pretty soon I will be able to talk only in six syllable words and you will need Webster's dictionary to understand my high-brow talk...All joking aside, though Nell, life is so full of a number of things these days there is not only not a dull moment but neither is there a peaceful one. Something or other is forever cooking, of which the church takes up no small part. I thoroughly enjoy working with the little ones on Sunday, and as you know, we are in the process of building a new church so all our energies are directed towards that goal. I can't do much in the way of money but I can give my time and effort. It's coming along so beautifully, too, and we'll be able to have our Easter Services in the new church. It's really very rewarding, all that trouble we take with it is well repaid in the wide circle of acquaintances we make constantly. In words of one syllable, we meet the nicest people---Even Jere is in it, with might and main, and full

of griping, as usual! but doing a good job as you would expect of him. He even teaches the Adult Class now. So with that, and the choir and the Men's Club, he is really in it up to his neck, and it's so good for him and all of us. Who would have thought the day would ever come that the whole doggoned Casagrande family would be off to church in the morning at nine and stay there until twelve! Why, my whole schedule is turned topsy-turvy--I used to sit over endless cups of coffee and read the funnies and fix dinner at noon and maybe even bake a pie or some butter horns. Butter horns, that reminds me, Jere did it again. That MAN, words fail me. It was his turn to have refreshments at the Men's Club last Wednesday and he thought it would be no trouble at all for me to bake some for the fellows. Twenty hungry men. You know what it's like to bake with yeast, your whole day is taken up what with letting it rise, punch it down, let it rise, shape it, etc. etc. etc. NO TROUBLE AT ALL. But my honor as a good cook was at stake so I did it, and baked a chiffon cake, too, just to make sure there was enough, and all he brought home was two little measly horns and one piece of cake, just enough so I could sample my own baking and see whether it was good enough. It was.

To back to your letter and all the question marks in it, though you probably have forgotten by now that you asked them. The T.V. reception is fair enough though we have only three stations and our T.V. set doesn't get channel 7, so we have our choice either 4 or 5 with third grade movies on both. Actually now that it's in the den we hardly ever bother to look at it, the kids do, mostly and we go down for Dragnet or something like that, and once in awhile when Jere is out to a meeting I'll look just to keep myself awake until he comes home. Matter of fact, we go to the movies once a week, and that's more than we did back in Hawthorne. Isn't it a blessing we have our own home-grown baby sitter? I just put the water on for another cup of coffee, looks like I'm going to be at this typewriter until far, far into the night, might as well be comfortable.

We have added to our menagerie again. Got us a guinea pig, and the cutest li'l pet it is, too, the baby is just crazy about it because it neither scratches nor bites nor runs away while she wraps it in blankets and dresses it in doll's clothes. I have to interfere quite often, not that she ever hurts it, I just don't think it's mama ever told it about being owned by a little girl and I don't want it to get a nervous breakdown from being handled so much. Then Bobby brought home another snake, about eighteen inches long and quite pretty, said snake being cozily installed in a terrarium to make it feel at home. It gets out regularly and it isn't anything out of order any more to come home and find it coiled up on top of the stove or wiggling around under foot on the kitchen floor. If words of this get around I will lose an awful lot of friends!@ It's one thing to brush a cat out of the chair before you sit down in it, but how many people are that broadminded about snakes????

Well, Nellie, I do think I'll sign off for tonight, I make more mistakes and my thoughts are getting kind of scrambled. It's eleven already and Jere has long since gone to bed. Tomorrow is another busy day in the life of Frances and I haven't even told you about our car troubles yet. (see what I mean about getting all mixed up?) Anyway, I took the car to the garage because she used up a lot of water and there was no puddle underneath to show where it went. We figured on a broken gasket but not on a cracked block. Holy Hannah!

A new motor yet, and Lizzy only three years old. This will put us in the beans for supper bracket for quite awhile to come. We don't have any nice in-laws who own a repair station, either, so it really hurt our old budget. Now I listen to every whistle and squeak with an anguished ear, the week before that it sounded funny and I found we had to have the wheel bearings replaced, now they put in a new clutch or something while they had it apart, what next I wonder? If this keeps up I'll ride Go-Go the horse and keep the car in the garage...Well, Old Pal, give my very best love to all your kids, a pat on the back Rexie, and to you

all my love, as ever

April 11, 1954

Hello, Mumsi:-

Thanks for your letter, Angel Puss, I was going to answer it right away, but as you can see a couple of days slipped by again and here I sit at ten o'clock on a peaceful Sunday Night and try to gather my rambling thoughts into a coherent letter. The kids are home on their Easter vacation and unless I lock them all out there will not be another peaceful moment until they go back to school again. Right now they've made their beds in the den and will probably stay up all night looking at T.V. and right now I don't much care. As long as they stay out of my hair for awhile.

Darling, I was awfully worry to hear you've been sick, are you sure you feel alright now? I know only too well now that virus infection can drag you down and make you feel like a washed out dishrag for a long, long while. I know it's easy for me to sit here and say "Take it easy", that's all people ever tell you anyhow, and how in heck can you take it easy when this that and the other thing is on your mind, eh? But take it easy anyway. I was sorry to hear about Franziska, too, I will write her soon, and if you think it will make her (and you) happy I'll manage a couple of dollars, too. Just don't know what to say to her...

Our phone number is LY-tell 3-8778. Didn't I write Pop and tell him? Thought I did. And the Sears address is: S. El Camino & Hillsdale Blvd. San Mateo, Calif. WHY ? ? ? ?

Well now, let's see what else happened in our neck of the woods. Pretty much the same. I have only one more week to get the girls' Easter dresses finished, though I got Cammie's done and Deedee's partly finished. Last Tuesday at the sewing club we were all roped into making costumes for Ann's kids, four of 'em, and if you can picture six grown women madly sewing on two pixie, one frog and a daisy outfit, complete with feet and head etc. etc. BROTHER! She had to have them done by noon, and by a miracle we managed to get them finished and collapsed over the lunch table. They sure looked cute though. Well, all I have to worry about now is the shoes and socks and what have you, to make them look pretty as a picture. We're going into our new church, too, so it will really be a gala even all around. Bobby came home the other day with his shoe-sole flapping, his boots were at the shoe maker having heels put on, believe it or not, the story he gave me was that a GIRL tore them off. Well! Anyway, I had to take him to the store during his lunch hour and get new shoes, and something tells me that by next Sunday they won't be new anymore.

This Easter vacation and all that goes with it will kill me yet! I had to take the car to the garage for a 500 mile check-up and when I got home there was no sign of my kids, but the place was crawling with the neighbor's children. Bless 'em. I let them bake cookies and in return they washed the dishes for me, while I dashed madly around making beds and starting supper before Jere got home. Gee, but it was a beautiful day, I do hope this weather keeps up until Easter. Jere and Mac promoted an Easter sunrise service on the

hill in back of our new church and naturally I'm honor bound to get up at four-forty-five IN THE MORNING. We will have two sessions of Sunday school and a candle light ceremony at night. The kids will sing in the choir and I have to--among other things, make their robe. Holy Hannah, and how the time flies. Anyway, looks like Easter is going to pretty busy and I wonder if I'll have time out to cook the traditional ham for dinner. Not to mention staying up the night before to make like an Easter bunny and lay eggs all over the place for the kids to find.

I went to the circle meeting last night and we embroidered dish towels for the new church. Gee, it sure looks as if our sun rises and sets on this church, doesn't it? I never thought I'd get so tied up in CHURCH of all things. But that is bound to happen when the whole neighborhood belongs, I guess.

We have a new member added to our menagerie, too. Bobby brought home a little ring-necked snake, about eighteen inches long and as thick as a pencil, which is now installed in a terrarium in the dinette. He traded a perfectly good gun for it, but guess who takes care of it? The silly thing spent the best part of two weeks trying to get out, and it was nothing for me to come home and find it curled up on top of the stove or on the floor. In fact I had to get into the habit of picking papers and clothes up just so's not to step on it. I finally discovered how it managed to get out, by pushing between the glass and the frame and fixed that in a hurry, now he stays put. Why, I might have lost all my friends, Ruby would stick her head in the door and ask: "where's your snake?" before she set foot inside. When I dig in the garden these days and come up with a fat juicy worm or sour bug I trot it right upstairs and put it in the terrarium. Every night when we gather round the dinner table it comes out and surveys the situation and then goes back under the rocks again. People will surely think I've lost my mind if they should ever come I and find me cuddle a little snake in my hand and croon to it. I should have gotten a job at the zoo...

Roby took her little Boston to be mated again--for the umpteenth time. I do hope for her sake that this time it takes. It's a cute little thing, reminds me a lot of Trixie, she used to show it and has a slew of loving cups and ribbons, but so far, no litter. I personally think it never will have pups, it's a small thing and as active as a flea. A couple of months ago, Mac called up on the phone and said he had a 'German friend' and would I come up and help translate, this friend didn't understand a word of English. So naturally I scrambled around looking for my German-English dictionary and hotfooted it up to their house. And who did it turn out to be? A dachshund. I tell you, they laughed fit to split a gusset. What a character! They named the little gal Duchess, and I lay awake nights thinking up a good fancy kennel name for it--Duchess Liselotte von Gravenstein. Well, she reminds me of you, she is bound and determined to raise pups, and maybe she'll have better luck with Duchess. Ruby reminds me of you, not the 'hund'.

Well, angel, I'll close this epistle for this time and mail off your Easter card, or you might be right again about me being behind like a cow's tail.

Bye now and a happy Easter to you both

with love from all of us

April 26, 1954

Hello, Parents:

And a very weak 'hello' it is, too. Here it is Monday morning and there are a hundred things I ought to do to catch up and just thinking of it makes me tired. So maybe I just better sit down and write that weekly report to you, and what a week it was, too! It started the day before Easter when all hands fell to to clean up the church for the next day, THE DAY we opened it for our first service. Jere, and can you just imagine Jere who never does a darn thing for me, Jere went to work with a will cleaning windows, the week before he'd spent his spare Saturday painting the kitchen. The kids worked like mad, and Norma and I got our nursery in working order. I'd taken our old green fiber rug and cleaned it up to serve temporarily for the ones to play on. The painters had left the windows in an awful mess and it took hours to scrape and clean them. Next morning bright and early at four-thirty yes, you read right, FOUR-THIRTY, we got up to go to the sunrise service and I served coffee to umpteen people afterward. The fellows from the men's club and I, me and myself washed the dishes and then I had to stay in the nursery minding a bunch of crying little ones from nine-thirty to cook dinner. I was just too pooped, it was too hot and we just ate a salad and sandwiched. Gosh, but that week was not here! I'd taken the kids to the beach twice during Easter vacation and each time came home with a headache, you know how I can't endure the sun, but the things you do for your kids! When they weren't at the beach they went in Howard's swimming pool while I stayed in my nice cool den downstairs and did nothing. Monday night we had our monthly Ladies Night and our circle was elected to furnish the refreshment, so naturally I had to bake a double batch of cookies, one for the kids. I fixed an awfully cute centerpiece from beach sand and grasses, camels and little palm trees supposedly showing the Holy Land. We had somebody showing slides taken in Palestine and also had our election. Naturally I got another job! Anyway, it was the longest darned meeting and we didn't get through until midnight. Then it turned out nobody had a key and we couldn't get the darned church locked up, until I remembered that Jere had a master key and I had to trot home, wake him up, and go back to lock up! Tuesday morning one of the girls called me up and said Ruby was too tired to take on the sewing circle and we would meet at Ann's house with all of us bringing something to eat. So I made a big batch of potato salad and tuna salad and brought the last remaining cookies. We had a good time until after lunch when we found that three of the youngsters had strayed away and we spent a frantic hour searching for them. Oh, they turned up alright, just went for a 'hike' they said, but we were all just about done in. Wednesday I had the Brownies at the house baking more cookies and if I do say so, did an excellent job without too much confusion. It was still hotter than--you know what--and I've had to spend a good part of my day keeping the garden watered. Because it's all downhill I have to do most of it by hand, or at least watch it, water is so precious here, I can't afford to let it run down the street. Thursday we had decided to have a little get-together for some of the newcomers on the street, and though we originally thought to have it in my house (since it was my idea) at the last minute Lois thought we had better use her house, she has a small baby she has to nurse and it might be better for her to be at home, so I went over and helped with the last

minute getting ready, plus the usual baking. This time I wanted to try Brownies, but the first batch didn't turn out too well so I baked chocolate cookies instead and to Cammie's delighted surprise let them eat the brownies, she doesn't care how things look, so long as they taste good. And you know how kids are, they'll eat anything if it doesn't walk away first. I had to take Bobby to the dentist that day too, so as far as the house was concerned that was another day shot. I get the washing done alright, and we always have clean clothes, but oh my ironing! I managed to get the beds made and the dust mopped up and when Cammie came home from school she did the accumulated dishes. Having Bobby home by himself is a big help, he'll do anything I ask him to; it's only when they're all three that they pass the buck from one to the other. Well, Friday night we had a kitchen shower for the new church and we each had to bring something. (besides the inevitable cookies again some of them brought sandwiches etc. and this time I went on strike I sat on my lil'l old chair and talked and never so much as lifted a finger to help. I felt I'd done more than my share. This brings us to Saturday--oh yes, we went on the picnic. Jere's department at Ampex cooked up a picnic in the park with steaks for the grown-ups and hamburger for the kids, cooked over a barbeque. You might know it--it's been nice and warm for two weeks, so Saturday dawns grey and dismal and cloudy and looking like rain. Well, we had a good time anyway, I ate not one but two steaks and French bread and drank my beer with all the rest of them. The kids had more cokes and ice cream than their little stomachs could hold, and roamed about and played and you might say the picnic was a huge success. I took the kids to the show that night, you know, when you come home like that you feel so restless, no cooking to do, the dishes were washed and I just didn't feel like tackling all the jobs that needed doing, so what better to do than go to a show? We saw 'The Naked Jungle', all about army ants on the prowl and eating up everything in its path, including people. Sunday morning I pried my eyes open an hour earlier and took up my white woman's burden again. Sunday school, dinner to fix, and what should happen to me, shouldn't happen to a dog. I was all set to take the family to church and was no more than half way down the driveway--flat! I called Norman but she had gone already, so I roped Don Howard into taking us to church, and bringing me home again while Jere stayed to sing in the choir and Cammie took my place in the nursery. I came home and wrestled with that &(*(* tire. I didn't have to do it, but thought I'd save us all a lot of trouble if Jere came home from church and have it all taken care of it. Bobby gave the garage a good cleaning out, in fact he did such a good job I don't believe it looked that tidy from the day we moved in.

Friday May 30

Looks like this is going to be a bi-weekly journal, and not a weekly letter, my pet, oh well, on with it. There's a lot more news. We had the most frightful accident on Ralston Ave. They have been leveling the hills across the canyon in back of Ralston Ave, the main road, and every day the dump trucks have been running one every three minutes or more and driving all of us residents crazy with their passing and running three abreast and blocking traffic. In fact we had quite a tempest-in-the-teapot over it during the last election. Well, this morning one of the trucks had his brakes fail on the hill and he raced madly down to the stop sign side-swiping another truck and a car coming uphill and crashed into a eucalyptus tree and burned before they could get the driver out he was a

cinder also. There is a school on the corner and as a rule the place is just alive with kids going to school, but luckily that day they were on vacation, it's a catholic school, or there would surely have been a massacre. As it was I'd been driving the kids to school and could hardly get through, and it made me just sick, I came along when they were taking the body out of the truck, after righting it and prying the cab open with torches. Now there really is a hullabaloo, the trucks go at fifteen miles an hour which ties things up even more, and everyone (including me) looks fearfully over their shoulder to see if one of the juggernauts is behind. The truckers claim they lose money since they get paid by the load and everyone wishes they would stop operations.

Gollies here it is almost twelve again and I have to stop and pick the kids up for lunch. More after I've fed my sprouts and sent them off again.

Tuesday, May 4.⁵⁴

You see what I mean, Mother, "Der Geist ist willig, aber das Fleisch ist schwach!" I never really get back to finish the job, there are always so many things to clamor for my attention. Jere called me to take him over to the University in Palo Alto for some research, and really, I can't think of anything I'd rather NOT do than sit in a parking lot riding herd on Penny waiting for him to come back. It just meant another day shot. We had open house at the school and luckily this year they decided to split it up and I didn't have to turn into triplets to do justice to all my three sprouts, but could leisurely inspect each room and work in turn. And some of that hard spade-work Jere and I've been doing with the kids has finally resulted in some better marks in spelling for Bobby, and Camille's work has been good. So far Deedee hasn't given us any cause to worry, she just goes right along holding her own, though she is the youngest one in hr class. Last Saturday I took all the neighborhood kids to a matinee FREE SHOW and they in turn repaid me by washing the car in the afternoon, bless them. Though the water ran in streams down the street, they did a good job. Sunday was another hectic day for me, aside from taking the little ones in the morning I had to rush home to make lunch and get back by one o'clock to take the young M.Y.F's to Playland. There were about eight cars and maybe forty youngsters. What a day! In order to keep my eye on the group I was supposed to monitor, I had to go on all the rides with them, and so help me, I'm about twenty years too old for that, I think my stomach is still there hanging in the air someplace. We had a lot of fun though we didn't get back until six, and believe you me I went to bed early that night!@ Yesterday I left Penny with Norma and attended another meeting and luncheon and here it is Tuesday again and I'm of two minds whether or not to call off the sewing circle. It's another beautiful day and I'm washing like crazy, as usual we don't have enough bed linen to go around and I have to wash and get them back on the beds before nightfall. Besides having the monthly budget blues again. Darn it anyway, here Sears has a perfectly wonderful sale on and I just can't see my way clear to take advantage of it. You see, now I'm singing the blues to you, but that's the way it always is, I'm forever trying to stretch one dollar to do four dollars worth of work...Frankly it's pure hell trying to make up that four hundred dollar repair bill on the car, but little by little I'm forging ahead and by next month I'll be there so I can spend a five spot again without having to hold my breath.

Well, Lambie Pie, I think I'll end this endless letter and write you another one in my 'spare' (hah) time. I want to wash my hair and put it up so I won't look like a with and scare my family to death. Tomorrow there will be another luncheon to attend in honor of the outgoing president and to be honest we're so glad to get rid of her we gladly do her this one more honor. Ain't it awful, and not a bit Christian? They made me Secretary in Charge of ?Supply, what a mouthful! and let that be a lesson to me and in future keep still as a mouse and not open my mouth and let them know I'm there. But no kidding, it's been fun and I've met so many nice people and made so many friends I think the whole thing has been more than worth the effort I've put forth. And while life is hectic to say the least, at least it hasn't ever been dull.

Bye now, Sweetie, take care of yourself, and save those pennies, oh, by the way, you can buy the ticket now, we haven't got our ring-necked pet anymore. We decided we had it long enough so we let it go. All we have now is a couple of guinea pigs and they don't bit you.

Best love to you and Pop as ever,
from all of us CASAGRANDES

Friday, May 7. 54

Hello, Sophie Mae, My Good and Faithful Friend:-

I'm positively ashamed of myself--if you can find a few minutes in your busy life to write to me there really ought not to be any excuses why I can't do as much for you. So to heck with the kitchen floor, (though I must say those Koolaid stains don't do much for the 'decor') and to blazes with the mess in the bathroom, I'm sitting here until I have a little chat with you. Nothing very momentous happened around there--just the same old routine with church and school and riding herd on kids. But just the same, this 'same old routine' is sure keeping me on the jump. Easter Sunday we had our first services in our new church and things sure started with a bang with all of us pitching in the day before to clean it up--brother what a job--all those windows! and all that messy paint to clean off 'em! Norma and I got our Sunday school room ready and it was quite a thrill to have a room to our very own selves. That's where those old green fiber rugs of mine went. Sunday morning bright and early we were up with the birds for the sunrise service, since Mac and Jere were the ones to cook this up, why, we were in honor bound to be present. And it was well worth it--so beautiful on the green rolling hill with birds giving our choir competition and the sun rising in back of us. Anyway, Norma and I had two sessions of Sunday school in the morning, and by the time I got home at one I was too pooped even to think of cooking a proper dinner, and it was too hot anyway. My sprouts looked adorable in their new Easter dresses, white organdy with red dots, and red velvet belts, although my youngest, drat her ornery hide anyway, got too hot and five minutes before we were ready to go to church I found her stripped naked, she had simply torn her dress off of her and I had to spend a hectic five minutes repairing the damage though it will never look the same again. That evening we had a candle-light service at seven with the young M.Y.F. (Methodist youth federation) participating. Bruce (the one with Go-Go the horse) read the scriptures and I was so very proud of them all. They're all MY kids you know. Well, then we had our circle meeting, general meeting and a kitchen shower for the church all in rapid succession the following weeks, and our circle was scheduled for the refreshment. We try to keep the refreshment in with the topic of the speaker, and since our speaker talked on Palestine we thought along those lines and I came up with the cutest center piece--sand in a flat box with mirror (pool) and camels and miniature palms, and I surrounded the box painstakingly by hand with wisps of dried grass. It sure looked cute. I heard some ladies talk about it and they said "The Ruth Circle (that's us) sure comes up with the nicest ideas all the time". Pat, pat, pat me back! I forgot to mention we served coffee after the sunrise service and guess who was busily pouring the stuff in the kitchen after the service? Yup, me and the men folk. I'm going to be elected honorary member of the Methodist Men's Club. Nobody else ever seems to think of lending a hand. And me I take our title seriously--W.S.C.S.--Women's Society of Christian SERVICE. Ah me, am I bragging too much? Last Sunday after church we took the youngsters to Playland and I was asked to drive one of the cars and chaperone a bunch. What fun, I do believe my stomach is still hanging in mid-air someplace back there. The only way I could keep an eye on them properly was to go right with them on all the rides, and besides you couldn't have kept me away with a team of horses. I thoroughly enjoyed

myself, though after that last little escapade on the 'Rotor' I had to seek a quiet bench and calm my insides down a bit.

Oh yes, and the day before we had been on a picnic that the fellows in Jere's group at Ampex cooked up. Steak and beer for the adults and hamburger and coke for the kiddies. It was very nice, and I never realized what a lovely park they had there in Palo Alto, I shall certainly put it on my list of places to go to this summer. You know, Penny has been so good about going to the toilet all this time I never thought to bring extra pants. So you could have knocked me down and dragged me out when five minutes after I'd taken her to the bathroom I spied her in the particular stance children get when they have a load in their pants. WELL! I took her and cleaned her up as best as I could, but from there on she was without britches and of course she had to go over to the playground and display her naked bottom every time the swing went up into the air. Everybody laughed, naturally; it wasn't their child, they could afford to laugh, but both Jere and I felt like disowning her....

We had our election at the WSCS and naturally I got another job. I am now along with my other duties the new Secretary in Charge of Supplies. I went to a training session last Monday to find out what I'm supposed to be in charge of. I found out. Supplies means they send a list of ASKINGS to the church and I round up and send off whatever is needed. Like bobby pins to a girls school in Mexico or Kleenexes to the Old Ladies Home, things like that. Items that are not exactly needed but make things a little more comfortable for people in institutions. Well it could be a very satisfying job if it weren't for the inevitable reports and meetings that come up quarterly. We stayed for lunch (no dishes to wash for a change). Wednesday we had a luncheon for the outgoing president and gave her a little gift. Although I think that Verna is a lovely person, she wasn't a very good president, and created quite a fuss when she found out she wasn't nominated for another term. So this was more or less a sop to her pride, and I think a very successful one.

Tomorrow we're planning on going off for our first outing, we're going to investigate the possibilities of the Portola State Park. Since we're both so tied up with church on Sundays we'll have to do our camping all in one day on Saturdays. One of our neighbors asked me if they could rent our trailer for their vacation and we went up to take a look at it. Wow! I opened the oven door to show her what a nice little stove we had and the door came off in my hand, I opened the icebox and found it full of little dishes of mud. The table has the hinge broken off, and they confided in a whisper that the sink is stopped. Well, Marge, I said, this is IT, if you still want to use it, give me a week's notice and I'll see what I can do. She laughed and said it was nothing that couldn't be fixed up in a jiffy and her husband is so keen to go while she held back on account of the baby and the three year old, that anything would be better than sleeping on the cold, cold ground. I wouldn't dream of accepting rent, but if they want to register the trailer I would more than welcome the chance to see it used as it should be. It's a criminal shame to see it slowly fall to pieces.

Well, Old Pal, it's eleven o'clock again, my how time flies, and I'd better sign off for today and think about lunch. We had open house too, and for once they staggered the dates so I could do justice to each room in turn. I was happy to note that all that spade work we have been doing at home has finally resulted in better grades in spelling for the two older ones. Sometimes I think I'll go start staring mad, holding a slip of paper in front of me while I walk about the house giving Bobby his spelling words, helping Cammie I her Social Studies and listening to Deedee read, all at the same time.

Bye now, and take it easy, kid, (like me!) with love to you all, as ever

June 2, 1954

My dear Parents:---

Well, what is it this time, my love? Sick? Busy? Broken wrist? Or did the ink run dry? Boy, you sure are a faithful correspondent! and it is SO much fun having a one-sided conversation all the time. Doesn't anything EVER happen in Dover? Surely you can't just spend your time sleeping and going to work, and looking at Captain Video. Come, come, dear, break down and tell me about your dogs and your fish and what you said to the gal across the way over a cup of coffee, or have you given that up since coffee went up to \$1.13 a pound (the price of gold)...I'm not really mad at you, only it's so awfully frustrating to wait for the mail with bated breath and come up with a handful of advertising.

If anybody has an excuse for being behind on this letter writing deal, it's me. (and this reminds me, you must be sick or something--maybe you're on your way to pay us a visit, hum?)

Days later

I ought to be shot for laziness, but honestly, the mind is willing--it's the flesh that's weak. More darn things to distract me...Guess what this time? I'm treasure hunting! Our daily newspaper has buried a small box someplace here in San Mateo county and they publish a clue each day and the lucky finder gets 1000 silver dollars. And oh BOY! don't I wish it were me. Anyway the weather's been nice (in spots) and I'd rather take the car and go for a ride and see if I can match the clues to a locality than stay home and cope with our messy house. I got the urge last Friday when I got bored with housekeeping and thought SOMEBODY's got to find the silly thing, so why not me. Of course every place that looks good to me also looks good to about a hundred other people, and we fall over each other all over the place. You can always spot a treasure hunter by the silly grin on his face and the shovel in his hand! I even roped Jere into it last Saturday and we had us a lovely ride and found roads and places we didn't even know were there. Fact is I found more nice picnic spots than there are days this summer to take the kids to. Anyway, I think it's fun. Norma and I put our heads together and try to figure out the clues and so help me I've talked to a lot of 'em and each one has a different interpretation of them. Oh well, like I said it's fun, it's exciting and it gets you out to places, and though I don't really expect to find anything.

I'm glad you got the package lover, and liked it. You know I've been sewing things and making up patterns for everybody else so why not you. Sure I made it, with my own lily-white handies, and from my very own newspaper pattern I copied off of an illustration. I made one for myself first and it turned out so cute and helpful I thought I'd make you one. I used one of my friends for a model, and if it fitted okay I can use my imagination and her figure whenever the mood strikes me.

Gosh I can hardly believe that summer vacation is at our doorstep already. Four more days and I have those wild Indians underfoot all the time. I can hardly bear to think of it, and Memorial Day week end was a good beginning. Jere and I went out for a ride on an impulse and when we got back we weren't in the house five minutes when Cammie came screaming into the house dripping blood from her hand. I still don't know how it happened but she fell on a sharp stake and it went almost completely through her hand. When I washed the blood off I could feel a little lump underneath and had a suspicion a piece was still there. I took her down to Redwood City Clinic (the only place open because it was Sunday) and the doctor cut through the top of her hand and probed away until he found the sliver. Sliver did I say? It was a piece of wood almost two inches long and half an inch wide. She had one sore hand there and of course like the doctor said that was the heck of a way to get out of doing the dishes for a couple of weeks. She's healed up fine now. Though both the doctor and I had been a little afraid it might have affected a tendon and her right hand would have been lame, but she was lucky.

I got a phone call from my neighbor down south and she's sending Gary, that's Camille's own special boyfriend, in case you didn't know, up here for a couple of weeks, and then she'll go down with him for another two weeks, and that ought to keep her from being bored for at least a part of summer vacation.

Honestly, Mumsi, there's nothing I'd like better than to pack the kids in the car and hook up the trailer and head east. But how in heck can I? It would be ever so much more convenient and so much more fun for you to come out here and pay us a visit. Why don't you? This is such a lovely place you'd enjoy it a lot.

Last Saturday night Bobby substituted for a friend and sold newspaper outside the show down in San Carlos, and although it was a long night for a little kid, from eight to one in the morning, he made about three dollars and was as proud as punch. I wish he could get a regular job, it would be so good for him, I don't mean for the money, they get an allowance and want for nothing, really, but the discipline and responsibility would be wonderful. Gee that kid is getting big. Sometimes I look at them and can hardly believe it. Cammie does baby sitting and makes a little spending money, too.

Well, darlin', it's about time for me to say bye-bye Bobby has a dental appointment in ten minutes and we gotta go. I want to drop off this letter on the way. Cross my heart. I'll be good and write again very soon. This was just supposed to be a line to let you know I'm still alive and while I was waiting for one o'clock to come around.

Bye now, and love to you both from us all

June 2, 1954

Hi, there:--

Another beautiful sunny June morning and I no more feel like tackling the daily chores then, well---Spring Fever, I guess. My correspondence has stacked up again as usual, my mind's all fuzzy but here goes for a visit with Jen all the while dreamily gazing out of the window. It'll be dull company, gal, but I'll go down trying...

I must be just the let-down from this last 'lost' week-end. Oh, the weather was just lovely and all Jere wanted to do was WALK. Gollies we walked all over God's creation. Of course Camille really topped it all by falling on a sharpened stake [....]

Not much else that's new or exciting. I got rid of the guinea pigs and Bobby turned right around and acquired four baby chicks. HE thinks he's going into the egg business, for of course we wouldn't THINK of eating them. (the heck we won't think!) but something tells me they will probably all turn out to be cockerels. He and his friend spend two whole days building a coop for them, and I spend the better part of my busy day rounding them up and stuffing them back and plugging up the leaks. He is some builder, that's all I can say.

All last week my household went to pieces while I chauffeured Jere to Berkeley and Santa Rosa. Three days in a row we came home at eight or thereabouts. Oh it was a beautiful drive, we'd come home along the coast and prettier scenery you couldn't hope to find anywhere, but I keep thinking of all the things left undone. Every morning this far I've had to iron a couple of dresses before the girls could go to school and it looks as if I'll never catch up with myself, especially of this Spring Fever of mine lasts. All I want to do is stand around with the hose in my hand and water the garden. Oh, of course it was grand to be able to pick a nice place to eat without having to worry about cooking it...Jere had a birthday last week, too, and the night before he treated me to dinner in one of the better places up on the hill overlooking the bay area, drinks and all, and a show. So the next day I thought I'd show him what a good cook I am and went all out, strawberry shortcake with whipped cream and steak and mushrooms--the works--so what does he do but go to Santa Rosa again and not come home until midnight! And me pacing the floor wondering if I should send out a police call for a missing husband. Or maybe I should have washed that man right out of my hair...

I suppose you're smarter than I was about this Den Mother business, Jean, and have given them up for the summer. It's such good 'fun' ain't it, kid? I haven't heard from or about Flo for ages, has she still got her den? or are they too busy going camping. You know I had let the kids have the trailer for a play house and they just about wrecked it. I never thought a bunch of 'quiet' excuse the expression, little girls could be so destructive. One of our neighbors asked if he could borrow it to go away on his vacation. And I said sure, help yourself. So we go up and look the situation over [...] Well, I turned to my neighbor and said here it is, if you still want to use it you're very welcome and no charge. So that

man went to work with a vim and vigor and fixed it all up beautifully. Replaced all the broken windows and plasti-glass and with Bobby helping him, fixed the table, the stove, the stopped up drain. The dear little things had washed their mud pies down the drain and it was just clogged with mud! Anyway he used it over Memorial Day weekend and had such a wonderful time he plans to use it on his vacation. I guess now I don't dare give it to the kids to play in again, after all the trouble he took I'd be mortified if he had to do it all over again by July. And Jere has gotten the bug again...he wasn't going to use it anymore but seeing it hitched up to another car sure gave us the fever to take off for the wide open spaces again. Yoiks and away----

Well, kid, that's about all for today. Penny is going through her usual routine again, she is forever changing her clothes and leaving a trail of shed clothing all over the place. If I want to be sure she has a clean and ironed dress on hand I have to hide it in my closet. How's Jeanie these days? Growing like a weed and driving you nuts too, no doubt. Incidentally, whenever Penny plays make-believe and dresses up as a mama her name is always 'Jean' and I have to be Mrs. Brown. Guess the name stuck in her mind. Anyhooo, I s'pose I'd better sign off for now. The heat has worn off a little and maybe now that the breezes have cooled the house I can get to work and at least have the beds made when my Lord AND Master comes home. Toodle-oo
Best regards to you all,
as ever
Frances and all the rest of Us Casagrandes

June 23, 1954

Dearest Mumsi & Pop:

Jere is conducting a "spelling bee" with the kids in the living room and I don't want to show off my superior knowledge (harrumph) so this is as good a time as any to have a little chat with you. Thanks for your letter, honey-lamb, it was good to hear from you again. Congratulations on your 'new' baby, power glide yet, eh? Good old gear shift not good enough for you folks anymore. For myself I hardly would know what to do if I didn't have to shift. Well, ours will have to last awhile longer and probably fall apart like the one-horse shay before we'll get a new one. We went to the show last night and as luck would have it on the loneliest NASTIEST part of the road we had to have a blow-out. All I could think of was how lucky it didn't happen during the day when I'd taken the kids to the Golden Gate Park in San Francisco and came barreling home at sixty miles an hour. Such good fun changing a tire on a lonely dark road in your good clothes. Our spare was not too hot so we crept home at twenty miles an hour and today we had to go and buy two new ones. Drat and darn, it's always something like that. Jere's been home since last Monday and I haven't had a peaceful minute since, never saw such a man for wanting to be on the go all the time.

Days later

Well, I'll make another try at finishing this letter, darlin', but I make no guarantees. For one thing Cammie and Gary have gone to Hawthorne and my, oh, my isn't the house peaceful now! and Jere has gone back to work, bless his wicked little heart. Honestly, I never know from one day to the next what to expect of him. With Gary coming to stay for two weeks and the first week of vacation and he had to go and have a falling out over policies at his job and quit cold. Now you know why I wasn't in any light-hearted mood to write bright letters, and there would have been no point in worrying you. Not that I did any worrying myself, things have a way of turning out okay, but it's the strain of having him and the kids and the thought in back of my mind that bills have a nasty habit of coming in promptly on the first of the month. Not to mention the fact that I had to chauffeur him around and couldn't take the kids to all the places we'd planned. I didn't tell them naturally, so they thought their daddy was downright mean to spoil their fun. Oh well, we managed to get to the beach and the park and Jere was so darned restless (no wonder) he wanted to go to the movies practically every night. So they had a fine time after all, and thanks to the Howards and their lovely backyard pool they had plenty to do. Even me, myself and I have gotten into the habit of going for a short swim whenever it gets hot and whenever the fancy strikes me. I certainly do enjoy it, and I think Beverly Howard is the sweetest gal ever to throw her pool open to the neighborhood. Of course, in order to keep the small-fry happy too, we waited until we got the good news about Jere going back to work and then went out and bought them a nice little wading pool at Sears, complete with shower and slide, and fairly large, so that keeps them happy for hours on end. Now we're all set for summer weather.

Went out and bought two new tires and now the car acts funny, guess I'll have to have the alignment checked and the wheels balanced again. Had all the bikes overhauled again and I do mean again! seems one or the other is always 'kaput', and this hilly country is rough on bikes anyhow. So we'll spend the weekend quietly at home and go for a bike ride on the back roads and stay off the highway.

Jean Burke just called up and said the kids got there safe and sound so that's one worry off my mind. When I think of how I used to trot all over the countryside by myself as a little girl, I don't know why I have to act like a nervous mother hen about a grown-up young lady of twelve. And brother, HAS she grown up! Sometimes I can hardly believe it. You know for her sake I wished we had a nice level lot in back to put our own swimming pool on, she loves the water so and is perfectly at home in it.

Bobby wrote you a letter but he refused to say anything about what he wants for his birthday. He looked at me with big reproachful eyes and said I just couldn't, I can't just write when I want something. Gee, sometimes they make you think all is not lost and there is hope after all!

I just read your letter over again--you and your????? Tsk, tsk. here we go again. Oh yes, the pictures. Darling, didn't I mention it. I was quite delighted and the kids were oogle eyes with amazement to think that's how their Mama looked as a little girl. Incidentally, we have a copy of that one, I put it in Cammie's baby book so's she'll know what her ancestors look like. And, MOTHR, that picture of you came as quite a shock. I suppose it's hard to realize unless you see a person day after day (and even then it creeps up so gradually you don't notice either) that time goes right along and we all get older. But Mumsi, to me you seem to be a perpetual thirty-five and in my mind's eye you always look like you did the last time I saw you--youthful and good natured and sweet, so I kept staring at that photograph and could hardly believe my eyes to think that was really you. You don't honestly look like that NOW do you? It must be just a bad photograph, or something. Anyway, it sure is a change from the one I have on my dresser, the one you had taken on your anniversary with Pop, now there's my Mom, well anyway darling, now we're even. You hide my picture in the dresser drawer and I'll do the same, right?

I asked Jere about the expense we had and he said that the actual figures wouldn't do you much good now anyway. He said it would cost you about 2-1/2 cents a mile for gas and oil, or at the rate of a day's travel, probably ten dollars a day, another 10 dollars for lodging and depending on what you eat five dollars for food and five for extras. That would make it thirty dollars a day for four or five days, depending how many side trips you take or whether you come straight through. But the 2-1/2 cents a mile is what you can count on.

Our phone number I shall write at the bottom again. Sears address is Hillsdale and El Camino Real, San Mateo, Calif. Though if you're thinking of sending things, you can choose from the catalogue and give the address of the person you want to send it to and they'll take care of it for you. That's how I kept my secret pal supplied with presents

without her knowing who sent it. Yup, Jere got his card and he thanks you for it. Nope, we never heard from his mother. Now, did I get everything answered? Well, I guess I'll get this letter off. I hope my birthday telegram didn't get you out of bed and frighten you half to death. But for once I wanted you to know that I thought of you on THE DAY, in fact I always think of you on the proper day, it's just that I don't get around to writing beforehand. It would be so much easier if I could just dash over to you on Christmas, Easter, mother's day and birthdays. Did you have a nice day? I hope so. Jere and I are 'celebrating' our twentieth anniversary today. And boy are we whooping it up. Seems every year something happens to prevent us from really doing what we'd like to. We went to the movies last night!

Well, bye bye for today, sweetheart,
with love from all of us, as ever

They really have the most fascinating exhibit there, the little seahorses kinda intrigued me (Jere thinks 'intrigue's not used in that sense, but intriguing is INTRIGUING to me, and never mind what Mr. Webster said) they look cute enough to take home and put in a goldfish bowl. There were all sorts of snakes and it gives you the darndest feeling to look a rattlesnake in the eye with nothing between you and it's wicked looking head than a piece of glass. And of course fish, fish, and more fish. I never realized how very large those ocean fish actually are. And last but not least the octopus, you stand there and shudder to watch all those horrid little suction cups creep up the glass. Shades of Jules Verne and my Science Fiction Magazines! We went through the Museum and once again I promised myself a nice leisurely tour without a slew of kids along. They rush me madly from one exhibit to the next and trying to keep track of them is like trying to herd quicksilver back into the tube. I got a fleeting glimpse of stuffed birds and life sized groups of animals, of minerals and rocks and pottery and a golden plaque left behind by Sir Francis Drake, Indian arts and craft and an embroidered bishop's mantle, and an eight foot stuffed bear in a glass cage that looked like nothing I'd like to meet picking blackberries in the mountains. See what I mean? We swept through the De Young Museum like a cyclone and me in a n agony of fear "Don't touch, please, don't touch, stay in back of the rope, those rooms are only to walk in, those chairs must not be sat in, etc, etc," Room after room of beautiful paintings that ought to be quietly taken in, and tapestries that would make a dandy cover for Esquire with those odd nudes on 'em. Well, one fine Sunday afternoon I'll quietly sneak away from my family and have a real look at all those fascinating objects.

I'd taken the car to the garage the other day to have the alignment checked and the wheels balanced. We had a blow-out on one of those nights we went to the show on the loneliest darkest stretch of the road. Such good fun to change a tire with only a pencil flashlight. You know the bolts are there and here are the holes and try as you will they won't get together--the wheel gets heavier by the minute and you have your good clothes on and murder in your heart! Well, we know we had to have new shoes for the baby, but this was one heck of a time to have to lay out about forty dollars, but it was that or stay home, because when I say blow-out I mean just that. The wonder was we didn't get one before, say on the way back from San Francisco with the car full of kids two of which were not my own. However, to get back to the story, they knocked all the weights off and the car sure felt awfully funny, so I had it aligned. They called me around eleven to say they couldn't possibly have it ready by noon, so I made sandwiches to take to my Lord and Master and thought to save me some time and effort by taking my bike. Oh Lordie me, every time I think of it my hair stands on end again. I don't know what my sprouts did to that bike, but feature me barreling down Ralston Avenue at about sixty miles an hour (or so it seemed to me) and the bike shaking and shuddering under me. I tried the brakes and could only keep myself from falling by going madly from one side of the road to the other. Lucky for me I picked the time of day when none of the big dump trucks were on the road or I'd be wearing a halo now for sure. I went through the stop sign at the crossroad as if I were shot from a cannon and didn't slow up until I was halfway into Belmont--in four minutes flat I was at Jere's place and my knees didn't stop shaking for an hour. No power on earth is going to get me on a bike down Ralston again. NEVER

AGAIN. I'll walk. It may be slower, but I'll live longer. Coming home again was another ordeal, that hill! and the wind in my face. Believe me, this is the only place on earth, I think, where you have to pedal to keep going down hill. Oh, I got home alright within thirty-five minutes, but I collapsed on the couch and told the kids not to speak to me for all of five minutes. Bushed is no word for the way I was feeling. And Bobby hovered around me and kept saying I TOLD you not to do gown Ralston but the back road, I told you it would be tough coming back, I TOLD YOU etc. etc. Well, now I know...I'll stick to walking.

You talk about a kitten, hah! you should have my troubles...Bobby took care of Ann's chickens when they went away for a week-end and she gave and bequeathed him seven baby chicks. He and his friend spent a delightful day building a chicken coop of a sort, you know, part cardboard, part chicken wire and odds and ends of pieces of wood and proceeded to go into the egg business, or so he thought. For of course we would never think of EATING them (the heck we didn't think!) But the first night we found one of the chicks a mess of blood and the rest picking on him like the little cannibals they are. Well, I took it into the house and washed them all off and lo and behold he had no wing left, in fact I didn't think he would survive, looked like half his right side was gone. But survive he did and we named him Little Half-Chick. After that we found one with his head gone, and I could hardly blame his brothers and sisters for that, so we figured something got into the coop at night and thereafter each evening we rounded them up and put them in the garage. But what with the jerry-built coop they lived in and liking to see them run around and scratch for seed they were forever out, and one day after I came home from shopping and counted my chickens thee were only three left. Next morning another one was stiff and cold and we guessed they must have been harried by a dog, there are several big ones in the neighborhood that have earned themselves a reputation for chicken stealing. That left me with two, Little Half-Chick and another. I pampered and coddled those two until the other day Beanie, the cocker up the street who is never, well hardly ever, off the leash came along with his mistress hotfooting it after him and he got Little Half-Chick before we could stop him. And now we have one. And boy, what a spoiled little chicken he is. He cried and cried and ran after me so I would pick him up and cuddle him in my lap and pet him and hand feed him tidbits, until now the silly thing refuses to eat regular chicken feed and subsists solely on dog food and cooked rice and cereal and the leftovers from the kids plate. AND the flies which we catch for him. Every night he comes and roosts on my hands for awhile before he finally contentedly peeps himself to sleep. Jere thinks I'm nuts, and I'm in no condition to argue with him. Now if this HE would turn out to be a SHE, all would be well and maybe we'd get an egg out of him or her as the case may be, which we no doubt would feed back to it. I don't know how kindly I would take to crowing at the break of day...All I can say is it's a good thing I never intended to raise a flock of chickens for the freezer, I'd surely lose my mind.

No we haven't sold the trailer, Jere won't hear of it, he says we couldn't get anything out of it anyway, it's worth more to us to keep it. But we have let folks use it. Cause they all want to pay us rent and I just can't see it. The way I feel, we're not in the trailer rental business but I would like to see it used properly, it's better for the trailer anyhow, so

whenever someone we know pretty well asks us to use it, we say by all means, do. Every so often Jere gets the fever, so I suppose one of these days we'll hitch up and take off, but not if he persists in using up vacation time looking for another job. I see no sense to going someplace just for the weekend. Not when we have all this beautiful country right at our door step.

I'm using up all the odds and ends of stationary, and this letter is turning into quite an epistle, ain't it? If only the kids would stay out of my hair I may be able to write a letter without quite so many mistakes in it. The phone just rang and it was my darling daughter, she doesn't want to come home yet, the lil stinker. Jean said she'd keep her another week. They're going to the mountains over the week-end and she may as well have the benefit of that outing, too. Heaven's knows we're not doing what we planned to do this summer, I can't, not if I have to pick Jere up for lunch and get him again at four-thirty. My whole darned day is shot, and what can you do in two hours anyway. We went to S.F. yesterday to get Jere some more maps and stopped by at the zoo, but before we had more than peeked at the giraffe and the elephants and the monkeys it was time to head for home. All I ever do is buy peanuts for the kids to munch on and I can do that right here at home! They have a free kiddy-show every week and the last time I let Penny go with 'em. Gee, it makes you feel kinda odd to watch one's own little baby come running up the street with the rest of the mob and realize she is not a baby any longer.

Well, how did the dinner go? I hope you didn't let Harvey's green eyes stop you from wearing your black dress. If I had a figure like yours I'd dress it to the hilt, believe me. I'd love to see you in a strapless Rose-Marie Reid swimsuit!!! (How do you make like a whistle on paper?)

The S.F. Chronicle had its annual Treasure Hunt last month, and in case you never heard of it--Emperor Norton buries a plaque someplace and the lucky finder gets a thousand dollars (A \$1000, drool, drool) every morning the paper publishes a rhymed clue and you try to figure it out and go out and make with the shovel. One they had in the city and it was found on the beach, one in Oakland and that was found in three days, and then last but not least they had a hunt here in the Peninsula, that's when I began to get a gleam in my eye. I was bored one day and just thought I'd take a drive and see if I could spot it. The clues said something about "drive up and down the winding ways that's where the golden treasure stays" so I figured it might be Skyline Blvd, it said something about a form in the sky, that was split in two, which stumped me. I found a likely spot by Crystal Spring Lakes and dug for all I was worth, feeling so darned foolish. People would stop and ask what I was doing and hang around and hang around hoping I'd find it so they could go home. But all I got for my pains was dirt under the fingernails. This went on for two weeks, each morning I'd feverishly scan the clues and Norma and I put our heads together and try to figure them out. Such fascinating clues, too, like "A scream in the night" and "between the forest and the trees" and like candy from a Christmas tree, I wished I still had them to send to you, but I left them over at Norma's one night when we had a Tupper party, and 'm sure the Tupper gal could have shot me because all we talked about was the clues. And then next morning I read where some lucky guy had found it at

Coyote Point. But anyway, I even got Jere to go out on a ride with me, and we found some of the most fascinating back roads and everyplace on the peninsula you saw people digging, you could always spot a treasure hunter, he had a shovel and a sheepish look on his face. And I met the most fascinating characters, too, you know me, I always talk to everybody! some would hold their clues clutched tight to their chests and so would discuss it pro and con with others, oh, it was fun alright, and even if I didn't find it, I'd do it again just for the heck of it. I forgot to mention, just when I got to the point where I was going over to Coyote Point to look, Jere had me running around for him and I had to quit. Oh well, I can always tell myself I wouldn't have figured it out anyhow. The last clue was something about "green above and red below, green means a stop and red means go" I would never have guessed the green meant the trees above and the red meant the red soil and that the treasure was buried in the quarry.

We do have the darndest weather hereabouts, yesterday hotter than anything and today it looks like rain, fact is, the kids brought the chicken into the kitchen over my protest, a little dribble won't hurt that reptile.

Guess I'll sign off for today and get to work, it's after nine already and time I got on the ball. Nowadays after I take Jere to work I come home and work like a ball afire and get the worst of the household chores done by this time, but I felt like finishing this letter, the only trouble is when I get going on the typewriter, time means nothing to me, and I just burble on and on and on. Bye now, and best love to you all.

As ever

Tuesday, September 7. 1954

Sophie Mae, Old Dear:--

Just shoot me for a stinker, but honest Ind'jun, cross my heart, my intentions were strictly on the level, as the enclosed letter will testify. I had really planned to come down to L.A. with Jere and chew the fat with you to our heart's content. But as always, there is many a slip etc. etc. At the last minute I just couldn't leave the baby with her sore foot, which still needed tending. So when Jere came home the day before and said his boss was driving down with him, I thought it was just another way for fate to show me it wasn't in the cards for me, and I decided not to go. And a very lucky thing for all concerned I didn't, because Camille came down with a touch of appendicitis and you can chalk up another grey hair for me. She had me plenty worried and neither one of us got much sleep for two nights and days. I had the doctor look at her, it just wasn't like Camille to cry bitterly and curl up in knots just from a li'l old ordinary stomachache (and I couldn't be sure whether she was going through her menses) but after a couple of blood tests and urine tests and what have you tests there was a definite sign of inflammation, but not enough to warrant her going to the hospital. I was supposed to watch her. Watch her! my gosh, I didn't take my eyes off of her, especially since I didn't know WHAT to watch for. I'd read of too many appendicitis cases that burst and I really was quite worried. However, apparently we were lucky this time, rest and medicine did the trick and it got better. Between that and changing the dressing on Penny's ankle I really had a wonderfully restful three days, I can tell you. Did I tell you that Penny's ankle got much worse after you left? Or did I? I can't even remember now. She DID use her foot when you were here, didn't she? Anyway, a day or so after she ran a fever of 102 and wouldn't put her foot down, so I took her to the doctor here in Belmont and he both scared and provoked me so much I've crossed him off my list. He told me to take her to the hospital and leave her there for a couple of days, said she needed to be x-rayed and that there was an infection. I could go along with the x-ray all right, I would gladly have rushed her to the hospital for an x-ray and given her the best of care, but I just couldn't leave a baby as young as Penny at the hospital unless it was absolutely necessary, she wasn't so sick that she wouldn't miss me and cry for me, and knowing her as well as I do I know she'd have been sick for sure, and I know the nurses are much too busy to bother with a crying baby. So I said I'd talk it over with my husband, which I did, and I came to the conclusion that I'd take her to the Redwood City Clinic where they fixed up Cammie's hand and see first what they'd say. If they said the hospital, all well and good. Well, to make a long story short, the doctor there is a perfect marvel with children, and he said there definitely was an infection but to take her home and wrap her foot and ankle in hot compresses and keep it up for a few days and bring her back. He also gave her some penicillin all of which I did. By that time, what with supper and everything I was so pooped out that I fell asleep right along with Penny, who apparently was soothed and eased by the hot pack, when Doctor Number One called up and read me the riot act. He thought I had taken her to the hospital and was provoked to go there and find her not there, I told him I had meant to call, but with one thing and another I hadn't had a chance (this was only about five-thirty) and then he said he hadn't even given her a shot and he wasn't going to be responsible if anything happened to that

baby, etc. etc. And then he proceeded to tell me to do exactly what doctor number two had done, with the exception that he had me get a prescription at the drugstore (\$5.00) and give it to her. Well, we hot-packed Penny daily including for the night and the swelling went down beautifully, but that deep gauge at the bone took it's own sweet time healing. In fact it is just about now going away. And I took her back to the clinic twice a week and the whole thing only cost me eight dollars including the medicine. Eight office visits, the medicine and dressing and all. Cammie's little peccadillo was only four dollars including the tests and all. The only drawback to the clinic is you have to go there, they don't make house calls (I don't think) and you go to whatever doctor the illness calls for. There are surgeons, pediatricians, skin specialists, etc. etc. Now it probably is my turn. Jere made a statistic out of me, he whacked my ankle with the sledge hammer yesterday. We were fixing the back porch, which was sagging, and he asked me to hold the post while he tried to hammer it in place, and the hammer slipped and connected with my ankle. I'm going to lead a sedentary life for awhile, brother it HURT. First Jere was concerned as to whether he fractured me but good, then he got mad "What were you doing there!" and then he thought it was funny ha-ha! and now his conscience hurts him watching me limp around. But I'm getting to be pretty good at this nursing business, and just applied what I learned from Penny's ankle to mine--lots of hot packs. Bobby and I went to the movies last night to see King Richard and the Crusaders, and all through the show my poor ankle did nothing but throb and driving home was sheer agony every time I had to depress the clutch. In fact after awhile I just coasted through the stop signs and didn't bother to shift gear. If I hadn't promised to take Bobby and if I was more of a 'man' than a mouse, I'd either have stayed home or have Jere drive me there. He had taken the girls, plus an extra one Sunday afternoon while I stayed home and basted our turkey (yum-yum) dinner, and picked them up again at six. Bobby stayed home to watch the baby for me so I told him the two of us would go Monday night, and a promise is a promise. So we went. I know good and well if I'd asked Jere to drive us there and pick us up again we'd stay home and look at T.V.

I got those leaflets from your mother and a letter, it was awfully sweet and thoughtful of her. I do thank her and will write her myself one of these days. I enjoyed them very much. And oh, Sophie Mae,

(I just started to sing a paeon of praise to you about how much I loved your scarf when a crisis occurred, and it's been one crisis after the other since.) First Bobby yelled up to me that the workshop was flooded, and OH BROTHER, how it was flooded. --Anyone for swimming?--there were at least two inches of water and one more drop and it would have come over the sill into the den. So the bucket brigade got busy, and the kids and I mopped and scooped up at least twenty seven pails of water. My, how my garden got watered that day! I was still mopping up when it was time to get Jere, and I left the window open to dry things out, I didn't want him to know about it until I'd at least made an attempt to dry off his tools and things. He always gets so darned mad! Well, that night Deedee kept me up half the night crying with a stomach ache, and I just didn't know what to do about it. Appendicitis keeps haunting me now, and I just couldn't get myself to call the doctor at the unearthly hour of four in the morning. Anyway, next day her temperature went up to

104 degrees and I s'pose I almost gave her pneumonia trying to get the fever down with sponging her off. I called the doctor and found he was away on vacation and I was not going to call Doctor number one, remember? So I tried my level best to make like Florence Nightingale, with enemas and aspirin and sponging her off and feeding her lukewarm tea, and by that night the fever was down to 101 and next morning she was right as rain again. The only thing I can suppose is that it was some sort of stomach flu that's going on around here. Matter of fact when I described Cammie's symptoms to the doctor on the phone she said at the time it sounded like stomach flu but to be on the safe side and have her tested. Anyway, all I can say is that next Monday had better hurry up and come to get these twerps off my neck.

So once again let me go back to where I left off, Soph, you can't imagine what it's like to go to the mailbox expecting nothing more nor less than another bill and to find your thoughtful loving friend has gifted you out of the blue. My dear, I do thank you. But I wish you wouldn't have, it really was not at all necessary, you know that. We always love having you stop over, and both Jere and I miss you no end, so it's really good to have a chance to chew the fat with you both. Though I must in all honesty admit I could scarcely bear to have the house cluttered up with twelve kids for twelve months out of the year, you never stay around long enough for me to find it a chore. I enjoy every minute of your visits. Anyway, I do thank you. It's so delightful to wrap myself up in a shawl and feel like old Cleopatra herself. I'm seriously considering treating myself to a black velvet or velveteen skirt to go with my silver lame blouse and I shall be ready for anything my darling or my circles can dream up.

And so we come to the end of the epistle again. I must try to make the mail today or it will lie around for another weekend. I forgot to mention that with school starting up I'm going to be on the usual merry-go-round again, being an officer of the PTA, the church and having the Brownies all by myself. Such good fun, whirling madly from one committee meeting to the next. Bye now.

With all our love, as ever

Saturday November 27, 1954

Greetings to you, Old Pal 'o Mine:--

Rudolph is beginning to breathe down my neck again, and a faint tinkle of bells can be heard in the distance. My eyes are getting glassier by the minute--who's got time to write letters? You do, by the looks of that nice fat one I just retrieved from the mailbox (along with a fistful of bills) Oh Soph, you would have to heap coals of fire on my bowed and shamed head...a still small voice tells me that I owe you a letter from since when??? Anyway, I was delighted and thrilled to get one from you and enjoyed every word in it. I sat on Jere's bed and giggled myself through it and kept him in a state of suspense as to who or from why. (Tsk, tsk such ENGLISH!) I s'pose I ought to at least inform you why I've been such a long time not writing (gad, here I go again, and I want my eldest girl child to get good marks in English--I simply must break myself of this habit) anyway to dig back into a hectic and dim past, say, when DID I write you last? Have I told you about Jere and me getting all involved in PTA? Parent Education Study Groups, no less? He's chairman and I do all the work. Hah! They cooked up this program and I ran myself ragged typing things up, getting them off to be dittoed, etc. etc. There was the questionnaire at first to find out if the parents would be interested in bringing some of their questions out in the open in order for there to be a better understanding between teachers and what they are trying to do and parents who are uninformed. The response was not bad, so we went ahead and lined up this program, consisting of six meetings to be held on consecutive Monday nights, we had a speaker who was to be an expert in this chosen topic and the latter part of the program was a panel question and answer period. The topics ran all the way from discipline and what is meant by it, to learning to read, to fitting our children for competitive American society. We had some excellent speakers and Jere managed to get enough tape donated to have a recording made of each session. Unfortunately the people that squawked the loudest about the school were not the ones to turn up faithfully at each meeting. However we tried to reach them, by publicity and notes sent home from school and mouth to mouth contacts. If they don't come they can never more say anything without having it brought to their attention that they had their opportunity to speak up and put their problems square in the laps of those best qualified to answer them. However, it did keep me on the run, and we still have one more to go. All of October I worked madly on the Church Bazaar. We had planned a Tuesday work day, and it fell to my lot (why always ME???) to gather ideas and round up the material and put all the willing hands that turned up to work. And we did make some of the cutest things. My idea was to have lots and lots of inexpensive cute gifts and to sell them as cheaply as possible and give folks a chance to really get something, especially the kids. Norma and I had a table with little things on it that only the little people could buy, for a penny up to ten cents. I must have made oodles of little wool dolls, and book arks and pin cushions and lapel ornaments and pin wheels and from scraps I made marble bags and someone with more money and less time (hah) filled them with marbles and jacks. I crocheted collars and made rick-rack earrings to be sold for thirty-five cents, and stuff like that. Cut out play aprons and made up a couple of samples for other people to fill with scissors and crayons and pads and pencils. Anyway, that took care of Mondays and

Tuesdays, then on Wednesdays I have the Brownies, bless their little hearts, and I love every one of them and actually look forward to having them. The sewing club of course, and Sunday School. Did you ever try to teach a bunch of wiggling boys and girls eight and nine years old? There are ten boys to eight girls, and the only way I could establish a certain amount of order was to threaten to place a boy next to a girl, a fate worse than death in their book! Somebody cooked up a potluck supper for Sunday school, and frankly I wished that 'somebody' would fall in a hole. However, the kids and I went with a cake clutched in our trembling hands, and while Dick, one of our neighbors, looked after my little brood along with his, I worked my fool head off, serving and washing etc. etc. But nevertheless enjoying every minute of it. Oh yes, we were supposed to go to church that afternoon to set up our exhibits, and driving rain was whipping Belmont that day, as only somebody who has been through it can picture. Every street was a brook gone wild and no windshield wiper ever made could keep up with those sheets of water. And Norma and I went out in it, me sloshing along in Jere's galoshes because some fool dog ran off with one of my boots sometime during the summer when rain seemed a long way off and I told myself I'd surely replace them long before I needed them. As usual there was a frantic scramble that morning for raincoats and hats and boots, and also as usual couldn't be found, so one went off with a raincoat and no hat (Bobby) and another had my broken down old umbrella (Cammie) and only Deedee went to school properly clad in raincoat, boots, and hood. She is the one that came soaked, don't ask me how or why. Anyway, that's the kind of weather I went over to the church and found not a soul there. They had a parakeet show at the YMCA next door and I spent a fascinated ten minutes admiring cheep-cheeps in every jewel color imaginable. I had made a miniature scene of what we laughingly called Old Jerusalem and I'm afraid my palm trees got a little more rain than they would have gotten in their natural habitat. But it looked cute just the same. Well, sometime during that month I was plagued by an infection that started out innocently enough with what looked like a hang-nail at the base of my middle finger. Well it seemed as if every morning there would be a new sore cropping up someplace on my hands and fingers. It started with a pimple that would develop a hard core with pus and sore area around it the size of a quarter. Finally one day I got one on the arm and it was sore and tender to the touch from wrist to elbow and even began to hurt under my armpit. THEN I went to see the doctor. He cluck-clucked and called it some long name I never can remember but anyway it's the same sort of germ as a streptococci, germs I should have said, because the way the doctor explained it that ordinarily we throw off all these germs but for some reason my resistance was low and they were having a field day with me, one right after the other. So he lanced the one by my nail and I almost hit the ceiling, mind you, he was talking to me all the while and before I knew what he was about he stuck his sharp little old lancet into me and sliced away. He rubbed off all the scabs and the nurse dressed my arm and hand in wet packs, until I looked like a mummy. For four days I went each day to have the dressing changed and get shot full of penicillin. By that time I was pretty tired explaining to people that "No, I didn't break my arm...", but anyway, for a couple of weeks I couldn't use my left hand and only painfully pecked out a letter to my mother, because you know how mothers are when they don't hear from you.

That brings us to the Bazaar. It went off just beautifully I thought, and though I was supposed to be helping Norma with her baby booth, I forgot to mention I dressed about eight or nine story book dolls, each one cuter than the other, and as I finished each one my children all exclaimed OH I want that one, and I had to forbid them on pain of something or other not to buy them, I could dress them dolls any old time. Anyway, Ruby was stuck with the baby she takes care of and couldn't take her "Attic Treasures" booth so I took it over and had more fun. If I hadn't been in charge I would have been my own best customer, I just can't resist other people's junk, pardon me, white elephants, or better yet, ATTIC TREASURES. Our motif was Old Fashioned and we died bed sheets pink and decorated everything in pink and black. Very very effective. I wore Cammie's Sadie Thompson outfit, and brother if prizes were given out, I would have gotten it! I sold all my stuff for ten cents to a quarter, with a few items for fifty cents and cleared almost twenty-five dollars and had practically nothing left. I figured everything I took in to be pure gravy, it was all donated, and so what if people bring me all their stuff back again next year, cause they can't use it!

Jeepers, I haven't even gotten to the most exciting part in my narrative yet, and already I have to stop and thank you, you old darling you. I came home and found your package waiting for me. And it wasn't more than three hours later before Penny had practically everything on her back, one dress at a time. More ironing, bless your little heart! You know, that sprout of mine has grown so amazingly everything I finally dig out of the ironing basket and put on her is away too small. By the same tape measure yours must have gained a couple of inches and several pounds by now, too. To get back to the Life and Times of the Casagrandes--and aren't you tired of hearing about us by now? Well about ten days ago the kids came flying into the house with the perennial cry: "Go-Go is loose again". And as usual he was heading straight for the lush green lawn one of our neighbors had put in and nurtured with tender loving care, but before he could get more than a hoof on it Frances sprang to the rescue. Bruce had tied him to an old truck tire, optimistically thinking it would keep the horse from running off from where he had put him out in the field, and Dopey Me, not content with having to lure a fractious horse out of the clover, so to speak, I had to try to cope with that heavy tire in one hand and leading the horse with the other. All went well, and I had done it so often before, until I was about to make him go through the gate, and he gave a little toss of his head, as horses will for whatever whim only Satan alone knows, and he knocked the tire right out of my hand and I fell headlong over it. As near as I could figure out later, he leaped forward and the rope caught under the fence and pinned my ankle between the tire and the fence post. My shoes flew every which-a-way, and I got up and hobbled to disentangle the rope and unfasten the tire, cussing a blue streak at the silly animal all the time. Well, to make a long story short, (why should I? It's more fun this way) I just managed to get into the house supported on the shoulders of my stalwart son, who would have been of a lot more help to me ten minutes earlier, and looked over the damage. My ankle, in spite of the soaking in ice water I gave it, swelled up to the size of a cantaloupe, and by next morning it was impossible for me to put my foot down. If I say it hurt like blue blazes I'm putting it mildly. I was so mad at myself I wept bitter tears of frustration to think I had let such a foolish thing happen to me. Of course Monday morning I couldn't even drive Jere to

work, and he took one peek out the window and cried: "I can't go out in this fog?" Yes, fog, even in our Garden of Eden we get fog this time of the year. (You'll probably snigger and remember those famous last words of mine, when you were up here last and we tried to explain away those wisps in the canyon as being 'most unusual'.) Anyway, the silly goose walked to work. And all day long my conscience bothered me about him having to walk all the way home again, so I gritted my teeth and took the car down and had him drive it home. I needn't tell you he drove ME slightly mad, oh well. I thought what with soaking and lots of rest in bed surely my ankle would be better in a couple of days. No siree, I hobbled around taking it nice and easy until Wednesday until my good friends and neighbors got after me to for heaven's sake go see a doctor, so I did. After waiting around for what seemed hours after they took x-rays of my foot I happened to get a glimpse of another patient being fitted into a straight-jacket--pardon me--cast on his leg, I really chewed my nails to the quick wondering how I was to get home, should they find it necessary to do the same to me. But eventually the good news trickled back to me in my little cell, no bones broken, no tendons pulled, take 'er home and continue to soak and keep the elastic bandage on, and stay off your feet. Hah! In my madhouse I can stay off my feet no longer than it takes to write this letter. Hence I'm writing it!

I warned everyone not to breathe a word of my accident to Bruce or his family, it wasn't their fault and I didn't want them to worry about me, but Ruby thought it was all wrong, that surely they had some sort of insurance to cover accidents due to the horse, and why should I be stuck with the bills, etc. etc. and she apparently phoned them, because Don, the father, came up and told me to give him the bill, in fact he was most emphatic about insisting that I have an x-ray and doctor's attention.

Well, anyway, here it is ten days later and my damned, if you'll excuse the expression, foot is no whit better yet. Oh, I can drive the car okay and move my foot up and down (cautiously), but the swelling is still there and I'm turning a beautiful shade of yellow and blue from toe to knee. Some tumble, boy, oh boy, when I fall I really make a production out of it. Oh, I meant to mention, the fool horse got away again the next day after my little fiasco, and when the kids came screaming into the house that Go-Go was loose, I calmly sat in my rocking chair and said "Let 'em go, with my blessing". I couldn't have done a thing about it had I wanted to, and at that moment I certainly did NOT want to. We, he got on his lawn alright and had himself a picnic. He chases the woman and her kids into a neighbor's garage and nobody could get him off, with every step he sank up to his fetlock into the soft turf, and he tore the grass up by the roots, oh, yes, he had a gay old time, until they got a hold of a girl-friend of Bruce's who knows how to handle horses, and he followed her meek as a lamb, the lil stinker Well, the poor woman whose lawn was ruined screamed loud and long about the damage, and I guess Don fixed it up for her, too, but I bet you dollars to doughnuts, Bruce is going to think twice before he ties him to a tire again and goes off and leaves him. His father gave him quite a dressing down, and the general feeling here on Monserat is--This horse has got to go! But Bruce and I still love him...

My co-leader of the Brownies told me she was going to sell her piano and asked if I wanted it. Did I! But we had quite a shock recently when we received a little communication from the tax collector to the tune of some two hundred and fifty-eight odd dollars, I still reel when I think of it and have to write it real quick so it won't stun me, so where was I going to get the fifty measly dollars from that she wanted, fact is, she was going to sell it for seventy-five, but knowing how badly I've been wanting one, she offered it to me for fifty. Even fifty! Gadzooks. Plus the twenty-five for moving it, since I couldn't ask our friends to break their backs on our sixteen steps (I went out and counted them) plus the steep driveway. Anyway, Jere arranged for the movers to pick it up this Thursday and Janet, that's my friend, suggested I pay her after January, the sweet thing, so I can hardly wait for Thursday and OUR piano. It's no baby grand, nor yet a "Knabe" or even a Baldwin, but kid, it's a PIANO, and in good condition and wouldn't take made a dandy Christmas present for the family. Cammie and me would settle for it, alright, but Bobby would rather have an airplane carrier, the stinker, and Deedee is torn between a trunk for her dolly and some new clothes and simply can't be persuaded to throw her vote in with us! But think of it--a PIANO to fool around with in my spare time! What spare time she says. And I wonder how long this enthusiasm is going to last, but right now all I can is "Gee, whizz".

Bye now, Soph, gotta look and see if I can dig out my old piano books that I've lugged around wit me from the time I came to the United States twenty-five years ago, good old Czerny, wonder if he'll bore me as much now as he did then...

Bye now, be seeing you,

Saturday Dec. 4th (I think)

Hello Sweetheart:-

Gosh wherever does the time go to, anyhow I really meant to answer your letter right away, but more darned things happen around here to throw me off my stride than any other household you could mention. Well, I guess I better get your letter and go on from there. Gee, now that Rudolph the reindeer is breathing down my neck again I wished I'd get a letter from you saying you were coming out here for a visit, that would be the very nicest Christmas present I could get, I've already got mine and you'll die when I tell you! The lady that helps me with the Brownies told me she was going to sell her piano, and knowing how much I've always wanted to get one she asked me if I wanted it. [...] So for four solid days it rained and rained and rained and you will never know what it does to the roads up her, and I almost worried myself into an early grave thinking they weren't going to come. That afternoon Norma and Ruby came up to sew on doll clothes and I waited and waited until nearly three. When they finally showed up they said I'd have to go along to show them the house, and I warned them not to go up Monserat, 'tis nothing but a mud hole and a trap in rainy weather, but no, they WOULD go up around the bend, and I never thought we'd make it. Between skipping from one side of the road to the other, with the canyon dropping off to one side and a soft mud bank in the other we almost did get stuck! However getting it on the truck was nothing, but getting it up the sixteen steps and around the corner into our living room was a horse of another color, but we made it. I can tell you right now, if we should ever sell this house and move, I'll have to sell the piano, too, I'd never move it. Mumsi, would you have believe you'd live to see the day when I'd spend hours practicing the piano? Scales and exercises, patiently, over and over again? And much to my surprise all the things that once were drilled into me stick to me yet. Up till the time I stopped I do fine, my trouble comes in what comes after. Bass notes and chords and stuff like that. All the kids have gone wild about it, matter of fact, it was supposed to be a family Christmas present, and everybody was willing except Bobby, he'd still rather have boots and Deedee is torn between the desire for a trunk for her doll clothes and her share of the piano. All I know is, now I'll never get any work done around her (for awhile anyway)...except that it will help to rest my ankle. Oh yes, the ankle, That's another chapter and verse. Remember me telling you about the horse in the pasture across the street [...] I just can't resist rummage sales, or other people's junk. As it was I got some cute pitchers and some good games for the kids. It was too bad I couldn't stay for the end, Jere had an appointment in Redwood City, and of course I had to drive him. Cammie stayed, though, and picked up some very nice things for next to nothing. Silk scarves for ten cents, and she said they were almost giving things away toward the last, rather than put it away for another year. One of the ladies had made a lot of hand-made ceramics, statues, medallions and earrings, and she sent home one for me, the sweet thing, too bad Cammie dropped it on the way and it is now 'kaput', though I daren't tell her that.

Well, to get back on the subject. Christmas that is. Before I forget it again. Cammie would love to have a white sweater, fact is she wants a couple, but I told her what with all

the other clothes she needs I could only afford to buy her one. Orlon or nylon, either short sleeved (\$2.98) or long sleeved cardigan (\$4.98). She wears skirts and sweaters mostly these days and has plenty of skirts, but never enough sweaters, and she's wanted a white one since her birthday. But her mama is such a putter-offer I never did get around to buying her one. Bobby tells me he can't live unless he gets a black suede belt. His list was endless, too, he needs more corduroy shirts, and socks, and underwear and pajamas and shoes, so his share of the Christmas money is about ninety percent of what I'd allotted for the lot of 'em. If you know what I mean. Deedee wanted doll clothes (which I'm making) and a trunk to put 'em in. You see the lecturing I did this year bore some fruit. Nobody asked for toys except the two little ones, and that is understandable. But I'd told the two older ones that it would have to be clothes this year, and anyhow, that's what Cammie wanted without my urging, but Bobby still has a lot of little boy in him, and it took some fast talking to persuade him that he's a little too big for an aircraft carrier and/or a tank or guns. Penny still believes in Santa Claus and wants everything her big brown eyes fall on. Dolly, telephone, picture puzzle, cars, train etc. etc. etc. I am going to order a rubber train (it's easy on my hardwood floors) and a rocking horse from Sears, and fill in with a lot of little things from the five-and-ten. So if you want to (only if you want to) buy Cammie a white sweater, size twelve, Bobby a black suede belt (or any other kind for that matter) in a small or 24 size, Deedee a set for baking, you know the kind, the package of cake mix comes with it, and Penny some little toy or other, doesn't matter what, you will be a popular grandma, if you cant, anyway, try to get Cammie's sweater, and I will make up something for the others like I did last year. If you can pick up some clothes for them, Cammie's sock size is 10 (she's a big girl now) her other sizes are all in twelve. Bobby takes a size 12 in shirts and underwear, and a size 9-1/2 in socks. Deedee is an 8, and her socks are size 8-1/2. And for your information, Ma'am, I'm still a 34. NOT 40! The same sylph like creature I was when you last saw me. Fact is, if it weren't for my crows feet I don't believe I've changed at all. Don't judge that snapshot, for heaven's sake. I'd put my hair into a pony tail for coolness, and I LIKE bangs. So there.

The school pictures didn't turn out too well, except for Cammie, and you know she always has taken a good picture. I'm downright proud of that girl. I don't know what the photographer did to Deedee's hair, she wears it pinned back, never hanging loose like that, and Bobby well, I don't know what happened there, looks like he was trying to be the serious type and they showed him the birdie to make him smile. Well, it looks like we'll just have to get some film for the camera and take a few pictures to send you.

Bobby is on Safety Patrol at school, and I would love to take a snapshot of him some day when he's gotten himself all decked out in his badge of office. I'm so proud of him. He lost the office for a week because of his schoolwork falling off a bit, but he takes it so seriously that after boning up on spelling and taking more care with his work he was re-instated, and it looks like that's going to work, where all else failed.

Well, let's see what else is new. I never did get Candy back, and I feel awfully bad about it. But we've got Freckles now, drat his ornery hide! How does one housebreak a dog in winter anyhow, especially when you have to rush him down sixteen steps of back stairs.

I've gotten so mad at him already, if I weren't so fond of the little Mutt, out he'd go. And the five chickens. Honestly, this is definitely the home for homeless strays. Some heartless, cruel person dumped these five chicks in an empty lot inside a cardboard box, and my soft hearted son brought them home to me to raise. We had the red one, and he she it, was getting enormous, but no eggs, although he, she or it, as the case may be was almost a year old. So one fine day when Jere was getting mad at me for the mess he made of the back steps and he was forever having to chase him off the kitchen table, I made up my mind he would make a fine roast chicken. So I asked Dick to kill him for me. If it hadn't been the end of the month (and payday not till three days later) and if our larder hadn't been so darned bare, even the meat in the locker was gone, and the new order hadn't been put up yet, I couldn't have done it. The silly thing was SUCH a pet, would come when called and I felt like a traitor when I tucked him under my arm and marched off to Dick's house, and he never even ruffled a feather. I plucked him myself and could have cried with every handful of feathers I plucked. He was so handsome (and so fat) I'd never had to buy any food, he lived entirely on scraps and what he scratched up outside. Well, now we have five more potential meals running around, white ones, this time, and from the looks of 'em, all roosters. The other morning, when the sun shone bright, there was the most unearthly sound, like a rusty hinge, and when I investigated there was this creature perched on top of the porch making like a rooster. I really wouldn't mind having them around, but chickens are such dirty creatures, and now that it rains so much they stay in the garage whenever they can sneak in, and you can imagine what a mess I have to clean up all the time. We are also harboring a pair of white rats now although they really belong to Cammie's class at school, someone has to care for them over the weekend and at night. The kids are waiting with bated breath for them to have babies, they're supposed to get one, Oh Brother! as for me, I can hardly wait--nothing I'd rather have than a bunch of white rats all over the place!

Well, darling, guess I'll get this letter off, or you'll never get it before Christmas. You know something? You never write and tell me what you'd like to have from us. It's awfully hard to decide what would give joy to your little heart, or even whether the things we send you please you enough to make it worth my while to pack and ship. Lord knows, what I'd like to send you is Rolls-Royces and wrap you in mink, but as it is you'll just have to bear in mind we love you and think of you. Even Cammie, it would be a lot simpler for her to go out and buy you stockings or handkerchiefs or a scarf instead of which she is stitching her little white fingers to the bone for you again. Bless her heart! (you'll be one dishtowel the richer come Christmas) Bobby found something for you in our travels which he's been just itching to send and I hope you'll like, though it can't hold a candle to some of the things you got from Germany, but he thought of it. Bye-bye for now, sweetheart, till the next time
with all our love from all of us

Christmas Eve, 1954

Dearest Mumsi & Pop:-

To some people Christmas means hanging a wreath on the door, to others, eggnog and spiced wine, and to the kids it means the lights on the tree and the mysterious packages underneath it, but to me it's Christmas when the mailman brings a package from Dover and I cut the first slice of that yummy stollen. Thanks ever so much, you two sweet darlings, you. Here I sit with a cup of coffee and nibble a slice of that jealously guarded, carefully doled out treasure, the kids are finally tucked into bed, the radio is caroling away and the only way I can let you know how much you're both in my thoughts and heart tonight is to sit down and tell you about it. Gollies, this has been a hectic time again, and each year I vow all over again I won't get carried away quite so much, and each year it's the same, a last minute frantic scramble. Take today for instance. Although I've been baking cookies madly for the last few weeks, they get eaten faster than I can stick them in the oven, so I thought I'd try one more batch, so I would have some to take up to Ruby, who isn't much for baking, but has a sweet tooth nevertheless, and naturally the kids had to come in just in time to get their little paws in the dough to help cut them out. I spent all afternoon getting in a supply of food to feed an army of hungry men, and which will carry this family through just two days. I got to looking at the stuff under the tree and thinking I ought to get Jere a shirt, after all the poor guy gets stuck with the bills the least we can do is to see he gets something besides the inevitable underwear and socks. Got home just in time to unload and dash back to get Jere. And I noticed some little gremlin had left several packages under the tree that weren't there before I almost died from suspense until I could open them. Honest, Mums, I have the best friends...After a hasty supper we took the kids out in the car to look at all the decorated houses and to pass the time until I thought it was time to open the presents. We had more fun, too, there were a lot of Santa and sleighs lit up at different houses and we kept telling Penny that Santa Claus was busy delivering and would be at our house soon until she was about ready to burst in her anxiety to get home and see. And then came the great moment...such excitement! Such ecstasy! Although the older ones knew pretty much what there was for them, there were still a few surprises tucked in with the rest. Let's start with Cammie--she got three orlon sweaters, a pretty slip, seven panties (one for every day of the week) pajamas, slippers, white rain boots, also stationary, scarves, handkerchiefs and two Nancy Drew mysteries, books she asked for, a necklace from Bobby (and a quarter of the piano), Bobby got pajamas, slippers, and that doggoned suede belt (I tracked through innumerable stores before I found one), a white shirt, bow tie (from Cammie) another arrow for his bow (from Deedee) a rifle (heaven help us) a flashlight, socks and underwear, and a meter (just like daddy's --so he can go around testing all the light bulbs to see if they're any good.) Deedee got her doll's wardrobe trunk filled with doll clothes, pajamas, panties, socks, and her baking set, which is for real, so she can really use it, with the package of cake mix, muffin tin, measuring cups and spoons--the works. A story book doll (from Cammie) and a hand knitted suit for her biggest doll from Ruby. Penny got the most--puzzles, a rubber train, two dolls, one big and one little red corduroy overalls, picture books and a doctor kit, paper dolls, and so on. And of course they all got shoes.

Incidentally, that's where your twenty-five dollars went, shoeing the little colts. Now we come to the mysterious bundles marked "Frances, because she's so nice" that one was from Norma and Ann and contained a perfectly gorgeous nylon slip with a foot-deep lace at the bottom. Honest, I wish they wouldn't, it touched me so I almost cried. The next one said "To a friend that's one in a million", that was from Ruby with a bottle of my favorite toilet water, Friendship's Garden, so appropriate another one was from Janet, the girl that helps me with the Brownies. She's divorced and I've taken her with me in the car because she lives away out in the middle of nowhere and has no other means of transportation, she bought me some "Tabu", another favorite of mine, somebody must have told them, probably the kids, and a four pound box of chocolates. The Howards sent up a cute little bread basket filled with cookies and candies. Jere gave me a little purse ashtray and a key ring with a tiny flashlight that has the Ford insignia on it.

Saturday night

That eggnog and rum I had last night made me so darned sleepy I couldn't keep my eyes open and practically fell into bed and slept like a log. Didn't even hear the baby rats for once, nor the two legged mice that got up at the crack of dawn to see what Santa left in their stocking. Fixed the turkey and had to stop every five minutes to answer the telephone. In the good old days people got dressed and went from house to house wishing everyone a Merry Christmas nowadays you rub the sleep from your eyes and stumble to the phone in your bathrobe, the jingle of the telephone has replaced the old sleigh bell! And speaking of telephones where in heck have you been all day? Here I am filled with the urge to speak to you and there is nobody at home! Didn't your sixth sense tell you to sit by the fire and wait for my call??? I'm still trying and it would serve you right if the operator wakes you up at half past eleven...

Well, Christmas has come and gone again, though the living room still looks like a cyclone struck it. But I'm not going to clean it up just yet, Penny isn't finished cutting up her paper dolls, and oh Lordie already I'm tired of picking up puzzle pieces and fitting them together to see that they're all there. But she sure loves 'em, and does remarkably well at it, too.

I got my way this year and bought a live tree. It was a pretty good sized Mexican pine, what do I mean 'WAS', it still is. And now that Jere has a week's vacation and is complaining that he doesn't get enough exercise, maybe I can lure him into the backyard and hand him the shovel to dig me a hole to plant it in. I still can't get over it.

January 8, 1955

Hi, Parents:-

Ye Gods what a week! It was enough to give me the jitters having Jere and the kids home for a week, but then My Lord and Master had to go and get sick last Monday. It had been coming on, I guess, and though he went back to work he called me up an hour later and had me get him home. He really felt miserable. Intestinal flu, I suppose, though he wouldn't consult a doctor. I've been feeding him tea and lemon juice and chicken broth for almost a week and yesterday afternoon he went back to work for a day anyhow, only to find out that half the office force was out with the same complaint. Oh well, he's getting better anyhow, anyway, he's getting cranky again, so I might suppose he's getting better. When he was feeling his worst he gave me no trouble at all, just sat around quietly holding his poor stomach.

Well, the sun is shining brightly, and I have a few peaceful minutes, I hope, so I might as well sit down and answer your letter. One of my few New Year's resolutions--writing to Mama once a week---Question: Did you get the money for the house in Hawthorne etc. Well I told you, and told you, we get it at the rate of twenty-two dollars a month, which is supposed to be put in a separate savings account to cover the lump payment we're SUPPOSED to make, namely a thousand dollars. The last time we could only make it a hundred, the savings had dribbled away with things like a new motor in the car and so on. The payments on THIS house are seventy-five a month, but we also have to pay sixty-six on the second mortgage, which runs for five years. This is the note we're making a lump payment of a thousand dollars at the end of a year. (If we ever get a thousand dollars) otherwise it runs five years at the rate of \$66 a month. Because we didn't get as much cash out of the house in Hawthorne as we had figured, and because this house cost us sixteen thousand, we had to borrow on the car to meet the down payment, and THAT load is forty-six a month but we'll be finished in March. We have an account with Sears for the kid's beds and the Venetian blinds which amounts to twenty-three dollars a month, so I figure it costs us about two-hundred dollars a month, which goes right out, rain or shine, every month, regular as clock-work. Yes, we still have the trailer, but because we live on a hillside and have no level space to speak of, we park it up on the hill aways on school property, where I can keep an eye on it, and the kids use it for a play-house We were thinking of selling it, but we can't get more than a couple of hundred dollars for it, and Jere thought it would be better to keep it. We could still use it for camping, if we were of a mind to, and last summer some of our neighbors borrowed it for that purpose.

We do NOT live on a mud road, it's just that there are only a few houses on this end of Monserat, and the hard-top goes only as far as the last house on the road. (The houses on this street paid for the paving) And when it rains naturally nobody in his right mind goes around the bend where there is nothing but wide open spaces anyway. Remember this part of Belmont is 'country', and fairly sparsely settled, though from the looks of things it won't be for long, there are houses going up all over the place. As for my ankle, it's better

of course, but it still bothers me occasionally especially when I walk on uneven ground and sort of slip sideways. But that will all go away eventually, the doctor said. Yes, the insurance company paid the doctor bills and a little extra.

Darling I wouldn't dream of selling your pretty handiest for ten cents. I told you, I had the white elephant booth, stuff people don't have any use for anymore, like vases and books and games, and things like that. We had a separate booth for new items which were priced according to value. Those little gloves we made and incidentally, I think Deedee made you a pair too, sold for fifty cents. I crocheted some of those hot-pad pads and pot holders, you know, the rose in the middle kind, and they sold at a dollar and a half a set.

About the piano--no, it hasn't worn off yet. Hell's little blue apples! I never get a chance at it except when the kids are in school, and who's got time then? With Jere home I couldn't dent his sensitive nerves by poking at it either. Cammie comes home from school and before she even has her clothes changed she's at it, and doing right well, too. Her accordion lessons weren't wasted after all, and she just loves that 'old' piano. I'll have to go over my budget figures and see where I can squeeze out the money for some lessons, she got Tina's (that's her friend and class mate up the street--the very last house on this street!) old lesson books and she practices them with vim and vigor, but I can't give her too much help because I didn't get much further than that when I was her age and had my last lesson. Incidentally, hunt though I may, I cannot find my old piano books, and I wanted to see how much I could still play I it. So I haunted the secondhand shops and came up with several books that we try to play but when it comes to the difficult parts we simply have got to have help, so I guess we'll have Cammie take the lessons and she can teach me what she learns.

I told you we went to the Howard's for New Years, and had a wonderful time again. Next day we invited a couple we know from church to come over and listen to some new records and Ruby and her family came, too, we spent a grand evening together and as usual, we always end up at the piano. Jim and Nita sing with Jere in the choir, so they were going full-tilt and Ruby with her lovely soprano soaring over it all, and me, with my bull-frog croak trying to sing along with Nita's alto. Boy, but we had fun. All the kids were in the kitchen (there were six altogether) popping pop-corn for us and I must have made a dozen pots of coffee that night.

[....]

January 14, 1955

Hi, There:--

We picked your letter out of the mailbox on our way to Sears and went merrily on our way to the tune of "Big Nut, same to you, etc. etc.", with me driving and Cammie reading aloud. We went to pick up Jere's bike, and of course it was raining pitchforks, it WOULD, because the fellow at shipping had to tie the box to the top of the car along with a running commentary: "Now don't go too fast, stay to the side of the road--don't cause an accident, and so on and on". What did he think he was talking to, an idiot child? Ah men! they think they have a monopoly on good (hah!) driving sense, as for me, those jokes about women drivers are kind of losing their zest and sparkle. I've never known it to fail, whenever my Lord and Master gets to zapping about some silly thing the other driver does, it invariably turns out to be a man anyhow. However, I'm digressing. We got said bike home without any help from anyone, and unloaded, too, because my darling was sick and could only barely hobble downstairs to inspect his pride and joy and then creep upstairs again. Boy, he really had it good this time. This has been the darndest month, truly. First he was home on a week's vacation, between Christmas and new year's, and what with having him and the kids, too, underfoot I was beginning to wonder who was having the vacation, it certainly wasn't ME. I withstood the onslaught of Christmas somehow, I can always work myself into a glow where Christmas and the kids is concerned, and the week they were all home wasn't too bad, but the very first day Jere went off to work he called me around ten and asked me to pick him up, he was SICK. With capital letters. Intestinal flu I would imagine, though he wouldn't consult the doctor, but preferred to sit around counting his pulse and having me feed him tea and lemon. From his symptoms I might have supposed he was having a baby, it certainly had all the ear marks, cramps in the abdomen, no it wasn't an appendicitis pain (I'm quoting my better half now) it was more like indigestion. He swallowed bicarbonate of soda, and Pepto-bismuth, he applied the heating pad I'd so generously bought him for Christmas (for his aching back, my we must be getting old!!) nothing would do much good. So he suffered for about a week, and not so silently either, until he finally went back to work. The bike came about because of said aching back, he had the notion that what he needed was more exercise, he sure wasn't getting it from digging in my garden, and he thought if he rode a bike like he used to, he'd feel better. So, along came the mid-winter sales catalogue and this here special on a three-speed lightweight racer, which we promptly ordered. We had a little surprise the week before Christmas, Jere's boss gave him a nice fat bonus check and mother sent us twenty-five dollars to apply on presents for the kids. I went out and bought them all shoes and boots. Good Lord, I just read over what I've written so far, and I certainly do jump around like a flea on a hot griddle. Maybe I'd better take a deep breath and start over again...

Joke: A young man about to get married said "I'm going to be boss or know the reason why." Now he's married and knows the reason why.

You and your positive thinking...maybe it works for some people but it sure as heck didn't work for me. I thought 'positively' I had Candy back wagging her fat little rear-end in the driveway, thought so hard and so positively (and still do) and I never did find hide nor hair of that dog. Maybe you'll apply the old bromide 'it was meant to be' or it's for the best, or God's will, but I still yearn for her, and even Freckles can't quite fill the bill (yet), though in his little puppy heart I reign supreme. He was supposed to be Bobby's dog, and Penny thinks he's better than any stuffed toy, still, it's my face he'll watch, and my bed he prefers to sleep in, and his favorite roosting place is my foot. So I'd guess that makes him my dog. But I still want my lil old Candy back. I'd made a private vow I'd give up smoking if she came back, and Jere tells me that God in his merciful wisdom probably thought I would find that too hard to keep so that's why I never got her back. I still want her...

Before I forget it, I want to tell you the perfectly fascinating news that Betty, you remember Betty? The sewing club? well, she finally got to adopt another little baby, a brand new, just born baby boy. It was to have been here no matter what the stork brought, and he brought her a baby-boy. She's bringing him home Sunday, and we're all tickled pink and as delighted as if it had happened to us. We can all hardly wait. I'm so very happy for her, she waited so long and so patiently and I think both she and her husband make the best parents any little kid is so fortunate to belong to.

Bobby joined the scouts and after tying me in knots for a week, trying out his knot tying, and reciting the twelve attributes of a good scout--a scout is loyal, a scout is trustworthy, and so on and on and on and ON, he did his daddy proud and became a tenderfoot. Right now Jere is at a Committee meeting, they found out he'd been active in scouting before, and they snatched him up so fast he hardly knew what hit him. I'm trying to decide whether I should sit up and wait for a phone call to make like a chauffeur, or go to bed and presume he'll get a lift home. No problem in THIS house about who's using the car. When Jere was home that week he and the kids decided it would be fun to go and see snow. So I sat up the night before cooking a big kettle full of Manhattan Clam chowder to take in our thermos jug, and a huge piece of corned beef for sandwiches. Got up the next morning at what I called the crack of dawn, and Jere called 'high noon', and actually was seven thirty, drove until half past twelve to Pinecrest, as far as the road was open, gamboled for an hour in a little patch of the sorriest looking 'snow' you ever saw, and traveled home again for another four and a half hours. Tired, weary, cross, and I hope nobody mentions snow to me again for a long long while. Maybe it wasn't the season for it just yet, and maybe there may be snow, lots and lots of soft white stuff, somewhere, but it wasn't at Pinecrest. And since the road was closed 'on account of snow' we couldn't go any further. Each time we go someplace Jere says he'll drive us home, and then for one reason or another I end up driving home, too. First I take us out of the mountains, then the kids fall asleep and I hate to stop because sleeping kids are the least troublesome, and then we're almost home...and so it goes. Oh well, I should kick. How many women do you know that have the car all the time, to quote my darling.

Now we come to the piece de resistance, that I've been saving for last. We are now the proud and happy owners of a dishwasher. Well, no, that isn't exactly true either, we haven't even made the first payment on it yet. We were browsing through our Wishing Book when we noticed this big deal on a combination dishwasher and sink, and since Jere had been blowing his top for quite awhile about the terrible job the kids had been doing on the dishes, in fact he was and is firmly convinced his intestinal flu was entirely due to unclean dishes, he finally broke down and went to Sears to look the situation over. The kids were all in favor of the idea, to the extent of giving up their allowance, what allowance may I ask, remember the piano? But anyhow, enthusiasm ran high in the family and I finally placed the order. We were undecided whether to take the under-the-counter model, for which we had no room, or the combination sink and dishwasher which was on sale and for which we have a perfect spot in our kitchen, along the wall where the builder had planned a washing machine to go and all the piping and drain was already there. Then there was the little matter of installation kit (a mere twenty-six dollars more), at the store they had quoted a price of around a hundred dollars for installation, and you know Jere is like Harvey, he will tackle anything. So last Friday we came home for lunch just in time to watch them unload it, there was only one slight hitch, the driver was going to leave it in the garage. His orders read 'to the door delivery' and he wasn't going to bring it upstairs. Well, I nipped that in the bud and told him to take it away again, I could just see Jere struggle upstairs with two hundred and seven pounds of dishwasher. I called Sears and they said to take it to the warehouse and they would then send it out with two men and bring it where I wanted it. Seems this truck came from Emeryville, and had nothing to do with Sears. Well Tuesday came and the phone rang, it was the warehouse to report that they noticed it had been damaged and for me to contact the catalogue department because it had been ordered through them. Catalogue Department referred me to Customer Service, and Customer Service was surprised they had called me at all, since they would automatically have either have a new panel put on or re-order it. They also told me it wasn't much of a damage, and since I was afraid Jere would get sick and tired of waiting I asked them if they'd give me an allowance on it. They called back to say they'd give us fifteen dollars off, and I said by all means, deliver it the way it is. Came the great day on Wednesday, and from the looks of it, it would have been a lot simpler to build a house around it than to try to get it upstairs. Jere spent that evening reading instructions and putting it together. Because it was what amounted to a new installation there was no trap nor pipe to connect it to, so next day he spent another seven-fifty buying whatever was necessary, and that evening put the finishing touches on it. The kids and I were about ready to leave home--MORE FUN. Came the great moment when Jere told Bobby to go downstairs and turn the water back on. And 'Bingo' water spurted all over the place, including Cammie, who had her head underneath. Off went the water and out came the wrenches again. More tightening and once again came the cry: "Turn the water on". Well, this went on for quite a while, until we finally had the leaks under control, or so we thought. Then Papa discovered he'd forgotten to turn on the faucet to the pipe that leads to the dishwasher, so he stuck HIS head under to unscrew it and promptly got a bath. Seems what he had really forgotten was to tighten the pipe in the first place. Once more poor Bobby dashed downstairs to turn the water off and out for the wall came the doggone dishwasher, out came the trap and we went over the whole thing again. By this

time the whole family was wondering if it had been such a bright idea after all to save the installation charges! However, came the Great Moment when we called 'contact' and apparently everything was ship-shape and we could put our days accumulated dirty dishes in and stand breathlessly by while the machine ponderously flushed and squished and squirted and sucked and finally the lid flew open with a bang to which I haven't gotten used to yet, and the drying started, and then the rapturous moment arrived when we inspected our sparkling glassware and hygienically clean plates and cups. Yup, I'd say it was a success...And there is no use even to follow the instructions where it says to leave the days' dishes in the washer and do them all at once--with this family the poor washer works overtime--three times a day. But I will say, it does a beautiful job, even the pots and pans when they've been soaked come out sparkling. Now I've ordered two sets of Mel-Mac, thirty-two pieces in all, so I'll have enough dishes for once and we don't have to wash the lunch dishes so we can eat supper. I can hardly wait, they tell me those unbreakable dishes are grand especially a family like mine, where not a day goes by without a dish shattering on the floor.

I think I'm about to lose my mind, first Penny teases Freckles, and then Freckles teases Penny, and now Cammie followed me I here and is teasing Penny. Cripes! Honestly that dog and that Penny---for the longest while I tried to protect the pup from her affectionate onslaughts, but from the looks of things it seems as if I ought to protect Penny's shoes and socks from Freckles. They actually enjoy it, those two...

I ran around all over town yesterday getting a uniform for my Lord and Mater, honest to Pete he's like a kid, (and he does look nice) and can't possibly be an assistant scout master unless he's got the shirt and pants and hat and tie and all the rest of the paraphernalia to go with it. I picked holes in my fingers just about a half hour before he and Bobby were due to go out, sewing the numbers and insignia on and shortening the pants. Hells little blue applies, I am going out to buy me a Girl scout leader's uniform too, so help me, even though I've been able to work with kids for umpteen years now, without the trappings. But what is sauce for the gander is applesauce for the goose...Our brownies are flying up this coming April, and I shall fly right up with them. I'm taking them roller-skating this coming Saturday, with the money they earned selling calendars.

I just got your other letter, Soph, but I'm not answering it until later. SOME people have time to visit by letter, but SOME people haven't got enough hours in their days to do all the things they want to. I'll either have to give up some of my friends or quit doing housework altogether. And I'll never give up my friends. Right now I'm knitting my fingers to the bone for Jere, he wants a heavy sweater for when he goes hiking and camping (here we go scouting again) and I ripped up a big heavy white football sweater my mother gave me years ago, and which is too small for Jere now. Either he grew or the sweater shrank, I'll lay you odds as to which it is. But it has so much good wool in it my scotch soul just couldn't throw it away, so for days I've ripped and hanked and washed and re-wound and am now at the knitting stage. My aching hands, it's hard work. The wool is six-ply, and heavy, and it ought to make a dandy sweater for out-doors.

That reminds me, do you remember Ann? The one with eight kids? Well, it's going to be nine now. How does she do it? Her husband went to Guam, he's in the navy, you know, and she had planned to join him there. She is, as a matter of fact, still planning to go, if she can get on the ball before six months is up, after that they won't allow them to go. But me oh my, such guts, with eight little ones and one coming, to want to go all the way to Guam, and pregnancies affect her something fierce, she'll be sicker than a dog from now on, and what will it be like on ship board? It would be a lot simpler for the Navy to ship Frank home. Shall I try some 'positive' thinking for her????

You know I get an awful kick out of those clippings you sent me occasionally, there's an idea---I ought to devote a half hour each day to report the doings and shenanigans of the Casagrande Clan and then just make several carbon copies for all my friends!

I'm sitting here waiting for one-thirty and my eleven little brownies to arrive, boy, are we going to have fun! Even though I'll probably do most of my skating sitting down...Do you sometimes miss the Bluebirds, or are you too busy riding herd on your own four? I laughed at Norma, she used to have the Sunday school class with me, and she got out of it by saying it was just too much for her, and too hectic. So now she has a den of eight cubs. And comes crying for help to me, but I don't mind, I like little boys too much not to enjoy them. And what's the use of all that experience if I don't share it...

Well, my dishwasher is still going full blast, but I'd better say bye=bye for today and see if I can whittle down that stack of ironing a bit. Jere keeps insisting what I need is an ironer, and I keep insisting what I need is more time, and an ironer wouldn't be of much use to me right now, it would just sit there and patiently wait for me to find the time to sit with it. MY next project is a garbage disposer, anyhow.

Be seeing you, old pal
with love to the lot of you,
from the lost of us

Monday Jan 31, 55

Hello Folks:

Whatever happened to my new year's resolution of "write Mumsi every Sunday"---? Already it has simmered down to every two weeks! and what's my excuse this time? Time is something I ought to have plenty of right now with one of my major chores out of the way, but truth to tell, it didn't quite work out that way. With the two sinks so nice and sparkling clean every little dirty mark stands out like a beacon, and I run around with a sponge and the Bon Ami wiping like crazy all the time the dishwasher works away. You just can't win...

Friday

Looks like this is going to be 'diary style' too, a few lines every other day...Honest to Pete, where does the time go to. I don't get a chance to sit down and catch my breath, let alone get older! Two weeks ago I took my Brownie troop skating, and oh brother a good time was had by all, yours truly included. Last Saturday we went to a children's play in Redwood City, a darling play, and we enjoyed ever minute and every syllable of it. Well, now our kitty is empty and we've got to save our pennies again before we can do anything like this again.

Tuesday was the first and the deadline for getting the registration plates for 1955, so I stopped at the bank to cash Jere's check and hightailed it to Redwood City, as usual I didn't have too much time so naturally I didn't let any grass grow under my feet and just as naturally I got nabbed for speeding. Drat and darn the luck anyway, I can think of a lot of things I'd rather spend money on than a speeding ticket, and in the meantime I'm gnawing my knuckles trying to figure out how much it's going to cost me. Ah well, into each life some rain must fall...

I've just got to get me a whistling teakettle, I'm forever putting on water for a cup of coffee and boiling the pot dry because I go away doing things and forget about it. I sure should hate to break my beautiful new Pyrex teakettle, and I sure as fate will if I continue. That's all I seem to be doing tonight--make one cup of coffee after the other--the two girls are up at a neighbor's house watching T.V. and Bobby and Jere are at a scout meeting while I sit and mind the telephone and Penny. I'm nothing but a glorified chauffeur. Oh well, this way you'll get a letter, even though it is in bits and spurts.

I told Jere he had better get on the ball and do something about that T.V. of ours--it's the old story of the shoemaker's children all over again; an expert in the house and our kids have to go to the neighbor's to see their favorite program.

Hell's little blue apples, this is one heck of a letter, I can't seem to get two coherent thoughts together tonight. What would you rather have--the ramblings of a tired mind or a real honest to god letter next week. No it won't be next week either, next week we have the Scout's Father and Son dinner to cook and nobody need even think I'll talk to 'em, let

alone write a letter. Did I tell you that Bobby became a scout and Jere an Assistant Scout Master and half the week they're not home anymore? Just a scouting widow, that's me. All I can say, I hope their enthusiasm keeps up, they both had me practically break a leg to get them their uniforms a couple of weeks ago. I don't know, I managed to work with scouts and brownies and bluebirds for years without the trappings, but my men would as soon go out naked as without their uniform, though I must say, they both look real snazzy, and I'm very proud of them. And when I say 'my men', I certainly mean it. Gee willikins, sometimes I look at Bobby and I can't get over it, how that kid has grown. My dishwasher has finally fallen silent, gee that thing makes more noise than the girls ever did washing the dishes. Honest to Pete, we had a riot when it was finally delivered and Jere finished poring over the directions and buckled down to installing it. [....]

Our PTA had a rummage sale last week, and naturally I was put to work for a couple of afternoons helping to sort and price the articles. I'm afraid I was one of their best customers, too, every time I stuck my nose in there with Penny she spied something that she absolutely had to have. Got here a cute little rocking horse for fifty cents, and a stuffed lamb, so she'd play with that and leave Freckles alone. She simply drives me mad teasing that pup. She loves him of course, but she can't leave him alone, and after awhile I get to thinking that he must like it too, and what I ought to protect is her shoes and socks and dresses from Freckles, he just loves to tug and her and she just loves to have him do it.

The Scouts are having their annual Father-Son dinner next week and their Court of Honor at which time Bobby will be getting his second-class badge and Tenderfoot badge all at the same time. He's been working like a beaver at it, and if he keeps it up he'll be the youngest eagle scout on record. Jere had to go and stick MY neck out again by suggesting the ladies of our church could cater their dinner. So I've been busy on the committee all week, and the upshot of it is, I'll be baking eight pies and making the tomatoes aspic salad for fifty. Jeepers, FIFTY! Not to mention washing the lettuce and getting things ready over at the center next Tuesday. One blessing, I shall not be alone, there are five of us doing it. And our Women's society can sure use the money.

Saturday and raining yet!
February 26, 1955

Hello, Brainy:---

And I don't say that with tongue in cheek either, I certainly do envy you. Anybody that can get up in front of a crowd and make with a speech has my sincere admiration. The only time I ever had to get up in front of the PTA and say a few appropriate words on behalf of my Cub Pack I died a million deaths and couldn't have told you afterwards exactly what I did say. So I'd say you won that Oscar 'fair and square'.

Incidentally and by the way, who were you mad at? Not me I hope and the way I regularly DON'T write to you. I honestly have the best intentions, and some day I hope to have a tape recorder to hand around my neck and talk into whenever I talk to myself to my friends far and near. Now there would be the perfect solution for me...

As usual your next to the last letter is misfiled again, oh yes, there's nothing like putting things in their place and having a place to put them in. My Mother's letters turn up in somebody's workbook at Sunday school, and your no doubt has found its final resting place in one of Penny's innumerable treasure boxes, bags and envelopes that she's so fond of collecting. Someday I'll discover it again and will then sit right down and answer it, that's a promise. Meantime I'll have to struggle on as best I may via recollection. I know you mentioned Freckles, and there's a subject that will still reduce me to tears. Sunday a week ago, Jere and I had taken the little fellow for a walk around our hills watching Spring popping out in every nook and cranny. The pussywillows are showing their grey fuzzy hides, and wildflowers seem to spring up wherever you look. Anyway, we had had a lovely walk and I had no sooner got into the house, and for once Freckles didn't follow me in because all the kids were playing in the street, when there was a shriek and a howl and Jere said: Well, there goes your dog. He had run in front of my neighbor's car and died on the way to the vet's. I could hardly believe it. Not a mark on him, he looked like he was sleeping. Bobby and I wrapped him up in blankets and put him in his bed, and only the rigor mortis could convince me that I had irrevocably lost my little friend. And he was so cute, ALL American Gentlemen, I should say. He was smooth haired and of the size of a fox terrier but spotted like a Dalmatian with the cutest little face and two brown spots over his eyebrows, one ear was up and the other was trying valiantly to follow suit. And smart, I'd finally housebroken him so he would go to the door and bark and I was beginning his obedience training, he sat and stayed when I told him to, and only came when I snapped my fingers and called 'come'. Gee, I could go on forever, but it only makes me sad, and Bobby and I shed enough tears. The only thing I could think of was to go out and get us another dog right away. I and the kids hounded all the animal shelters in the neighborhood and finally chose a little black and white pup about four months old of the Sheppard type. His name is Bootsie on account of because he has two white forelegs. Cost us all of three dollars and they told me to take him to a vet for a free examination. Next morning bright and early, although with bags under my eyes because I got up about every hour on the hour whenever the pup got restless to put

him outside, I took him to the veterinarian in San Carlos. He shook his wise old head and said the dog had infected tonsils and he strongly suspected he had distemper and advised me to take him back and get another dog, preferably an older one. Well, I could no more condemn that poor sad forlorn scared little scrap of fur to death at the pound than I could abandon a baby. So I was firm and told him I'd take a chance and to give him a shot of penicillin for his sore throat, and a distemper shot. He said I was making a mistake and the dog would not live four weeks, but If I insisted, (and I did) to feed him well on meat and eggs and milk and keep him warm and WATCH him. Well, that was only ten days ago, but to look at this animated streak of lightning tearing around the house these days you'd be hard put to find a trace of the cowed little creature I'd brought home such a short while ago. And he is no more sick than I am.

Jere is in the throes of going into business for himself, with two partners, that is. This has been brewing up for quite awhile, and now they have a chance to bid for some business at Moffet Field, and I have been going crazy driving him here there and everywhere. One of the fellows lives in Palo Alto, and the other night when I met him at four-thirty he wanted me to drive right away to Palo Alto and be there by four-forty-five. At the peak of the rush hour yet, and without a chance to call the kids and tell them we'd be late. And late we were! I did get a chance to get to a phone and told them to fix themselves something to eat if they were hungry, and to look after Bobby who is in bed with a fever (it jumped from a hundred and three to a hundred and one and up and down like that for a couple of days, now he's on the mend). We didn't get home until seven, and this man's wife is one of those heartless wenches who left me sitting alone in her living room without so much as a cup of coffee or a word of cheer. Later on the other partner-to-be and his wife came up to discuss the blue prints and stuff like that. Listening to them makes me feel like the dope I am, and this gal is right nice and very clever and capable. If this is getting confusing, don't be alarmed, it's my natural state of mind these days. To get back on the subject, I think it would work out very well, and those three guys work well together, one would be public relations and make the contacts (he's the one that rustled up this bid) and the other one, (they live in San Carlos) would do the mechanics, and Jere the research and electronics. However, not one has any capital to speak of, and they will continue in their jobs and do this on the side until they can get the capital together to incorporate. If this pans out, and for all their sakes I wish them every success, they might even make enough to get a start. I don't know too much about it yet, and will keep you informed as I absorb it. But it means a lot of putting heads together and they talk far, far into the night and all this night life is leaving me slightly bleary.

To get down to my level again, we've had some lovely weather and I got into the planting mood, planted three threes, an apricot, a pear and a black walnut after bribing Bobby to dig the holes for me and following Go-Go around with the wheelbarrow to season the soil with his 'liquid gold'. Now I'm right pleased to see the rain, it will give them a good start. You know, Soph, if I sound a bit depressed and inferior, it's because of this allocation with all those clever people. No kidding, after another evening spent with Lyn and her husband Jean (the San Carlos couple and partner-to-be) I feel like a stupid clod, and really I shouldn't, I don't know what's the matter with me, or even why I tell you this. She's

really awfully nice, but so ultra-ultra modern it scares me. Their home has a 'dingus' dangling from the ceiling and their lighting is a Chinese lantern contraption hanging from the ceiling, too, and the chairs are wrought iron and canvas slings, you know the kind, and a couple of Siamese cats slink around, she paints in oil with a palette knife, and adores modern art with 'moods', oh heck, what IS the matter with me. I like her and yet cringe inside with all this bright talk, I must be jealous because she really is clever and it makes me feel inadequate. I was just going to drive Jere over and then go up to Janet Katchen and have a nice cheerful talk about such things as Brownies and kids and the husband whom she just divorced and look at her television (since ours ain't functioning) and instead he insisted I come in, it would only be for a little while, and two hours later I was still sitting there talking about modern art, or should I say listening to other people talk about modern art. All the way home I was as grumpy as an old bear and couldn't have told you why. The only thing that tickled me that evening was an article in one of those slick magazines lying around on "non-conformists versus Conformists" that had a picture on one side of six houses all alike on the outside and all furnished differently inside, and then six houses all different in the modern trend on the outside and all furnished identically with a mobile hanging from the ceiling, sling canvass chairs and an identical modern painting over the identical modern fireplace. Get it?

Well, I think I've mooned long enough, and I'd better cut this short and get back to my Sunday school lesson for tomorrow. Our Mama rat had ten little babies again in spite of my separating them, so Jere put his foot down and said those rats have got to go. Now we have just one left, Harlequin, and a little limb of Satan she is too. I let her out for a little while every day and it's a tonic to watch her and Bootsie play together. She thinks Bootsie is an oversized rat, too, and follows him around and he in turn thinks she is the nuts and no better toy was ever invented. Doesn't hurt her either, so by now Lovingly, as ever

March 17, 1955

Greetings & Salutations:-

Jere just called and said he was going out to lunch, so that gives me a few extra minutes and it suddenly dawned on me that I haven't heard either from you or my Mom in ever so long, must be almost a month. What's up, friend? Busy? Mad at me? sick? or something? As usual we've had the usual hectic time around here and I guess the only thing to do is start where I left off and go on from there. I s'pose both Harvey and you are wondering how Jere's business venture has turned out. Well, after working like beavers on costs and production and what have you they finally came to a decision on their bid and (naturally) after I typed up the necessary papers I rushed over to Moffet Field with them. Now Moffet Field was an experience in itself, I wandered around like a lost soul in all the restricted areas looking for this particular place, and each person I asked for information sent me off on another wild-good chase. Next time I'll take a guide along with me...I finally found it, and after the usual red-tape of filling out forms in triplicate and practically swearing my life away that I had no fire arms, camera or sinister designs on Uncle Sam I was allowed to enter the hallowed halls. I dropped off the papers and fled. That afternoon I took Jere back when they opened the bids and clutching tightly to my rabbit's foot I waited breathlessly in the car for the results. The results were sad to contemplate. The fellows lost out by a couple of hundred dollars. Most of the bids were higher and most of them almost a third as much, but this one little outfit from Marin County, I think he said, underbid them by a couple of hundred dollars. I just can't get over how close it was, but who knows, it might have been for the best. They hadn't had time to incorporate yet, and Jere was doing it under his name, and if things had not worked out the way they were planned he would have been solely responsible for a six thousand dollar contract. (Goodbye house, goodbye Belmont!) Ah well, but my darling has not given up. The kids and I had cleared out the garage and I had the junkman come and haul all the clutter and junk away, including the bikes we didn't use, and all the wheels and bearings and kiddy cars and stuff my sonny-boy had accumulated; we'd even taken away the swing and stacked all the firewood neatly in a corner, and the very next day Deedee had taken to housekeeping there and let Bobby use the trailer for his 'kite headquarters' and club house. Then Jere got the brilliant idea of enclosing the back end of the garage and make his workshop there. He left me just enough room to put the car in and Mac's been kidding me ever since about knocking the wall out when I park the car. Mac's been coming up in his spare time and doing the job, and boy, does it ever look nice. There's a door with a lock (thousands of dollars worth of equipment will be stored there I've been told) and there are workbenches running around two sides, and shelves fluorescent lighting--the works. And my better half will be busier than a one-armed paper hanger with the itch. He has to make a working model of some kind of measuring device or instrument to show at an exhibit or something like that coming up in a couple of months, and they hope to get orders for it on the strength of it. Meanwhile they are still trying to dig up contracts to bid on like the one at Moffet Field. They will use the garage as a workroom until such time as business booms (?) and they can expand.

April 11, 1955

Hello Mumsi:-

It's the day after Easter (and of course the beautiful card I bought you is still sitting around waiting to be sent in '56, darn it anyhow!) and after combing colored eggshells out of my hair for the umpteenth time, I can now sit down and relax a little and at long last get around to having a little chat with you again. Have you about given me up for lost again?

I had ordered some pink nylon dress material from Sears and they didn't deliver it until last Tuesday, which gave me just about three days to buckle down and make three dresses. I did, too, and they all looked good enough to eat, turned out simply beautiful, if I do say so myself. I bought them all those taffeta nylon petticoats that make their dresses stand out, and with new black patent leather slippers they really looked lovely. Bobby was resplendent in new slacks, white shirt and bow tie yet, gee how that kid has grown up, you wouldn't believe it. He sang in the Boy's Choir at Easter. Easter! Ye Gods when I think of what a hectic day that was. I got up before the birds even, to go to Sunrise Service, after staying up late the night before to get the last little bit of handwork done on the girls' dresses, and could hardly pry my eyes open. It was a lovely clear morning but so cold and windy I thought every man jack of us would catch pneumonia. The minister held on to his hat with one hand while he said a few well chosen words. A very few! We had coffee after and then came home to a hearty breakfast and pandemonium. Penny had hardboiled eggs strewn from one end of the house to the other, and she had dined regally on candy Easter eggs. Bobby's baby duck was quacking piteously, the dogs were making a racket and you couldn't hear yourself think. It was a relief to escape and go back to church for another service. Jere sang in all three, so I attended all three. We had made a cross of chicken wire from the floor to the ceiling and covered it with Calla Lilies, it was just beautiful. In between I came home long enough to start our ham, and after I got the dishwasher going I just fell on my bed and slept.

I had hoped the photographs I'd had made of the kids would come in time to send for Easter but no luck yet. Remember that picture I sent you a couple of years back and which you hid in the bottom drawer? I'd vowed and declared I would never, but never fall for a door to door salesman again, but they caught me off-guard again. I'd just been thinking of you and how nice it would be to have a picture of the kids to send when along comes this knock on the door, and I fell. Four dollars worth. For one picture! They came around long after I had given up all hope of ever seeing my money's worth (like a dope I paid in advance) when the photographer showed up and took innumerable snaps of the kids and different poses. If they all turn out as well as I expect I'll probably want them all. Jere sniggered and said "Did you expect to get away with only one picture? You'll want them all". Well, we'll see.

Jere finally gave in to our pleading and did something about fixing our T.V. Gee, every Wednesday night my kids would scatter through the neighborhood to look at Walt

Disney's program, and even I would go up to Ruby (who loved the idea anyway) and make a night of it. Anyway, Jere replaced practically every tube except the big picture tube and got it working very well (we think). But he wasn't too happy about it, and lo and behold he comes home one fine day with a twenty-one inch set or is it twenty-four(?) that he bought from a friend for eighty dollars, and which he is still trying to perfect. I say it works well enough, in fact our RCA works fine, so let it alone, but no, he's going to make it BETTER. Okay, so let him. At first we kept the set in his bedroom and all of us would crowd on top of his bed to watch it and let him get into a messy bed at night, so he broke down and put it in the living room where it belongs and where I wanted it in the first place. The den was okay, but we were never too comfortable, we just don't have enough easy chairs to go around downstairs, and it was kind of cold without a fire. If we put a fire on, the reflection would shine right on the screen and everyone squawked about that. Anyway, Bobby sleeps down there now, and I wouldn't want to tempt him to put the T.V. on when he's supposed to be asleep. We even got our antenna on the roof now, like everyone else, instead of stuck on the ceiling of the den. And every bad windstorm that comes along I'll be worrying whether it's raining rain or aials.

a week later

Good grief, at this rate you'll get a letter by next Easter. I do wish I knew where time goes to. If it isn't one thing taking it up it's another. Of course we waiting until the fifteenth to get our income tax made out, and naturally it was the night that Bobby had to go over to the Cipriani Center for his Pack night. He's a den chief now and that night he was awarded his den-chief's cord. Quite an honor, and of course Mother had to be there. When I got back home I was practically bleary-eyed, and still had all that typing out to do. Jere was asleep and I had an awful time waking him up to put his signature to it before I rushed to the post office with it, I was sure tempted to send it off unsigned. But even so we goofed it, and next morning my beloved woke me at the crack of dawn to tell me I'd forgot to include the salary statements. Ho-hum, too late to worry about it now, if they want 'em they'll just have to ask for them. But it will make our refund come late, too, but what the heck, you can't spend what you haven't got, can you?

Still later

We finally decided to sell the trailer, the kids aren't doing it any good, and every time I go to look at it something else has broken or gone wrong with it. Somebody came by the other day and asked if it was for sale, and after talking it over we decided we might just as well realize a little something on it. What with the T.V. set that Jere brought home and that other little surprise that I haven't gotten over yet, we've got to lay our hands on some extra money. Jere brought home a tape recorder and I was so mad about it I wouldn't speak for a whole night and day. But the family is so enthused over it, everyone wants to get in on the acct, and it sounded like so much fun, I gave up sulking in the kitchen and rattling pots and pans (no more dishes to rattle). My curiosity got the best of me and I crept closer and closer to the living room and just couldn't resist hearing how I sounded. I found out, oh Horrors! Just awful, now I know why everyone still asks me where I was born, why I have an ACCENT, ME! Jere turned it on one night at the dinner table, and oh boy, you never heard such bedlam in your life. Penny crying, Deedee whining "It isn't

fair”, and Camille sounding just ducky screeching “Why me all the time, let someone else go”, Bobby yelling, I want more, I didn’t get enough. Oh brother! And this is what’s known as a nice peaceful quiet dinner hour...though I was quite surprised to note that my voice sounds so gentle and pleasant, even when I scold them. Jere brought the contraption over to our sewing club last week and our sewing turned into a Singing Club. We gathered around the piano and sang and played it back and laughed and sang some more until midnight. We seriously considered making Jere an honorary member of our club.

Well, anyway, we have a lot of fun with it, though it seems to me we have to be amused an awfully long time to make up a hundred dollars worth, that paltry little sum is nothing to sneeze at. Jere tells me that the reason he got it so cheap (cheap, hah!) is that the fellow who ordered it got into a fight with his wife over it, well all I can say, for awhile there it looked like the Casagrande family would break up over it too. Good thing I’m a reasonable woman, I’m not saying a word mind you, but I’m just going to gather up all our bills and serve them for breakfast, lunch and dinner. This will be ammunition for a long, long time to come, whenever My Nearest and Dearest gets mad at me and tells me all I ever do is spend money, hah, will I get my licks in then! Meantime I got downright reckless and instead of just window shopping at the Nursery I went all out and bought six dollars worth of shrubs and plants. Oh boy, am I ever a spendthrift...Oh incidentally, this year I actually went and got me a new dress for Easter too. The Sears catalogue had a darling dress in it, and I just happened to mention it to Jere and he said magnanimously, Why don’t you get it. Well, why don’t I? So I did, and it fits beautifully and looks just lovely. Though whatever will I do with the parasol that some with it, I’ll never know. I can’t see myself strolling in the hot sun shading me lily-white complexion with a parasol.

April 30

Oh my poor mother, you must have just about give up ever hearing from your errant daughter again. This is awful, I mean so well, and time just slips through my fingers like smoke. Every day something else comes up and I never get a chance to sit down and write anymore.

Our church had their annual rummage sale a couple of weeks ago, and I just love to work on rummage, to me it’s utterly fascinating to see what other people throw away, there is anyhow a lot of pack rat I me, and I feel I must buy everything I see. I spend much too much money and only consoled myself by thinking it’s in a good cause and I certainly got my money’s worth.

Ruby took her little Boston to Santa Cruz to be bred, and she asked me to go along for company. We had a nice outing, I love being around Ruby, she is such a bubbly kind of gal. I hope this time she has better luck with pups, and already she is worrying about it. Did we get Bonny there in time, will she take, and how will the whelping be this time. Worry, worry worry. She bred the little miniature pincher the same week, so she’ll have two to worry about this time. She keeps asking me as if I were an oracle by itself, gosh, it’s been a long long time since I’ve had a bitch in season, I don’t know anymore how she should look or act, or whether a continuous flow after breeding will affect conception. I

try to look wise and reassuring, and I don't believe she hears a word I say, she just worries...My little dog is getting along just fine, and he's not getting too big just yet, but we managed to add another member to the family. Just a home for homeless Hectors, that's us. Janet Katchen moved away and didn't know what to do with her dog, so since I know the beastie and like him a lot I said I'd keep him until they had a bigger place. Now I wouldn't give him up for nothing. I LOVE the big black brute. He's a Labrador Retriever, and a horse of a dog if I ever saw one. She worried a bit about it's costing me a lot to feed him, but as it turned out I'm feeding the two dogs for what I used to cost me for one. Blackie is used to the kibbled food, and I had been extra good to Bootsie because I wanted to give him a fair start, with horsemeat and milk and cod liver oil, the works, but now seeing Blackie eat with relish he eats the same stuff, and it costs no more to feed the both of them. Blackie sure took to me, I thought I'd have trouble with him running off home all the time, but he is so contented to be my dog, and never had so much loving showered on him nor all the attention in his whole life that he never once strayed off. Even when they came by to see me he wags his tail and greets them, but comes and sits on my feet. I thought Jere would squawk having such a great big dog underfoot, but for some strange reason he LIKES Blackie and is as patient as Job with him, more so than he ever was with any dog we ever had.

Well, we sold the trailer, or did I tell you? And I got most of our big bills paid off, like the meat in the locker, the T.V. and the yearly insurance, always quite a hunk, got the taxes paid and now I can relax a little and maybe even buy Bobby that bugle he was clamoring for. He is in the bugle corps and doing mighty well, much to my surprise. Cammie is taking piano lessons and loves it and plays beautifully. I never have to coax either of them to practice, our problem is: When do we get some peace around here!

Bobby and Jere went off on a Camp-o-ree Saturday and I drove them and five boys up there, and went to pick them up again on Sunday. Well, this way maybe Jere will get his fill of camping and I don't have to stand around and make like a Chief Cook and Bottle Washer they are on their own up there. Camping is all very nice, and I still love it, actually I just get so darned tired of being baby sitter and carrying all my household chores along with me. Make believe it's nothing to feed six hungry mouths, three or four times a day and wash up after them. It doesn't leave me too much time to take a walk and enjoy the scenery. As usual I thought I might have a little time to myself and just as usual I spent my time at the garage having the brakes checked and wasting my breath telling the girls to for goodness sakes behave themselves and stop fighting over which television program to put on. I hardly missed the men in my life...Last time the two went off on a camping trip the girls had overnight guests and I got absolutely no rest at all.

Friday night I was asked to chauffeur a bunch of Sunday school kids down to San Francisco's Playland, we had a marvelous time although I was kept stepping trying to keep up with my charges. Only way I can ever do that is to go on everything with them, and the only thing I drew the line at was the Big Roller Coaster, I wasn't brave enough for that. I had a horrible time rounding the little stinkers up when it was time to go home, and I had promised the mothers to have them home by ten and we didn't leave until a quarter

of. So I went breezing along the coast road at forty miles an hour and got picked up for speeding before I even had my regular speed up. Why don't anybody tell me there's a twenty-five mile limit on that particular stretch! I didn't dare tell Jere and have to make up the six bucks somehow. He'd be mad and not want me to take the car again next time something like that comes along. But what the heck, somebody's got to drive them, and it might as well be me, since I enjoy myself anyhow.

The man came around to show us the proofs of those photos, and are they ever darling. I just knew I couldn't resist wanting each and everyone of them. Wait until you get yours, you'll just love it. I was hoping I'd have it in time to send for Mother's Day, but it will be a little late. They don't deliver the pictures for several weeks after you've chosen the ones you want.

Oh darn, there goes my peace and quiet. Deedee just came home from school with a friend and they just HAVE to bake a cake. Never mind that I just took one from the oven, they've got to bake a cake. Well, one consolation, my girls will all know how to cook by the time they're old enough to get married. Even Bobby is no slouch when it comes to cooking for himself and even knows how to bake a cake.

Well, I guess that's about all for today, I must give this to the mailman when he comes by. Take it easy, Angel, and remember to write, the fish and plants and dogs and birdies (lucky you) can't take all your spare time. It's not like having four rambunctious kids underfoot. Bye now, and all our love to the both of you
as ever
F.

Of course I always think of you,
but how you gonna know it...
Unless I write a line or two
or drop a card to show it!

May 9. 1955

Hi, there:-

Time has a horrid habit of slipping silently away from me and I feel like yelling: "Stop, thief!" A lucky thing for me I don't have any deadlines to meet, I'd never make it, from the looks of things a letter a month is about all I seem to manage. Why don't you buy the lot next door to me and build yourselves a tepee on it, there's a sold sign on it now and I sit in my little ol' sunny kitchen and speculate who my new neighbor is going to be. We'd better be good friends--with only ten feet between our respective windows I can borrow a cup of sugar with a not-even-so-long a pole. I guess we're spoiled for bee-hive living, having the wide-open spaces around us for a couple of years I just don't take too kindly to having civilization creep up on me. Mind you, I like people an awful lot, you might even say people are my hobby, but. and this is a big BUT, I would very much like to keep a little 'Lebensraum' around me. You would hardly recognize Belmont, should your wanderings take you this far again, houses have sprung up like mushrooms after a rain, and after the Howards move (that is if they succeed in selling their home and moving to Los Altos like planned) my friend Go-Go will go, too, and the chances are that in place of a pasture there will be at least three houses across the street from me. Sigh, sigh!

Jere did such a fine job with his Parent Education Program that they've asked him to run for School Board Trustee, and the way things have gone around here you'd think he was running for President! Meetings, and writings up in newspapers, and this morning I took him to the Redwood City Tribune to have his picture took, yet, tonight we're due at the Luis Barret School PTA meeting for him to say a few well chosen words as to why he'd make a good School Board Trustee. The phone rings, more letters to type. WELL. Of course I honestly do think he'd make an excellent one, but there are five applicants and only two openings, and all five are well chosen. One is a teacher at the local high school, two are active in PTA and other civic organizations, and one is a business man and father, and of course there is Jere Casagrande, well qualified for the job. The election is on May 20th and then I'll either have peace or could be I'll wish we'd never heard the word, Jere being the type who carries his claque (ME) around with him. Maybe I'll even have to hire a gardener, can't be seen with dirt under my nails you know, and hire a maid to serve afternoon tea on the family heirlooms from the five and dime. Like I said so many times before---never a dull moment!

Last night we went to the Scout's Court of Honor where sonny boy got two awards and I was downright proud of him. Gee, maybe we'll have an Eagle Scout in the family yet. Bobby got his bugle, finally, and it warmed the cockles of my heart to see him along with the other nineteen other buglers and blowing their little brains out. My, but they looked

smart, and sounded right well, too. What with Bobby and his bugling and Cammie with her piano, the question is, when do we get some peace around here. I used to see a cartoon now and then with a little boy scout waking the neighborhood at the crack of dawn with his lil old bugle, and never dreamed I'd ever flinch to the sound of one. I take the kids to bugle practice every Monday night, and so help me, ear plugs are required, they make the welkin ring all the way there and all the way back...

After the Scout meeting we had to dash up to Cipriani School for the PTA meeting there (where Jere said a few well chosen words why he'd make a good school board trustee) and then we walked home in the dark, because I had on my very best Easter dress (which didn't come till the week after Easter) and my lovely new high heeled suede shoes that I love with all my heart, and this costume was the very thing to stumble around in the dark from one gopher hole to the other trying to find the path. That's what comes of trying to be a Lady and doing my doting family proud. I should just stick to my loafers and cotton skirts, I'd sure as heck be a lot more at ease. Ah me, I'll just never make a Governor's Lady...

Took a look at the clock and it's time to gird myself for battle again, in other words I shall comb my face and wash my hair and put on my slinky gown and my silk stocking and wear my haughtiest expression as becomes the wife of a school board trustee (aren't I the rat?)

I tease Jere a lot, but actually he doesn't care one way or the other whether he gets it or not. But like he said, if he should, he'll do his utmost best, though as far as time is concerned he as soon not get tied up in anything else right now.

The scouts went on their annual Camp-o-ree a week ago, and of course my men-folk had to go, too. I drove a car full of whooping young'uns up there and went back for them the next day. And once again I thought I'd get a lot done and the end result were nil and nothing. I took the car to the garage and had the breaks taken care of and the day after I had Bobby home with a temperature. Some scout. He's supposed to be prepared, and when I urged him to be sure to take along a spare pair of jeans, he poo-pooed the idea and as much as said I was a 'fuddy-duddy' mother-hen. But when I went back on Saturday to pick up Jere (he had to go to church the next morning for his choir singing) I was met by a very unhappy looking little boy who sheepishly confessed he'd slipped and fallen in the water before they were hardly there an hour, and had to borrow a pair of pants here, and a shirt there, while his own clothes were drying out. I should have taken him home with me then and there, but they so obviously had such a wonderful time I didn't have the heart. The wonder is he didn't get pneumonia, instead of just running a temperature of a hundred and one for a couple of days. The third day I sent him back to school, Bobby recuperating is something I simply cannot bear anymore at my time of life. The school nurse called me up and suggested I keep him one more day, even though he had no fever or other signs of coming down with anything, but when I explained to her that he was slowly driving me to drink and I don't mean black coffee either, she laughed and said okay, she'd kind of keep an eye on him and we'd see. Nothing further happened, thank

goodness. Gollies, at the rate that kid is going I'm going to be able to pin an eagle on myself yet, the only thing that seriously slows him up right now is the swimming. Bobby never was one for swimming unless he could splash around with flippers and mask and nose doohickey and come out of the water every five minutes or so to roll up in a blanket, and it comes hard to him to swim well enough to meet the requirements. Right now both he and Deedee are taking swimming lessons every Saturday morning, and except for one occasion we've been fortunate enough to have nice weather on that particular day. He's been in only a couple of months and has his second class scout and two merit badges. He's in the bugle corps, as if I didn't have enough trouble, and I finally broke down and got him a nice shiny new bugle of his own.

That isn't all I got, for Mother's Day I finally got my wish and was presented with a honest to gosh singing canary. I've just been utterly delighted with my little feathered friend. He sings to beat the band, whenever the piano goes, so does he, when the radio gives with a cheep, he goes it one better. It tickles me no end and nothing has gladdened my heart so much in quite a long time than to listen to that little mite sing his heart out.

That Frankenstein of ours, commonly known as a dish washer, went berserk last night. First it quit in the middle of the operation, and of course I blamed Cammie for taking a shower and using up all the hot water, though she indignantly denied getting more than her hide wet before I asked her to stop running the water. Nothing happened. Jere was asleep in front of the T.V. and when I finally succeeded in waking him up, he acted like a bear with a sore paw, and blamed it all on me. Poor little Me. Said it was my problem, the louse, so I dug out the pamphlet we got with the contraption and did all the little things they advise for trouble shooting, and still nothing happened. I ladled all the hot water out by hand thinking the drain was plugged or something, and still nothing happened. So today I got at it with vim and vigor and pushed the button at the bottom, and sure enough the motor started up, but the action didn't stop, the lid flew open with a bang and sprayed hot water from here to Hell and gone. I practically sat on it to hold it down and frantically pushed knobs and finally got it turned off. Once again it was full of hot water I had to ladle out with a cup. Then Jere the expert took a hand, we got the front off and the doggone thing was leaking and dripping so much you couldn't even tell where it all came from, but it didn't go any place except on the floor. Once more we started the cycle, and again the lid popped open and Jere got a bath without benefit of towels, so I spent lunch hour ladling it out once more and this time I called up Sears, and when he asked me what the trouble was I practically blew a fuse myself, I got positively incoherent trying to tell him what had happened. The upshot of it is they will be out Wednesday, so for the next few days we'll go back to the old fashioned way of doing dishes. Won't the kids be overjoyed when they hear it? The way bits of wood keep floating to the top all the time makes me suspect foul, very foul play. One of my innocent darlings must have dropped something in that wasn't according to Hoyle. Either that or we're down to eating wood now.

Later

It's after supper, and the kids have scattered to the four winds. Dishes, you know. I do hear a bugle sounding in the distance and that means I better get this letter over with by seven to take My Pride and Joy (plus a few extra) to bugle practice. When Jere heard that Sears couldn't come until Wednesday it must have touched his pride or something. Anyway HE is going to fix it. Never let the grass grow under your feet, is his motto, and Do It NOW is going to be engraved on his tombstone. He got his little meter and informs me that it isn't the pump. So what is it? That took a lot of energy out of him, so now he's back in the living room reading up on his press clippings. Well, I have nothing to lose. Either he gets it working or Sears will. Meantime my hands have taken such a beating digging around the yard, what better way is there to get them nice and clean again than immerse them in sudsy dishwater?

Did I ever get around to telling you that we sold our trailer? Somebody came along to ask us if it was for sale, and it so happened that for the umpteenth time I'd been up there checking it over to find several little things loose and broken, and I was getting just a mite fed up with the whole thing. How nice quiet gentle little girls can merely by playing house, wreck such havoc is honestly beyond me. And anyway, I was getting snowed under with bills, and to top it all off, My Dearest and Best came home with a nice little surprise, and I don't mean a box of candy either. Only a tape recorder. I was so darned mad I couldn't talk, and he kept wondering all the way why I was so quiet. Hah![...]Well, I had reconciled myself to it, and after the trailer was sold, even though we got only the big outstanding bills, including this little gadget. Then he comes home and tells me he's going to return it and get one that automatically changes the tape from one side to the other without having to lift out the spools and reverse it. The only catch was, this one came direct from the manufacturer down at S.F. and would have to be paid for in cash, a hundred and twenty-six dollars, to be exact. That put me just twenty-six dollars in the hole. However, we went this far, so I traipsed down to San Francisco and picked it up. Personally, I didn't like it nearly as well as the other one, which was a darned good recorder, this one was harder to use (for a simple minded person like me, anyway) and to me it didn't sound nearly as good. So after going around mumbling to himself for a couple of days about how he ought to learn to live with his decisions, while I heroically restrained myself from comment, he talked the company into taking it back. That meant another trip down to San Francisco, however, I don't mind, I never do anything anyhow, may as well run down to the city. That was a short sweet interlude, but if I know anything about Jere after living with him 'lo these many years, I know he won't let the matter rest there, and sooner or later we'll own a tape recorder.

Still later

Well, my brainy husband seems to have fixed the dishwasher, he bypassed the pump by putting it on the meter and ran the machine through a couple of times, and perhaps with the pumping going strong, whatever matter had fouled things up, went down the drain. Anyway, it works, though there is still some dripping from somewhere, and I want Sears to come and take a look at it anyway, while I still have my three month's guarantee.

Right now I am busily planning our Brownie Fly-Up ceremony for June. It will be a big thing in the girls' scouting program, and I want to make it as impressive as I can. I've arranged for the use of Cipriani Center, and I hope all the parents and brother, sister, uncle and aunt will come that night. Then in the fall, we can go full tilt into our Intermediate program and buckle down to earning our badges and ranks. From now on it will really be fun. No more fooling around with 'busy work', no more making paper flowers, not plate holder and stuff like that, Life will be real and earnest for us. I've formed the troop into two patrols, with the patrol leaders on probation for the rest of the term, and in the fall we'll elect our permanent ones. We'll concentrate on the great big wonderful out-doors, and all that goes with it, cook-outs, hikes, nature study, etc. etc. I got really interested in plants and flowers. Got a book from the library that had me scurrying around seeing if I could find some real-life samples to go with all those fascinating illustrations. Our neck of the woods is just full of wild flowers right now.

I was up at Ruby's this noon, because my Lover Boy had phoned to say he was eating lunch out, and I wanted to talk to her about our Brownies without interruptions. Hah! Not five minutes after I sat down to a cup of coffee the phone rang and My Lord and Master was on the line to ask me to trot down to S.F. to pick up some text books for him on Market Street. Well, that seemed as good a time as any to get my own private personal copy of the Field Book of Wild Flowers for Amateurs (that's me) and so I did. I s'pose the next thing on the agenda will be a flower press and scrapbook and Latin terms will roll off my tongue like oil, at the drop of a petal. Oh, Soph, Life is so full of a number of things I hope I'm around this good ol' earth for several centuries to catch up on all the things I want to tackle.

Well, at this rate you won't ever hear from me unless I write it into a book and send you an autographed copy. So until further notice this is it, period, the end. Seems every night I write a few lines after supper, and then put it away until inspiration strikes me again. Well, now it's your turn. What with you? Anything new? Been surprised with an automatic baby spanker and door bell answerer yet? I think it's lovely about your new drier, do you like it and how well does it do what you want it to?

Gosh, it's later than I think, so this time I mean it, bye bye till next time around.
Best regards to Harvey, a big hug for the kids,
and my very best to you, as ever

Thursday, June 2nd. 1955

Greetings & Salutations:

Well, next to having you live close enough to borrow a cup of sugar I like getting nice fat newsy letters. It always lifts me out of whatever doldrums I happen to be in just then, and believe you me, I'm just the gal to have them, doldrums, I means. Luckily they don't last long--to busy with too many things to brood.

How you feeling now? Given all the little bugs the Go-bye, I hope, without issuing an open invitation to a batch of new ones. We seem to have bi-passed all the measles and chicken pox and what have you, only to nurse along a beaut of a case of poison oak again. I told you they are practically carting off the hills around here, and my three youngest thought it would be such fun to play around the heaps of dirt there, this at three on a Saturday afternoon and by five o'clock you could just see the splotches come out on their faces. By Sunday morning they were hardly recognizable and for the rest of this week my poor wee ones have been the very picture of misery. Bobby was so disgusted, and him a boy scout, too, but he said he didn't SEE any, and he certainly knows enough by now to keep away from it. The only way we can figure it is that they dug up the plants and roots and it was all through the dust there on the hill. 'Tis a pity, too, because I finally succeeded in coaxing Bobby into going to a dance tomorrow night. A girl scout troop is earning their dancing badge and issued an invitation to the scouts in Bobby's troop, refreshments, girls, the works, and it would have been so good for his social development. Sixth graders only, you see, and Jere has had the devil's own time rounding up enough boys. They keep accepting and backing out, and calling up to accept again until we are both at our wit's end, and as for the Girl scout leader, she will have ulcers before this is over. Boys! Especially sixth graders, pheuiw (how DO you spell this gesture of derision and disgust anyhow?) Well, wanted to reward our diligence by giving Jere and me an invitation, too, and so help me, if it's anything I'd rather do than go to a dance watching ornery boys hulking in corners and anxious girls making like wall flowers, you name it...

Lover Boy did not make the school board election and my little heart is just broken. Think of it. No meetings to attend to, no endless correspondence to write, no waiting outside this place or that place, no phone calls to make, no house calls, oh, how can I ever bear it! Oh sure, it was a little deflating to the ego, but after all, there were two posts and five candidates and those other four a lot better known over Belmont than Jere, a veritable newcomer. Personally I was relieved, I just had done my two days stint at the Scout-o-rama, my feet ached, my back ached, I as hoarse from having to round up strays, and my temper was beginning to fray Saturday night I finally hauled the boys I could collar home at nine and sat and waited for my own sprout to come home. Eleven-thirty the phone rang and my son and heir indignantly demanded to know what the idea was leaving him stranded and practically the last person there. I was in no mood to argue however and curtly suggested he walk home or hitch a ride. I was through. Course I would have backed down again but anyway he did come home with someone else. After ferrying other

people's kids around for two days that was the least they could do for mine. Did you ever try to latch onto four or five boys long enough to wrestle them into the car? One or the other is sure to want just 'one more candy cone' or 'please Mrs. C. let me get one of those flags they're making' and when I relent they all shoot off in five directions at once. However, sonny boys troop made the top honors and were rewarded with banana splits apiece, and the troop got a blue ribbon! Meantime Mac came over to build a room downstairs in the furnace room for Bobby and we went off Saturday to get the material down in S.F. and when I got back, tired, hot and lunchless, and after helping unload the stuff, and believe me sheet rock weighs a ton, my better half was chomping at the bit for me to be gone and pick those little demons up to take them for their reward. There I was surrounded by nine scrubbed little boy scouts looking like the nigger in the woodpile. Course I got my cut, in the shape of a hot fudge sundae and a hamburger, and Mr. Haas offered to make me official mascot. They might just as well, whenever there are scout doings Mrs. C. turns up sooner or later. I feed them popcorn and bake them cookies and make them lemonade and all but act as mother confessor to them. Bless their little pointed heads. But it does make me feel pretty good to have cheery hellos flung at me all over Belmont (and half the time I have to stop and think, are they Sunday school, scouts or school or just plain neighborhood).

Where was I? Oh yes, Bobby's room, gee, it will be just swell, Mac (Ruby's husband) is doing a wonderful job, and it will be just grand to put Son in a room off by himself. I never would have thought that a few sheets of sheetrock and a coat of paint would make such a cheerful bright room. An overhead light and two sockets, a built-in desk under the window and a bench along the end wall with hinged cover, and even a small built-in bookcase. I can hardly wait to move him in. Too bad we won't be able to go whole-hog and tile the floor first, but I'm afraid that will have to wait a bit. Anyway, then I can concentrate on the den and make that more livable and less a depository for junk. I have regretfully come to the conclusion that the T.V. belongs downstairs. We've moved the furniture around in all sorts of conceivable combinations none of which look good, and every morning you have to find your way around the rocking chairs, which clutter up the place around the dinged thing, three deep. The couch is in the way no matter where I put it, and we can't sit and look out the window anymore. So the set will have to go back downstairs again, especially since my darling has found a new love. Oh yes, we got another tap recorder, exactly like the first one (which meantime had been sold) only it costs us ten dollars more, because it was specially ordered. That's life for you. But anyway, Jere is thoroughly happy now, and gets so darned mad at us because we want to look at T.V. while he wants to sit and revel in his recorded music. Okay, okay, so we go downstairs again and he can enjoy himself upstairs. What probably will happen is that he'll turn it up full strength and expect us to glue our ears to the loudspeaker or learn to read Sergeant Friday's lips.

Oh. Oh, wait till I tell you, oh the stinker, after all I said! Jere was on the nominating committee for church, and after practically pleading on bended knees that I had enough to do with Sunday School and Girl scouts, and after gleefully and thankfully giving my very last report as Chairman of Supply and laying down gladly my job as Civil Defense

chairman, what does that husband of mine do but come home last night and inform me that LUCKY ME, I've been unanimously selected as Historian for the coming year. I was speechless, and he must have thought I was overcome with joy, he said, and those are his very words: I thought that would please you. Please me, holy cow, for a solid year I've suffered with Ruby, scanning newspapers and saving clippings for her, she was IT last year, and now I'm faced with the rosy prospect of hanging onto clippings long enough to get them into the book, writing lovely witty reports on the church doings, and beating Penny's brains out should she so much as touch a scissor to my papers. Oh, OH! I'll put arsenic in his soup, I will. His Honor is going to be Chairman of the Music Committee, and that will be right up his alley.

June 8, 1956

I broke my glasses, and boy, I was going around like a gal with a perpetual curtain of cobwebs in front of my eyes. With the subsequent dampening of spirits. Everything is just too much effort trying to see, so I settled down to a book, and what a book. Even with glasses on I would not have been able to lay it down. Did you ever read anything by Celia Gardner White? I read "The Pink House" and it really was a fabulous book, you were so completely identified with the family and the person who wrote the story, it became more real to me than the actual doings of my own family. I trekked to the library to see what else I could find that she had written, No Trumpets before him, for instance, but though that one was out I did get several others, each one just as fascinating. Right now I'm looking at the shelf where I stack my library books, and dear me, what catholic (please look up 'catholic') taste I've got. Confessors of the Name, Two Tickets to Tangiers, The Human Mind, The Vixens, a sort of Gone with the Wind in pint size, and A Seal's World, Now I ask you, do I get around or do I? There's also The Eye of God by Bemmelmans (that should be interesting) and the Woman in the Window, and a garden book. A pretty full menu, I should say. If only Jere continues to take the car and eat his lunch out, I might not only get caught up on my housekeeping but on my reading as well. I really got rolling this morning, and by the time the kids were off to school I had the beds made, the wash out, and part of my ironing done. Now the kitchen is clean and I'm waiting for my thundering herd to come home for lunch and then I start all over again. Here they come, bye till later...

Later

Took my Brownies up to the center to rehearse and see how long our program actually takes, they were remarkable good about it, too, marching as if they'd done it for years and falling into alphabetical line at the drop of courtesy, and believe you me that takes some doing. They march in according to patrol and have to form a half-circle in alphabetical order, you'd think there would be mad confusion, but actually it went off very smoothly, I can only hope they will do as much for next Friday night. I get goose bumps just thinking of it, and will I ever be glad when it's over.

One of the last little chores I had to do for PTA was to go around on a tour of inspection (?) or what would you call it? Anyway, a tour of Hillcrest the Juvenile Home for delinquent children here in Belmont, no, I don't mean we have a monopoly on delinquent juveniles, but the home is here. It was sort of pathetic, although they really do marvelous with them. The probation officer who talked to us and showed us around showed a rare insight and understanding of youngsters and especially youngsters in trouble. But the rooms were so small, and so very bare, holding just the beds and an open shelf for their personal belongings and clothes. I suppose you can't expect too much, but three and four beds to a space not much larger than our littlest bedroom! However, they have a nice lounge or recreation room, and from what we could see their food was good and ample and most of their time well accounted for with schooling and special instruction. He tells me they don't actually have each one there long enough to do much, only a few days or weeks at most, then they get sent somewhere else or some other disposition is made. The

following week we went on a tour of the Schools for exceptional and handicapped children. Although a lot of the ladies I talked to thought it might be too sad to see, to me it was a most heartwarming experience to see how much they do for these children, who otherwise grow up neglected and untaught and undisciplined or as in some cases, over protected. Here they learn to make a useful place for themselves in our society. For instance at the 'point one' program they are taught simple basic skills, like mastering the telephone and they have a little store set up, complete with food, posters and even a cash register where they learn to purchase with actual money, making change and all that. At the 'point two' program they have those children that you can't do much with, Mongolian idiots and such, but they take these children and in a short space teach them discipline and order and even simple arts and crafts. When I said exceptional before, I really meant retarded, so you see what I mean. Really, we watched a group of youngsters eat their lunch, and they acted a whole lot better mannered than most normal groups would. They told us when these children first come there it is not unusual for food to fly and lunchboxes and it's like taming wild animals, but with the help of understanding and patient teachers they learn to accept order in short time and their parents can and do take them out into the public without being ashamed of them or expecting them to create a scene. We went to the school for the blind and the near blind, the deaf and the cerebral palsy. Did you, for instance, know that they have Braille typewriters? I was quite amazed at the dexterity with which those little tykes type their lessons. And I was especially touched at each school to see the teachers there, so patient, so loving and understanding and kind. Yes, it was quite an experience.

Coming to think of it, we had quite a shattering experience here on our street a couple of weeks ago. I had let Bobby persuade me to let him go to a show with a couple of his friends at night, and I was waiting with bated breath around eleven for him to come home. The Owl Movies had just come on and before I could get more than the title Bobby came bouncing in breathlessly crying "Call the Police, call the police we caught someone stealing Mac's truck." I looked at him foolishly, with my mouth hanging open when Bruce dashed in: "Did you call the police?" Well, you'd have thought I had never handled a telephone before, here I have the Police and Fire Department stuck right on the dial, and I called the fire department twice before I got it right. They said they'd be right over and I struggled back into my clothes and went out to see what all the shouting was about. Sure enough, Mac had this kid in his truck up the street and there was murder in his eye. Seems Bobby and Pat were left off at the corner and walking home when this boy asked them for a push. Bobby thought the truck looked familiar and asked him if it were his, and the boy said yes, and he just got it. Bruce came home just then, too, and he said to Bobby to run up and see if Mac's truck was there, it wasn't so Bobby went in to get Mac. Seems this little stinker had found the key in and just took off but because Mac's truck is a little temperamental he got stalled at the head of the street and that is the only thing that kept him from getting away with it. The police came with siren shrieking, handcuffed the kid, who was practically fainting away from fright and put him in the patrol car while they tried to get the story from us innocent bystanders. Ruby came trotting up in her bathrobe, took one look at the boy, and cried "Why that's the boy who came to my house to have me fix his hand when he fell off his bike." She couldn't get

over it, here she had played Samaritan to him and he repaid her by coming back to steal her husband's truck, with all the carpenter tools in it. Though really, when we got down to it, he probably would just have ridden it awhile and abandoned it. He seems to have a record of petty thefts and has stolen several bicycles, which he just left somewhere. He lives down in the canyon and his background is not too good, the usual thing, parents don't care enough to look after their kids. He is now eighteen or so, although he claimed to be fifteen and it has gotten beyond the juvenile delinquency stage. I just don't quite know what's going to happen, unless Mac presses charges, they called Ruby from Hillcrest the other day to find out how they feel about it, so I suppose that once again it will blow over for the kid, but gee, how long can it go on like that? From bikes to joy rides to worse. But I feel so sorry about a youngster like that. The worst of it he stripped the clutch trying to get started and broke the handbrake, and Ruby is still in a dither to see if the insurance will cover it. They got Allstate, and Allstate is very reluctant to accept the liability. How in heck can Mac prove that the clutch wasn't bad to start with?

But to get back to Bobby, we were very proud of his sharpness in spotting Mac's truck, because the people at that end aren't too familiar with it, I guess, because one of the men said he was about to give him a push, and Pat's mother said the only reason she didn't is because she couldn't, the car was out with her husband. (My that sounds real snazzy--the car was out with her husband! To a bar no doubt) Anyway, Mac wrote a nice letter to Bobby's scoutmaster to the effect that scout training pays off in smart youngsters, No, not smart, alert, is the word.

Well, Soph, I guess that about wraps it up for this time, so I'll say bye bye for today. Take it easy, take it light, and don't let the coming vacation give you a nervous breakdown.

With our very best love, to all of you
as ever
Frances and Company

2729 Monserat Ave.
Belmont, Cal.
July 5, 1955

Dear Horace and Anne:-

A lot of water has run under the bridge since the night I met you both and Nanne played the piano for us, so when Jere handed me your letter to read, it brought you both back as clearly as if it had been yesterday.

You were not just a-kidding when you said time has made changes, and your little paragraph hit the nail right on the head. Of course we're one youngster up on you and that entitles us to a few more wrinkles and grey hair, our youngest is just four and a half, that lovely age when you begin to wonder if you'll survive the daily onslaught of dirt brought into the house, and crayon marks on the wall and screams of outrage from her older sisters and brother about getting into their belongings AGAIN. There's Camille, our oldest daughter the ripe old age of thirteen, Bobby our pride and joy and the despair of his father is twelve, Diane is nine and last but certainly not least is Penny. As if that weren't enough, there are also two dogs to get in our hair and under our feet and a canary bird to raise his voice about the bedlam and din that reigns in our house most of time. Right now I find it hard to concentrate on a letter with the constant interruptions, the dogs want in or out, Can I have another apricot, where's the pail, if I have to wash the car I gotta have a pail; Mummy I learned a new song and so on and on and on.

Let me take a deep breath, lock the doors and start all over again. You'll probably want to know how our wanderings have taken us so far from our old stamping grounds and good old New York. Well, during the war Jere found himself stationed on Alameda near San Francisco and fell in love with the town. He talked so persuasively about the beauty and mildness of climate that I came out to see for myself. However, I must have chosen a very bad season of the year, it was foggy and rainy and COLD, however on our way home, and that is really a story by itself, imagine the innocence and naivety of us attempting to drive a '36 Ford home to New York with three youngsters, the baby was only barely a year old, encumbered with play-pen carriage and diapers, and with myself as the chauffeur proudly clutching my brand new driver's license! Anyway, we went by way of San Diego and I told Jere if I had to move to California I'd prefer the sunnier southern sector and consequently Jere found a job with North American Aviation in Hawthorne. We lived down there about five years, and Jere changed from one aircraft plant to another, never quite satisfied, never quite settled, and always with this dream of living near San Francisco. After Penny was born we made a more intense effort to move up here and finally made it. Actually it was quite a wrench for me. We owned our home, I had made staunch friends, Jere made good money (though with four kids to raise is there ever such a thing as a good salary?) and in order to make this dream possible Jere had to take a substantial cut, living costs are higher here and our new house cost more than the other one. But it surely was worth it. Even I am convinced, and Belmont, beautiful lovely Belmont is the place I want to put roots down and watch our children grow up in. Our

house is large, it has to be, for us, and sits on the side of a hill and overlooks a little canyon with the hills rising up beyond it. From the big picture window in the living room and ever changing panorama unfolds itself and after two years of looking at it, is still a delight to the eyes. As for Jere, nothing he likes better than to come home at the unearthly hour of four-thirty in the afternoon, and sit in his ol' rocking chair and look out over his domain, basking like a lizard in the sun and I hope he is content. I say "I hope", because knowing My Lord and Master, he is never still for long. Last year he located with Spinco, and that really was ideal. It's right down in Belmont, takes me about five minutes when the road is clear, and ten at the most if I get caught in traffic, which enables him to come home to lunch. Heaven help me, it's a perpetual shuttle service, taking him to work, picking him up at twelve, taking him back and at four-fifteen, with an eye on the clock I'm back to bring him home. If I had time to stop and think I'd wonder when I have time to LIVE myself. Right now, my darling is in the throes of going into business for himself, with a partner, that is. We started off by building a workshop in back of our very ample garage (it runs the full length of the house) complete with a lock to keep marauding young sons away from his tools and equipment, and now we're at the stage where they have rented a store in San Carlos and picked out a name for this up and coming concern. Peninsula Electric Corp. I think it is. Frankly I don't know too much about it, T.V. repair and colored T.V. I believe, with some consulting work or whatever comes along that they can handle. We shall have to wait and see how it unfolds. Jere has always wanted to be in business for himself, and if he doesn't venture it now he ever will, didn't someone say "We're not getting any younger?" If he doesn't give up his job and tackles this in his spare time, of which he has a lot, I can't see how we can lose too much. anyway, I for one, wish the Peninsula Electric Corp. a lot of success. Anyway, as the family's correspondence secretary I can only write about the personal side of our doings and that's mainly the reason why my busy husband has delegated the delightful task of answering your letter, to me. He thought I could fill you in on the picture and any questions that come up in your mind he can deal with later. Coming to think of it, a gap of seventeen years or so takes some filling, doesn't it? The years fly by so fast and one day you look at your thirteen year old skillfully applying lipstick, while a bunch of twelve year old boys attempt to 'bop' to a record turned up to full volume, and you quickly rush to the mirror to study your familiar face and realize by gum and by gorry, you're getting on in years, Old Girl! It doesn't happen very often that it strikes me that way, what with coping with Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts and Sunday School not to mention the garden. Gardening is my hobby, my joy, and the best excuse ever for not industriously chasing the dirt from one room to the other. Let it settle on the Venetian blinds, if I dust today I'll only have to dust again tomorrow, but when I stick a plant in the ground and lovingly tend it, tomorrow I have flowers. When we bought our house two years ago it was brand-new and though we loved every inch of it inside, the outside was in a sad state of chaos. Lumps of cement decorated the front and the back was a yawning, raw hole dug from the hillside. Well, if I may modestly pat myself on the back and what Jere and the calluses on my hands will testify, I did create a bit of beauty around here. Because the front is a steep slope a lawn was out of the question, so I terraced it and edged it with all the big, handsomely rugged rocks I could lug, or persuade the kids to lug, and planted it to flowers. Now practically all year round we have a solid mass of bloom and color in three

wide rows, with a pepper tree and a princess bush and whatever my limited budget has allowed me to buy since. I'm slowly getting away from annuals and little by little getting in the permanent planting of flowering bushes and shrubs. Yes, for all my hard work, and if I do say so myself, it looks beautiful. Especially when viewed from above, where we do most of our viewing from. Except for me, I get all mine from a worm's eye or stooping position. The Girl with the Hoe, that's me.

Last Christmas we acquired a beat up old piano, and our oldest daughter took to it like a duck to water, which made Jere very happy. If you will remember, he loves music and has the soul of an artist, and would ask nothing more from life if one of his harem would lull his troubled soul with the strains of Beethoven or Tchaikovsky or better yet, what is the name of that composer of discords, that I simply can't stand and which Jere listens to by the hour. He wrote the Rite of Spring. To get back to Cammie and her piano, it certainly is a relief to have a child WANT to practice, I never have to remind her, rather I have to ask her to please STOP. Chances are she will never be an artist or make it her profession, but she likes to play, and plays well enough to be pleasing to her audience and after all, that is what counts. Bobby has become an active scout and the first thing he clamored for was a bugle. If I had been able to gaze into a crystal ball and foreseen the time would come that my ears ring to the sound of a bugle I would not have laughed so uproariously at these croons picturing a boy scout waking his neighborhood up to the sound of a lusty bugle. I take the kids to practice every Monday night, and what I want to find most in my Christmas stocking is a set of ear plugs. (just read over the above sentence, wow! if my English teacher got a look at it, we'd take back all the straight 'A's she ever gave me. Shows you what bugling does to my nervous system!)

I'm getting to the bottom of the page again, and I'm wondering If I should stop now and let you get a word in edgewise, or go all the way and write a book entitled "The Life and Times of the Casagrandes". On second thought I ought to leave enough over to encourage you to write again and breathlessly await the second installment. It was so nice to hear from you and your letter was only, what you might call a Hors d'oeuvre, we'd like to have you come back with the main dish. Meanwhile,
our very best regards to you, Anne and the family

as ever
The Casagrandes

My Dearest Mother (I still have a mother, I hope!)

April, May, June and now July, good grief, don't you ever answer a letter, or are you on another sit-down strike? But before we throw brickbats at each other I'd better remind myself that I haven't exactly bombarded you with letters during all that time either, so alright, I'm a rat and time doesn't stand still even for a rat. You'd never believe, no, guess after all these many years of being late with my cards, you probably would at that, but anyway, I now have two Easter cards reposing in my messy drawer, both bought with love and good intentions and both never mailed off. Now they also have a Father's Day card to keep them company, I really am slipping aren't I? Please don't be cross with me but no kidding, the days are so very full of so many things and the older I get the more forgetful I get...Gollies, sometimes I think it would be an absolute relief to have a job, work eight hours a day, and sit on my laurels the rest. If I had time, which I don't lucky for me, I'd sit down and have a nervous breakdown thinking of all the things that keep me occupied. It's the same old merry-go-round, and if I gave you a blow by blow description of my days, you'd have a nervous breakdown just reading about it. But enough of that, I have to fill in the picture for the last three months and I have to save my breath for that.

Since school's been out I've been operating a regular shuttle service taking the kids to the swimming pool and once a week to the matinee. The idea being I'd have a little peace to catch up with my work, but somehow it never works out that way. By the time I take Jere back to work after lunch, get the kids off to the swimming pool or wherever else come back home for a quick cup of coffee, comb Penny out of my hair, it's almost time to start picking them all up again. When I go out and putter around the garden I have to keep one eye on the clock all the time, or Jere would meet me half way home, which wouldn't be so bad either, I think he'd need the exercise. All he ever wants to do is walk, walk walk after supper when I'm so bushed I'd like nothing better than to go to bed. Yep, I guess I'm getting old at last.

July 9, 1955

At this rate I'll never get this letter written, will I? There's really nothing to write about, like I said, it's the same old merry-go-round. Bobby's been to camp for a week and is now busily plotting his birthday party. This year it's to be a double-date party, his best friend and his girl, and Bobby's heart throb of the moment. They'll go to the miniature gold course first, have a goopy, drippy sundae and take in a show. The older they get the easier birthday parties are on long-suffering mothers. He's getting real grown up now and toys are a thing of the past. Nowadays he craves nylon shirts and a pair of slacks and another one of those narrow belts all the boys are wearing. That is if you can get them to put a belt on. The fad hereabouts is to wear the jeans hanging from the hipbone, and with schools and parents constantly harping on belts being a necessary part of the male attire, they grudgingly condescend to those narrow ones. Another thing I'll probably wrap up for him is a quart-size bottle of hair lotion. He uses the stuff by the gallon, it seems to me, and for every time I used to say to him "Go and comb your hair" I now flinch to see him pull a comb out of his pocket and comb his hair every second on the second. Yep, the kid's growing up.

Camille is planning another slumber party with a movie thrown in, and the one thing they probably won't do is 'slumber' if I remember correctly from the last one she had. Certainly her father and I didn't get much sleep that night.

Mac came up and built us another bedroom downstairs for Bobby, It looks so nice I'd move into it myself at the drop of a nail. Surprising what a bit of sheetrock and a coat of paint can do. He even built in a desk under the window and a little built-in shelf for books, and along one wall a bench with a lid that lifts up for all the clutter, baseball bats and gloves and the like. It's a big load off of our lives having Bobby out of the way downstairs, and not upstairs bothering the girls. Now I can concentrate on fixing up the den and keeping after the kids to leave it picked up. Not in such a state with play toys all over so's you're liable to break your neck if you walk through it. I sit and dream how I'd fix it if, and that is a big IF, if I had some money that didn't

Saturday Night
July 16, 1955

Hello, again:-

There are a dozen chores crying to get done but I shall stop my ears to the voice of conscience, get the lead out of my pants and get on with this letter I've been writing in my mind for the last couple of weeks. 'S really odd, but our minds are still in tune with each other, and if it hadn't gotten too darned hot to write, our letters would have crossed in the mail again. As it went, mine never did get written though I had every intention of putting it in the mail when I took yours out of the box. I should have a dictaphone hung around my neck and I could cozily chat with you while going about my daily grind. Speaking of dictaphones, maybe it's blessing we don't have one, the Darling of my Heart called me up one day last week, not to pass the time of day or whisper sweet nothings in my ear, but to tell me to transcribe something he'd put on tape the night before. Holy cow, what a time I had with it. In the first place the clatter of the typewriter made it almost impossible to hear and in the second place I couldn't type fast enough to keep up with the flow of words, and in the third place I couldn't stop the machine whenever I wanted so lost part of the sentence, and lastly I couldn't make out some of the words, either Jere mumbles or my hearing is impaired. Anyway, it was definitely not a howling success, half-way through I thought of the earphones and spent the rest of the afternoon looking for them, and never did find 'em. Anyway, Jere decided it was not worth it. GOODIE, GOODIE GUMDROP. The he came home with a technical paper in German yet, and asked me to translate it. I sweated that one out in two days, though in a way it was a lot of fun. The vocabulary of a thirteen year-old just does not include long wordy technical terms, and in those days all I knew about electricity was that you turned a switch and presto! Light! When you come right down to it, that's about what it means to me right this very minute. I know that when I touch the toaster with one hand and the metal strip around the drain board with the other---ZINGO---, and in my language that means somebody's pulled the plug and put it back the wrong way, but don't ask me the whys and the =wherefores. Guess I'll just never be another Marie Currie and work side by side with my husband in his chosen profession. I'm about to have a nervous breakdown whenever he comes near me with a sheaf of notes to type up or a business letter to write or a report. Let somebody else have the pleasure of saying "I quit", I quit right now, and so far I've gracefully declined to be drawn into this up and coming business of his. Whenever he so much as suggest that I do a little telephone answering or such like at his office-to-be I point out I have enough to do right now getting his shirts back from the cleaners and Bringing Up Father I decline the honor of being an office wife, too. They have progressed to the point of renting a place in San Carlos and negotiating a loan to give them a start and there is talk of buying a Volkswagen for business. Another bid came through the mail today for a job at Moffet Field (here we go again), so one of these days they'll really get rolling. He asked Cammie if she'd be interested in giving him some time to act as telephone answering service though privately I think they'd better let the telephone handle it. Surely a telephone answering service can't be so much, and I'd rather not tie Cammie's vacation

time up in sitting around a store, though she thinks the idea is perfectly fascinating and has such wonderful possibilities (money, you know).

Our Brownie Fly-Up went off successfully, though let me tell you right here and now, when honors are given out for public speaking YOU can have the Oscar. I still go into a cold sweat whenever I think of that little speech of mine. I had such a nice little speech written out (oh I'm always good at writing it) and went around for days mumbling to myself or declaiming to anyone who would stand still long enough: Ladies and Gentlemen etc. etc. and then when it came time I muffed it, sure as Fate. Jere took a tape recording of it and all I could hear was Blackie barking his fool head off. I'd locked the dogs up in the basement and Jere let 'em out when he came over, and the darned mutts wanted to become Girl Scouts, too. They told me I did very well, and who am I to doubt it! but you can't prove it by me. I wanted to talk a little about what it means to be a girl scout and all that goes with it, and to answer some of the questions parents generally ask. It was raining cats and dogs that night, but all the parents and a few extra relations showed up, much to our surprise. We had about twenty-five adults and about twenty kids, counting our eleven fledglings. And I'm happy to report everything went off smoothly and according to schedule. We had made a sort of bridge which they crossed waving goodbye to their brownie days, they said their promise without a hitch, their laws in unison, they sang three songs and gave their performance flawlessly, I was very proud of them. They all wore a green skirt and white blouse, and during the ceremony I capped them and put the Girl Scout neckerchief on them and pinned on their pins. Talk about being all thumbs! Every one of the little dears came up to me afterwards and said I put the pins on upside down, I explained very carefully (on the spur of the moment), that the pins went in easier that way and they could all do a good deed and turn them right side up. Hah! how's that for fast thinking?

The Sunday after that we had our promotion day at Sunday school and I was free, FREE for the summer. No more pencils no more books, no more pupil's dirty looks....! Nowadays I spent all my time ferrying kids to and from the swimming pool. Our kids and their friends are taking swimming lessons, even Penny, and What Cammie wanted lessons for I'll never know, but she claims that although she knows how to swim (and loves it) she wants to learn it properly and get her certificate. She'll do it, too, I watched her a couple of times, and boy, that girl is part fish. Bobby has to make his swimming tests in order to get his first class scout badge. If and when he earns it, believe me, he will have EARNED it. Does that sound too mixed up? He likes to play around the water all right, but he gets cold so soon that he spends more time wrapped in a towel than in the water, and he just can't seem to learn to relax enough. When he has his mask on and his fins he does very well, probably because he can get from one side of the pool to the other quickly, but when he is on his own I can see him get a bit panicky and he gets flustered and his motions get too hurried, but he has learned a lot already and I do believe this time he'll probably make it at that.

We haven't gone anywhere so far, and with Jere so busy I doubt if we will the rest of the summer. The kids are busy too with their swimming and what have you, so they haven't

complained of being bored yet. We went to the beach a couple of times, but you know how the beaches are hereabouts, too darned windy and cold. The kids have fun all right, hunting for shells and just playing around, but little old me gets tired just sitting around waiting for THEM to get tired. I'd much rather work in the garden, with my two faithful shadows dogging my every footstep. I bet I never told you about Blackie, did I? First we don't have a dog at all and next thing I know we've got two, no less. One of my neighbors and friend, Jane moved away and couldn't take her dog along, they were going into an apartment and this is a big black brute of a dog with the gentlest disposition, I just adore him, I always did like him whenever I went up to see her, so I said I'd keep him until they could find him a home. After one day she might as well have stopped looking, he found a home. Ours! Penny cried at the mere thought of giving him up, and the way he follows me around and adores me with his brown eyes I'd as soon give up Penny as give up Bootsie or Blackie. It was a lot easier to train Bootsie with the big fellow around and they get along just beautifully, and for a wonder instead of Jere squawking about having another mouth to feed he actually **LIKES** the dog. Fact is he likes him better than any other dog we ever had. Although I had told Bernard, whose dog it really is, that I'd only keep him until he could take him back, by now I think it would break my heart and Blackie's too, if we had to part. Janel had divorced her husband, you see, but after a couple of months they made up and now bought a house again in Redwood City and they really could take him back, we sort of reached an impasse. Whenever they came to see me, and Bernard would make a point to come and see his dog, Blackie would greet him all right but then make a beeline for me and press against me so hard he'd almost knock me over, he'd wag his tail and let Bernard pet him, but then he'd come back and sit on my foot as much as to say: This is where I belong, and he never once went up to his old home or try to run away, from the very first day. Guess he gets more loving and petting and pampering than he ever had in his life, and he knows a good thing when he gets it. Janel and her husband could see the way it was, that Blackie had come to love us, and that it would be unfair to the dog to take him away again, and anyway they had Rex, that's Blackie's father, and the few times they met they fought like anything, Blackie would surely kill the old dog or cripple him, so there would be no point of taking him back anyway. But it's hard to explain that to a kid, and I feel just awfully guilty about it. If I thought for one minute that Blackie would be happier with Bernard, I wouldn't hesitate a minute, but I know it is better to preserve the status quo. The only time I've been unhappy about Blackie is when he killed our white rat, I'd begged and begged Penny not to leave him out of the cage, I feared this very thing. And the little thing was so used to Bootsie it didn't occur to her to be afraid. It happened so fast I could hardly believe that Blackie could move so fast. One minute he was sitting by my side and the next he'd darted across the room and the rat was dead. Just like that. But then he killed a couple of snakes in our walks, too, so how can I blame the dog for something that under ordinary circumstances only wins him praises. Some day he might be with the kids and kill a rattler, of which there have been several in our neighborhood, and earn our undying gratitude.

Although Blackie killing our white rat made the kids and me very unhappy, in his secret heart Jere was mighty glad, and possibly that's one more reason why he likes the dog. We

used to let Harlequin run around the house, and he or rather she, it was a female, was the only white rat I can think of that would come to me when I called it. It would pop out from behind the refrigerator or stove and climb up my skirts and sit on my shoulder, and was just about the cutest thing on four legs you ever saw. She and Bootsie would play together by the hour, sleep together and eat out of the same dish. But Blackie was an outdoor dog and used to chasing anything that moved so really it was only a question of time, either we had to learn to keep the rat locked up or Blackie outside. But with a little imp like Penny in the house neither was possible. Only a few days before Jere had a conference with a man in the living room and the little stinker was out as usual and trustingly climbed on top of Blackie who was sleeping in the living room, Blackie moved and the rat shot up Jere's pant's leg and can you just picture it! Jere shaking his leg like mad, the man ogling the procedure as if he'd just seen a madman, and then the mad scamper of rat and dog and man all over the place! The wonder was that the evil deed didn't take place right then and there, and it would have but for Deedee who saved Harlequin by putting him back in his cage where he should have been in the first place. Although I laughed until I cried when they told me about it and still go into hysterics whenever I think about it, I guess it probably was just as well.

July 30, 1955

Good gracious grief! DON'T tell me another two weeks have slipped by and this letter is still stuck in my typewriter. Oh! Oh! Last week Jere called me up in the middle of the day and said the plums were ripe and ready to be picked. There's a girl at the office who has several trees in her yard and neither she nor her mother are much for canning, and even if they were, there are more plums on those trees than five families could use. Anyway, next morning bright and early I took off for Palo Alto and picked plums (and ate some) until the big basin and several boxes were full. These are the little plums, I really don't know what they're called, to me they're Damson some folks call them 'cherry plums' and that's just what they look like. But you can imagine the trouble trying to make jam out of them. Jelly is fine, nothing to it, just strain 'em through a sieve or cheesecloth bag, but we like jam, so I go to all the trouble of handling all the pulp to get the stones out. More darned fun! The first batch we cooked up the kids helped and thought it was more fun to squish their hands through the mess...but then even their enthusiasm wore off. Anyway, I made up about twenty-three glasses and then ran out of sugar and paraffin, so went to the store. When we got back I noticed a lot of strange little folk under the tree and a car with a trailer hitched on trying to maneuver into a space. I squealed with delight, "Oh it must be the Duncan's and how can that be, I just got a letter and nothing was said about a vacation!" It wasn't. But the next best thing, one of my former friends and neighbors, Carleen Rigg and her family. My gosh, I hadn't seen them for so long and we didn't stop talking for four hours. They have four kids too and you can hardly believe how kids can grow beyond recognition in a couple of years. Lance is quite the young man, though only a year older than Bobby (and took quite a shine to Cammie I'll have you know). We made supper, and fed the kids first, and I thanked my lucky stars for my meat in the freezer and some second sight had prompted me to cash my housekeeping check two days in advance and I was lucky enough to have plenty of food in the house---for once. But oh, the state of the house! It defies description. I had left to go 'pluming' at eight in the morning and

hadn't even made the beds. Usually Cammie has her room in apple pie order, and so does Bobby, but not that day. There were plums all over the place in bowls and dishes and pulp and seeds and the big canner full merrily boiling on the stove. My bedroom in its usual state with wash all over, oh yes, the show place of the nation. But what the heck! While Carleen and I chewed the fat the kids, bless their little pointed heads, worked like beavers to clean up.

Jere is starting on his vacation today, not that we'll do much of anything. He'll probably go to his shop and get that set up, he finally got his loan and now they can really get started. Anyway, the way our car has been acting lately I'd hesitate to take a long trip with her. Baby needs new shoes, too. And one of these days she's going to fall apart like the one-horse shay. And only five years old, too. But she's been well used, I'd say and we ought to be about ready for another one. Well, one of these days Papa is going to go to town and wealth, spelled M-O-N-E-Y, is going to start rolling in and we'll get us a new one. Gosh, a girl can dream can't she?

So how are things going out your neck of the woods? I see by your letter you've had your full quota of sick kids so you ought to be able to settle down to an uneventful rest of the summer. All you have to look forward to is someone stepping on a rusty nail or falling off a swing. Boy, I should've had your letter for reference (the one dated Jun 15) when I had to make my little speech for our fly-up. Where it says: Don't make with the fig leaf, don't look at the cracks of the ceiling etc. etc. And never, no NEVER say Thank You. Ha! I bet I broke every rule in the book...

I sat up until midnight for the past two nights finishing that pieced quilt I started for Cammie over two years ago down in Hawthorne. It sure is purty and I'm so proud of it. I finally gave up trying to carry out my design and just finished it hit and miss, and it looks just as good, now maybe I can throw out all the rest of the scraps and pieces that I've moved around for years and years and added to over those same years. I really started to houseclean downstairs. If we haven't missed it in a month, out it goes. If I can't mend it immediately, out it goes. I've got Cammie helping me, and she's a really hardhearted Hannah whenever I start to weaken. So far we've carted four big boxes to the dumps and tomorrow I'll get at Deedee's play clothes, and try to convince her she is now too old for Dress-Ups. Though I still have Penny, and she cries bitterly whenever I mention throwing out her lovely, lovely dress-up dresses. I'll allow them just one small box of stuff, and that's positively all. I've cut off enough buttons to fill a coffee can and now have more zippers, used ones that is, than the five and ten. Where on earth did all this clutter come from? Don't tell me I spent good money moving it up here? Cammie is planning her birthday, slumber, movie and snack party for next week, and we want to have the den in fit condition for five bouncing young ladies to 'slumber' in. I'll make Bobby sleep upstairs for the night, I can just imagine what a commotion it would cause if he burst in unannounced on the girls in stages of undress.

Well, Old Girl, I'll call it a night and say bye-bye for this time. Anyway, I've talked Jere out of making me go for a walk on pretext I've got to finish this letter, and he and the dogs have gone around the bend by now, now I can relax.

P.S. I so enjoy your jokes, WHERE do you pick 'em up?

P.P.S. The Howards have sold their house, and just when I got used to going into their swimming pool, too. They sold it to some people who belong to our church, but unfortunately she is one I just can't cotton to. Maybe when I get to know her an awful lot before I'll run in and borrow an egg from her. I'd sooner have had a completely new set of strangers for neighbors than THEM. Well, we'll see. I could be wrong you know. Maybe she's just shy (hah! Shy she says. Snooty is the word) I am being very unchristian, I know, but it's been so hot again today, just can't work up any enthusiasm or Christian charity. See you doll baby.
and I miss you, too,
as ever

Thursday Aug. 31. '55

Hi, Doll:-

Guess I hit the Jackpot with yesterday's mail, two letters yet! And such nice, long, newsy letters. Thanks a million, I'm so relieved to know that everything is more or less under control and Pop is home again. Gosh, Mumsi, I can't even think---the lot next to us was sold and they started to dig away the hillside for the foundation this morning, and with all the noise of the tractor and the kids, ours and everybody else's, running in and out and the dogs barking and the dust flying I tell you it's a madhouse around here. But I'll try anyhow, at least until it's time to take Cammie for her piano lesson. I feel kind of two minds about this business of a house going up next door. I told you, didn't I? that I found to my dismay we haven't got much ground around this mansion of ours, only about a sixty foot frontage, but it wasn't evident because of the empty lot between our house and the McCoy's, and on the other side are three lots that are mostly rocks and big old oak trees. Many people have looked at that site but found out it's murder to try to build on. The owner will only sell as a parcel, and the shape of the land is curved around the hill and it would mean dynamiting to get into the rocks, so everyone has held off. We tried to buy just the one lot next to us because of the trees on it, but he won't sell just one. Even if I had the money I doubt very much that I'd want the whole parcel, too much upkeep, so I can only hope that whoever buys the place will leave the trees alone. Now that our kids are getting more grown up they don't play much under or in the trees anymore and it wouldn't matter too much if they belonged to someone else, it's just that I hate to see them cut down.

It sure has been hot around here the past few days, but that's normal, we always get our summer weather around this time of year, and when I say 'hot', I don't mean hot like in New Jersey.. The way I can't stand heat I feel like I'm cooking when the thermometer registers eighty in the shade, and the one blessing is the ocean breezes that spring up regularly every evening about five or six, at least it cools off enough at night so you can sleep, and a hot night is something that I can just vaguely remember from back east.

Went out to the sewing club last night and madly sewed away at school clothes. Besides helping my friends out, gee, I'm a regular authority on sewing and my machine is just about as popular as I am (pat on my back) no kidding, I make everyone's button holes and with that zigg-zagg stitch of mine we can just about do anything we want. I also tried my hand at designing, and that's something I intend to learn more about in night school this winter, although I've done pretty well with the children's clothes I designed a few simple summer dresses for my friends, I almost hate to do it for someone else and wished I knew a little more about it. I have an idea what I want but to get the effect is mostly trial and error. I made Cammie a darling dress with a scoop neck and rows of jumbo rick-rack and looks lovely on her, and of course made about six skirts and blouses for the girls. Now I'm in the mood to make something for myself. Today, PAYDAY, I shall go forth and spend Jere's hard earned dollars buying shoes and underwear and then we'll be all set for school.

Saturday September 10, 1955

Good grief, if I had to pay a fine for every day I keep this letter waiting, I'd owe you quite a hunk of money wouldn't I? It's been so gosh-blamed hot this past week, I mean hot for hereabouts, nothing like the heat you get back there in New Jersey. But I never could stand the heat very well and feel like a wrung out dishrag all day until the breezes come up at night. Thank god for our nice cool den downstairs. Now that the public pools are closed down I wished I had gone swimming before. Ruby dragged me off to get my new suit wet at least once, and we had so much fun I could kick myself for not doing it before. Where else could I have gotten an afternoon of fun and relaxation for forty cents, I ask you. And we would have to pick the very last day, next day the pools closed for the season.

I guess my mind isn't functioning very well in this weather, I read over what I'd written and found I repeated myself. I babble and don't say nothing. After what happened to me today I guess I'm entitled to sound a little crazy. Yesterday I worked myself into a frazzle canning plums and pears and making jam. Jere's partner, Herb, had brought three boxes of fruit and I had to do something with it before they spoiled and what the kids didn't eat. You must remember what it's like, preparing the stuff and getting the jars ready and then watching the clock and so on and on and on until you wish you'd never see another pear or another plum in your whole life. Well, today I was still tired and it's still hot so I wander around in a daze--put the dishes in the dishwasher and wanted to soak the pots. I put them in the sink and ran the hot water and then wandered off into the bedroom to do a little ironing. Jere had gone to his workshop and the kids were all downstairs playing ping-pong. Much much later Bobby came upstairs and started yelling for me. I looked up and the water came meeting me in the bedroom. Water, water everywhere and HOT water at that. Honestly, I didn't know where to begin. It was inches deep in the kitchen and I got to worrying about the hardwood floor and the inlaid linoleum. Well we all fell to swabbing the deck and had it pretty much under control, when I discovered that all the drawers by the sink and the cupboards were full of water, and we started all over again. Just when I thought we'd see the end of this, Bobby came rushing upstairs to inform me that it had started to leak into Jere's workshop and all his tools etc. were getting a good soaking. Oh Brother! He had some T.V. sets downstairs that he was working on and that didn't even belong to us, and I had to madly try to dry everything off at once. He came home while I was still trying to dry things out and of course he gave me H*E*L*L. What a day! Supper was two hours late and now I'm sitting here at ten o'clock at night trying to compose myself and this letter. I sent the kids to the movies, the atmosphere was positively poisonous around here and now I have to stay awake long enough to go and pick them up. I'm too mad at Jere to go in and watch T.V. (so much the good for you) though what I've got to be mad about I'll never know. Sure he flipped his lid, but why shouldn't he? Even though a still small voice inside me keeps saying, all right so it was my fault, but once the milk is spilled there's no use crying about it, you have to go to work and clean up the mess.

Thank God school starts next Monday, I don't think I could have held out much longer.
I'll sort of close this sad epistle today and try and write again next week when things have
simmered down a little. Bye bye, parents. I'm awfully glad things are better with you.

Keep up the good work.

With all our love, as ever and for the present
your darling daughter

November 10. 1955

My Poor, Darling Mother:-

I was going to answer Pop's little letter, but when I got your epistle yesterday addressed to "Elfriede", quote and unquote, I thought I'd better forget about my sore finger and cheer you up a little, even if it's only to make you madder at me. Feeling pretty neglected, aren't you Angel? Well, we'll fix that. I shouldn't wonder if you took to your bed out of sheer range because I remembered to send Pop a check and your present is just now in the mail. Honest, Mums, it's easier to write on a piece of paper than to get something to the post office, however, that's no excuse, is it, and you're perfectly justified in feeling sore. But please don't be, you should be philosophical by now about your slow-poke daughter, and I always have the very best intentions, and you must be pretty tired by now with the same old alibi, 'BUSY-BUSY-BUSY', but truly, I am.

Well, the insurance adjuster came out finally and looked over the damage, estimated it at two hundred and fifty dollars, they're going to practically re-build the redwood fireplace mantel, and paint the ceiling and re-do the floor. He said it would have to be refinished to match the piece they'll have to set in. So far, so good, but we discovered to our dismay that we have no insurance on the furniture, so we'll have to chalk up the chair and the books that were destroyed due to my carelessness. Darn it anyway. How would you like me to cry on your shoulder for a bit, we were just hit by a tax bill that staggers my imagination. I don't see how we can cut down enough on anything to pay three-hundred and thirty-seven dollars by January, the first installment will be due on Dec. 5th, on top of that I found out that the car insurance has expired and I'd been running around a whole week without coverage. Oh well, all THEY want is money, not blood (or letters). I've been feeling pretty low anyway because I've had to destroy Blackie, our big dog, and it practically broke my heart. But he bit another little kid on Halloween night, and I just couldn't take the chance of having him around anymore, with all the new houses being built and all the new little kids moving into the neighborhood. Killing cats and leaving me stuck with vet bills was bad enough, but biting children is a horse of another color so I took him to the vet and had him put to sleep. And would you believe it, the kids didn't even miss him and it's almost two weeks now. Penny did say something the other day to the effect that she wishes Blackie would come home, she thinks he's lost. Well, we still have Bootsie, and it's a lot less complicated having only one dog.

We've also had another little communication from the Los Angeles Welfare Agency, registered mail this time, to make sure we got it. About Jere's mother. Jere wrote them a letter explaining our situation, and if they feel we can squeeze out thirty dollars a month for her they'll just have another guess coming. After reading over the figures they'll probably come to the conclusion that WE should go on relief. I feel a little bitter about that anyway, because she was useful to George and Laura for the past ten years and any money that Jere would send her would only help them out, let them look after her, they owe her some responsibility, outside of raising Jere for seventeen years she never did a darned thing for the kids or me. You know, if she had shown the least bit of feeling or

affection for the kids I'd be breaking my neck to see that she got something, no matter how hard it would be for us, but it's always been just Laura and Adelaide and Albert, well, the three of them can take care of her now. Jere was so mad about it he said if they force him he'll move out of the state. He would, too, it would be just like him, especially now that he's beginning to feel hemmed in with all the building going on around us. Gosh how I wish the house next to us were sold so I'd know what sort of neighbor I'd have.

This has been another one of those days in which I end up by feeling "Why did I ever want to be a parent anyway?" Camille is a cheerleader for her school and with the football season in full swing my two oldest come home long enough to grab a half a loaf of bread and latch onto anything edible they can find and then ask me to drive them down to the football game. To top everything she coaxed me into making the skirts for the six girls on her team, so I had to rush to the store this morning, buy the material, cut out six skirts, have a house full of twittering teen-agers at lunch time being fitted, have the skirts and letters ready by three, have my Girl Scouts come swarming into the house by three-twenty, get them set with their routine and take the girls to the game, rush back to restore peace and sanity, dish out the ice cream and lemonade, comb Penny out of my hair, squelch a feud between Deedee and little Ruby, see that they all go home with the had and book and purse and sweater that they came with, and dash down to pick up Jere, cook supper and then collapse into the nearest chair. And you wonder why I don't write. Hah! This goes only in different scenes, acts, and plays day after day.

For the last three weeks we've been having our summer weather again, in other words it's been hot. After putting all the summer clothes away, I've had to dig out my shorts again, and you know how hot weather affects me. I feel like a wrung out dishrag and everything is just too much effort. And yet, the wash has to go out and be brought in and sorted and put away, the yard has to be watered if I don't want to lose all my plants, the kids still come home from school and want to find a cake or cookies to eat, and I get so doggoned annoyed with Jere saying "Now be sure and get a good rest this afternoon" I guess he's worried the old grey mare will collapse in harness one of these days.

Oh good lord, here it is midnight again, no wonder my eyes start to close and I can't seem to be the usual cheerful self that I am during the daytime. I'll see if I can get the kids to stay home long enough to write you a letter.

Nightie night, sweetheart, be of good cheer (that letter's here)
Best love to you both
from all of us.

November 16. 1955

Hello, Darlin':-

The weatherman has finally caught up with us, and the drizzle outside is only matched by the sniffles of my nose. Between running to see if it's leaking under the den door yet, and wiping my poor sore, dripping nose I'm having quite a ball. Ah! What wouldn't I give for some of that sunny warmth I was squawking about only a little while ago. But then, us women are never satisfied, if the thermometer registers 85 degrees I'm too hot, and now I want to huddle up by the blazing fire. Why, oh why, does a measly little cold in the head make you feel the world is coming to an end! Well, anyway, mine is---for weeks now, Ruby, Norma and I had planned to go to the Annual Mason's Dinner Party, the one big shindig during the year for which we planned to go as a group, and here my doggoned cold is getting worse instead of better. I will surely look cute with my hair done nicely, perfumed and manicured and clutching a mess of Kleenex in my hot little hand. But I'm going, make no mistake, after talking Jere into it (he's not much for the social life you know) I'm going if they have to carry me there on a stretcher. Dig out those silver dancing shoes, Mother's going to dance or know the reason why ever not!

Guess I haven't been living right lately, I've gotten into the darndest scrapes. Take last Friday (yea, you take it, I don't want it) It was Sewing Club night, and also the night the two oldest kids go to the show. Their father finally broke down and permits them to go out at night, providing they go in a group and I pick them up after the show. Anyway, it was my turn to pick up some of my friends, and I almost forgot one of them, so I started to go into a driveway to turn around, and as luck would have it a car came by in the opposite direction and took more than his share of the road, so I backed up a little more to give him plenty of room and 'boing' I found myself in the ditch with the wheels spinning, and the car wedged against the bank. Well, eventually a kind gentleman stopped and after looking the situation over he gave me a gentle heave-ho and I was back on the pavement. Well, that night after sewing I went to pick up Cammie and her girl friends and started to take them home, each living in a different direction, and one of the little darlings lives away over in Redwood City, which means going through the hills and around the mountains. Well, I noticed my lights were awfully dim, and just when I got into the middle of nowhere and took my foot off the gas the lights would go out completely and there I was in the pitch dark on those curving roads. I practically felt my way along, scared as a get out, knowing that if my motor were to quit on me I'd be stranded. However, we finally made it, dropped her off and came home along the well traveled highway even though it was the long way around. By this time it was getting onto one in the morning and I knew all the girl's mothers would be worried to death, but I didn't dare drive faster than I could see. I managed to get around the corner of Ralston, just about a block from home when the motor stalled and there we were. I left the car and walked Tina home, and then went home with Cammie. Jere was in the throes of talking business with his partner, figuring out some kind of bid or other and had hardly missed me or noticed how late it was. Well, next morning I went to get the car and sure enough the battery was deader than a door nail. One of my neighbors tried to give me a push to see if she'd start,

and lo and behold we locked bumpers and had traffic tied up in four directions, until with the combined effort of every able bodied male in the vicinity we managed to get loose from each other. I coasted down the hill to the nearest gas station to have my battery charged enough so I could get to Sears, Good old Sears, and buy another one.

Sunday, or four days later

I've still got my cold and it's raining again. I cleared up for a day and a half and now it's really pouring again. All I can say, if the T.V. aerial falls down today it can jolly well stay down, I'm not about to clamber about on the roof for nothing or nobody. Last Sunday it came down and Bobby, the clever little fox, took off for the movies and I was elected to go up and help Jere. I'd rather read a book anyway.

Camille is joining Job's Daughters on December the first, it's an auxiliary organization of the Masons for the young teenagers, and she's been waiting breathlessly for her thirteenth birthday to put her application in, and it finally came through. We went shopping for her first formal yesterday, gollies, it makes me feel terribly aged to see her wearing such a grown-up dress. It's darling, pink and strapless and she has such a gorgeous figure to fit into it, she looks just lovely. Now we have to try to find pink shoes to go with it and we'll be all set. Next June will be her graduation, too, and I guess formals will be the order of the day from now on. I managed to save up seventeen dollars for her, and turned her and her girl friend loose in San Mateo to see what she could find that would fit the budget and her fancy at the same time. She had a lot of fun, I bet, and didn't do too badly, the dress was just sixteen ninety-five and she had to phone me to come to the rescue with fifty-one cents for the tax. While we were there we looked at coats, too, she needed one so badly, and I put a five dollar deposit on one. We just hope the weather stays warm enough until the first of December when I hope to get it out of bail. Of course the others are crying (figuratively speaking) that they need shoes, shirts coats etc. etc. etc. Honest to gosh, if they would only stop growing, maybe I could catch up with myself. Cammie is just about my size now, and we can wear each other's clothes, isn't that wonderful? Most of the time it's MINE she's got on her back, but once in awhile I find myself caught without anything, and it's sure nice to go to HER closet and dig out a skirt and sweater or blouse.

Cammie had another piano recital today, too, and it always makes me feel so proud, she looks so cute and really plays very well. Thank goodness, I never have to remind her to practice, she loves to play and voluntarily practices whenever she gets a little spare time. Which is really something, she has a pretty full schedule, kids are so busy nowadays, what with school and all the things that go on after school, games and such, you hardly ever see them except when they come to raid the icebox. They can always eat. They brought home the first report card and I was pleasantly surprised at Bobby, for the first time in history he had three E's, and 'S's' in everything but Spelling, that still has to be worked on. But, no kidding, he finally has decided to buckle down and bring his books home to study, and is actually showing us for the first time that he is a really bright boy. Deedee of course always had a good report card, and the only trouble we have with her is the fighting she does with her sisters and brother, but in spite of that she is a very sweet little girl. I'm afraid Penny is getting more and more spoiled and willful. She really is quite a handful and between everyone petting and protecting her, or trying to boss her she

really has a trying time of it. She is really ready for school and I'm only sorry she missed out by a couple of weeks and has to wait a whole year. I was thinking of sending her to Nursery School, but with all the little kids moving into the neighborhood it is no longer necessary she has lots of playmates now, and doesn't hang onto me so much anymore. You ought to see her in her Davie Crocket hat and the long wooden gun that Bobby made for her, she's a character.

Well, doll, Deedee just came to set up housekeeping on the table, she's making cookies, so I'll have to cut it short and close up shop. Bye-bye for today.

Friday the 25th of November

Hi, Parents:

There's nothing like a cod in de node to make you feel like you lost your last friend, unless it's the kind of situation I found myself coping with for two whole rainy days. The workmen came on Monday to do the floor, of course everything WOULD have to be done backwards. First they fixed the fireplace, that was okay, a very nice job then they came and painted the walls and ceiling, even painted the hall (because he had the paint mixed and might as well use it, he said) and then, after having the books sitting around on the bedroom floor, and all my brick-a-brack on the porch getting rained on, only then, three days later did they come to do the floor. Of course all the furniture had to be taken out and I moaned and wrung my hands over the careless way they put the stuff in the hall against the newly painted walls, and the piano, rocking chair and great, big old davenport ended up in the kitchen. If you can imagine such a thing! Every time I wanted to open the icebox I had to move the couch back against the stove, and then move it back again to get around the stove to the sink, I barked my shins until they are black and blue and leaped from obstacle to obstacle trying to cook. Oh it was great! The kids thought it was, anyway and Cammie got a bang out of practicing the piano sitting on the arm of the couch. Well, they sanded one one day, and the next put the first coat on, in the afternoon they put on the second coat, and while I was out doing some shopping someone came in to wash off the brick and had put newspaper down on the sticky floor and walked on it! I pretty nearly blew a gasket when I saw it, then the man moved the big old radio combination back in place and left scratches all over, and after that I just closed my eyes and prayed. However, it does look nice now, after moving the stuff back again and polishing up the furniture and piano it really looked lovely. For all of a day I forbade the kids to enter with shoes on, so what happens? Deedee was sitting in the rocking chair and Cammie was dishing out pie, gave a piece to Penny who was bringing it to Deedee, and 'flop' the apple-pie went on the floor. I gave out one anguished shriek, I wasn't going to yell at anybody, it was the day before Thanksgiving and I was not going to say one cross word to anybody, but that was too much. I must have been heard in the next county! I had a headache from my cold, I didn't see how I was going to get up at the crack of dawn to cook our turkey, I had just gotten the tracked in mud cleaned up, the house looked nice for a change and it was just too much and I said so. Then I heaved a deep breath and told myself I've had it, I'm just not going to make a nervous wreck out of myself and the family trying to keep the shine on the floor and finger prints off the wall. The heck with it. Let's live it up today, sure I'll wax the floors and keep it neat and picked up but as far as scratching it up again, nuts to it. The winter season is here and we'll have rain off and on, and every time it rains the mud gets tracked in, no matter how much I urge the kids to wipe their feet, particles of sand get in and rubbed around so what of it.

We've had a very nice Thanksgiving, plenty of food and flowers and candles on the table, but honestly, it isn't a feast unless you have someone share it with you. Everyone I know has relatives to share it with, and even Ruby had company, I wanted them to come and eat with us, but she said she wanted to cook a turkey herself so they have something to nibble

on the next day. They ate with relatives the year before and she missed her snack. Gee, I would have given my share of the drumsticks to have you and Pop sit down to the table with us...And Christmas it will be the same, just no fun at all. Oh well. Today the sun is shining again and I ought to get out in the garden and transplant my peach tree and get some geranium in the back yard, but I just have no heart in it. Deedee went to a birthday skating party, Bobby is off with his friends someplace, and so is Cammie I guess I'm blue.

December 7. 1956

Good gracious grief, what happened to the time anyhow. Here I thought I had this letter finished and off long ago and just now I thought I'd sit down and write you and find it stuck in the typewriter. Which just goes to show you how much letter writing I do these days.

Did you get the stole yet? Did you like it? It is NOT a Christmas present nor the package coming up, we picked that up during the summer when we went to see Ruby at Ben Lomond down near Santa Cruz.

Well let's see what happened around here since I left off. For one thing Cammie got sick just about the time she was supposed to be going into Job's Daughter. She came home the day before and complained of a sore throat, a sore mouth and she had a temperature. I thought if I kept her home and quietly in bed for a day she'd manage to make this high spot in her young life. She had been looking forward to it for so long, and after buying the dress and shoes and everything I just didn't have the heart to say right out she couldn't go out that night. Well she was VERY quiet all that day and didn't eat, her mouth was beginning to break out in bumps and lumps and she felt just miserable, but she got up and got herself ready about half past six, she was supposed to be there at seven, Jere and Ruby and I went along. I don't know if you know anything about these organizations like the Masons, the Shiners, Eastern Star and Rainbow girls, but they are very ritualistic and the ceremony, although very impressive and beautiful, goes on and on and on for hours on end. I kept looking at Cammie, who incidentally looked like a doll in her new formal, but awfully pale and her eyes got more and more glazed-looking and she started to sway, and sure enough, half way through the ceremony she started to buckle and the Guardian (the matron in charge) caught her just in time and we had to take her out, prop her feet high and mop her brow with a wet cloth. She rested for an hour and was able to get back at the tail end of the procedure so she actually didn't miss out on being initiated. But I was never so glad to get her home again at eleven o'clock mind you, and the next morning I made an appointment to see the doctor. Who informs me gaily that she has 'trench mouth'! Trench mouth yet, why I never heard of it since I was a kid and thought it was soldiers were supposed to contract during the war. Well, it is very contagious, but only if you touch anything that was in her mouth. That God for our dishwasher, which does such a thorough job. I think she must have gotten it from the drinking fountain up at school. However, she stayed home and swallowed pills for the next four days and the infection is now gone. The only thing that bothered her more than anything was that she couldn't eat.

It hurt her to swallow and I was hard put to find something that suited her. And boy, was she tired of soup! And ice-cream if you can imagine that.

Today I'm babysitting for my neighbor, she has a job and her little boy has a bad cold, during this holiday rush season she can't very well take time off, so I said I'd keep him here. But it means I'm somewhat tied down and this is the day when I went out to the garage to start the car and found to my dismay that somehow or other I left the ignition and lights on and my battery, my new battery yet, was as dead as a doornail. I called the service station and he came up to get me started so I could go down and have the battery charged. It was drizzling again and I just hated taking those youngsters out in such horrible weather, but I had no choice, without the car I might just as well be dead and buried. Ruby took Jere to work and she would have picked him up again, but she also has a baby to take care of and I hated to ask her. Besides something had to be done in any case, it wouldn't get any better sitting in the garage. And let that be a lesson to me...

Well, Darling, it's almost time for the mailman to come so I'll stick this in the box. I'll write again later in the week. Okay? How are you and Pop feeling these days?

Bye now, and best love to you both

Sunday night December 12, 1955

Hi, Soph:-

Here comes that time of year again when you dig out the old address book, thumb and shuffle through boxes of Christmas cards trying to pick the right one for the right person until your brain begins to whirl and you see spots of green holly in front of your eyes. Oh I started out just fine, but each name that came up was someone I really ought to write a letter to, so the pile of names with letters owing began to grow and grow and the mere thought overwhelmed me, so I said nuts to the whole thing, and here I am beating my gums (pardon me typewriter) at you. I'd rather talk to you any day in the year...Besides, don't I owe you a letter too????

Right now I feel so bushed I don't even want to go downstairs and look at T.V. Our son and heir got the bee in his bonnet he wanted to hunt for mistletoe to sell, so yesterday I took him and his friend to Woodside to a likely spot and got goose pimples watching them climb around in those big old white oak trees, got my legs scratched up dragging the stuff back to the car, which incidentally never will be the same again. We went around to all the nurseries and had very little luck until we hit one of the wholesale Christmas tree places where the big boss bought the lot for four dollars and ordered six more boxes. Back we went for more, haunted the grocery stores for boxes, took the stuff down to El Camino and got eight more dollars. All together the boys made twelve dollars and Billy made a beeline for the nearest electrical store to buy his mother an electric kitchen clock. Bobby on the other hand made a beeline for the nearest sporting goods store to buy himself the football helmet he's been craving and simply could not live without. That was yesterday, today they got up bright and early at seven o'clock and Billy's father took them to Searsville Lake and they came back with a whole truckload full. Once again good old mother (that's me) rustled up the boxes and we began our trek from Belmont to San Bruno and sold about six dollars worth. The wholesale place ordered seven more boxes to be delivered Wednesday night, and in the afternoon the boys went out to sell bunches from door to door. Another dollar and a half. Gosh, those kids will have more money than I have. But anyway, Bobby was able to buy some Christmas presents and will have three and a half more on Wednesday, after splitting with Billy. They certainly are doing okay by themselves.

I had told them it would be a pretty lean Christmas this year, what wit the taxes to be paid and the car insurance due etc. etc. and all they could expect was the clothes they need with the exception of Penny, she's still a baby and Christmas is special for her. Even at that it will take some doing. Good Lord that reminds me, Jere in an off moment had told the kids he would match them dollar for dollar every one they earned legitimately (that is not from me) and at that rate they will have quite a sock full, Cammie has been doing a lot of baby sitting and she has kept track of her earnings religiously. Good Lord again!

We had quite a time with Cammie last week. You know she was going to be initiated into the Job's Daughters two weeks ago, and the day before she came home from school and complained of a sore throat and her mouth was hurting her [...]

December 19, 1955

Good grief, how this letter does hang around, I could have sworn it was finished and mailed ages ago. Well, we're having such a beaut of a storm since yesterday that finally the electric wires gave up the ghost and there's nothing to do but sit and write. I can't sew or iron or even wash dishes (say, what's the matter with my lily white hands???)

Anyway, I thought I'd write a letter or two and you could have knocked me over with a feather when I found this letter still stuck in the typewriter. Oh well, so you'll get it as a Christmas greeting.

Gosh the storm has been howling around this old homestead all yesterday, all night and is still going strong. The wonder is we haven't been blown down to L.A. yet. You know, Soph, when you're young a storm like this is fun, exciting and exhilarating and you just love it (at least I used to) but when you get along in years and own a house and kids, all you can think of is: Does the roof leak, Is the antenna still up, and for goodness sakes don't get your feet wet and I hope the shoes won't get ruined. Ah me, I'm really getting old...

This surely is an auspicious beginning to a two-week vacation... wet wash all over the place, wet boots underfoot and a bunch of wild kids whooping it up all over the house, and there's just no use even mopping the floor. Cammie was supposed to go out babysitting today, she has a job for the whole week, but the lady called up and said she wasn't going to work, and it's probably just as well. She was out a couple of days ago, babysitting, and when the midnight show was over and she still wasn't home Jere and I were doing the worried Parent act, pacing the floor and wondering if I should put my clothes on and go out to check up on her, she had left me a phone number but had been very vague as to whose house she was sitting in, and I didn't want to ring up and wake the babies at that hour of the night. You know, I just can't go to bed when any of my chicks are out, I always wait up, and it was with real relief I saw the car pull up and have her home, even though it was almost two in the morning.

Jere got his bonus check and I could hardly wait to cash some of it to get the Christmas buying over with. Of course I spent a lot more than I had budgeted for and I'm not through yet. I took Cammie with me for several days in a row and we looked from one end of town to the other for a black skirt to suit her, no luck yet. She finally decided she'd rather wait till after Christmas and maybe get a better buy. She's really grown up, the way she said it "So long as I get something before I get back to school, I'd be ashamed to say I got NOTHING for Christmas". What a girl, I dearly love her.

Well, doll, I'll sign off for today and get this off my chest. Have a nice holiday, and think of us.

Bye now, and best love to you all
as ever
Frances

December 26, 1955

Hello Parents:

Well, this has been a Christmas that I will remember to my dying day----what a week, what a week! We've had storms before the last two winters and rains, too, but never like this. Bobby got up one morning and stepped into two inches of water, splash, splash!! For two days I vainly tried to bail out the downstairs and it came in faster than I could mop it up, so I gave up in disgust and thought the heck with it. It poured through the windows and doors upstairs and for a whole solid week I couldn't use the washing machine, everything we owned was muddy and wet and dirty. It stopped raining for awhile on Christmas eve and a bunch of us from church went out caroling. No, first we went up to our neighbors house for some egg-nog, and after a couple of cups of that spiked stuff we decided we'd all go caroling. I had taken the kids to the movies, they were pretty restless and because of the rains making muddy rivers of every street here I didn't want to go out looking at the pretty decorations like I do every Christmas eve and the kids were anxious to open their presents, so the best thing to do was to send them to a show. Anyway, we caroled all over town and I almost forgot to pick them up at ten-thirty. Fact is we remembered them around eleven o'clock, so Wilbur, who was driving suggested we better go after them, even though there were already six people in his car. We met the kids half way home walking, seems the movies had so few people in it they turned off the lights and closed the house and after waiting outside for a long long time they decided they'd better walk home. There's a curfew for kids at ten o'clock and every time a police car passed them they were petrified they'd be picked up. Poor kids. Well, we sat them on people's lap and came home singing 'Rudolph the red-nosed reindeer' and Jingle Bells and Silent Night at the top of our voices. After we got the kids in bed, Nita called up and said to come to her house for a snack, she had ham and biscuits and would be hurt if we didn't come, so we all piled back in the car and went to her house for a midnight snack. What a night, but it sure was fun. Next morning eight seemed the crack of dawn to me, but I had to get up and stuff our eighteen pound turkey, bake pies and open presents. Looking at that pile of debris it seemed incredible that almost a hundred dollars in presents were under the tree. Of course all the kids got new shoes, and there's a hunk of money right there, Bobby got two pair of pants, two good shirts, a wallet, fountain pen, identification bracelet, and some other stuff from his sisters, Deedee got a white sweater set, two good skirts, a petticoat slip, scarves and one little doll complete with wardrobe. The kind of doll with washable hair and jointed knees that can kneel and sit. Penny got a Davy Crocket outfit, guns to go with it, bow and arrows, a set of jumbo beads to string, three pair of jeans and a Davy Crocket flannel shirt, a hobby horse on a stick (so she will leave my broom alone, which had been substituting for a horse) and a bunch of small things from the kids, like paint books and a xylophone and musical mandolin and a harmonica, things like that. Cammie got two nylon sweaters, a skirt, a photograph album, pen and pencil set, scarves, and she wanted a slim black woolen skirt, which we haven't gotten yet, because she couldn't find one she likes. From the money that Rose sent her she bought a darling woolen jumper in which she looks so grown up and pretty as a picture. She also got a good coat a few weeks ago. She had been baby sitting for a week

and with the money she earned she bought a dress. Saturday she helps Nita clean house and bake and get things ready for that midnight snack I mentioned awhile ago and with that money she bought another pair of shoes. Next week she will stay with another little boy for two days and with that she intends to buy some underclothes. She earned eleven dollars so far this week, and if she keeps that up she will have me in the poorhouse matching her earnings.

Jere gave me a beautiful table lighter (I'm always out of matches) and I was supposed to have bought me a bathrobe, but couldn't find the kind I wanted, so I will probably have to make it. I wanted a fitted flannel robe that ties around the middle. I can't be bothered to button or zipper when I get up in the morning, and I'm tired of chenille which is always dirty around the hem. I had ordered Jere a nice pair of lined moccasins with a sponge sole for slippers and the day before Christmas I got word from Sears that they're out of stock, so all the poor guy got was some orlon stretch socks, and a can of nuts. From my friends I got a couple of beautiful slips and a compact and lipstick, a set of angel chimes, a big tin can of decorated cookies and a pan of fudge, beautifully done up with lace papers and ribbons, much too pretty to eat, so I promptly called a family conference and we voted to take it to the minister and his wife. A real sacrifice on our part because we all love sweets and I had been unable to bake much this week on account of the weather. Half the time the power was off, and half the time the phone wouldn't work. Matter of fact, I tried all week to get you on the phone and can't even get the operator yet. I called the service operator and she said the lines are so busy or out that even she can't get 'operator' for me. I'll try again sometime during the week.

Bobby has been sleeping upstairs on the floor for the past week and since the water went away in his room yesterday I was going to clean up today, there's a layer of mud all over so what happens--during the night it stormed again and now there's the same old two inches of water back again. The rug from the den is out on the driveway and getting a good soaking every time it starts to pour, it will probably rot before it dries out. Jere and Bob put the weather stripping in the doors and windows and drilled a couple of holes in the cement hoping it would drain, but even though it helps in draining off after it stops raining, it doesn't do much good while the rain lasts, it comes in faster than it can flow out. I do believe the last earthquake we had must have cracked the foundation, we never had a bit of water come in before. I just don't know what we can do now, with Bobby's room down there. Unless we can lick that problem I can never put asphalt tile down like we'd planned. Even in the den, which also gets a good soaking nowadays. Makes it kind of rough if the kids can't go downstairs to play, I tell you. They put on their rubber boots the other day to go downstairs and play ping-pong, I laughed like crazy when I saw them, boy, they must sure have been bored...Jere sits in front of the television with his feet propped up on a stool and the fire is going to keep him from getting rheumatism. What a man. Of course he should be working this week, he has a lot of work to catch up on, but his excuse and a good one it is, is that his workshop is too wet. The place where he works is closed as usual during Christmas and new years and he had planned to do a lot of work for his business

I had some rotten luck with the car too. I had brought Jere home for lunch and when I went downstairs to take him back, lo and behold, a flat tire. Jere had on his good clothes because he was having a conference, so I asked Ruby to take him back while I struggled with the ^*)(*& tire. I found it had a break in it and I couldn't even use it for a trade-in when I went to buy another tire. Well, a few days later we had to go to Palo Alto in the pouring rain to pick up a T.V. set that Jere had repaired for a friend of ours, and on the way home we got another flat, right in the middle of a dark and lonesome stretch of road. It was such fun to change tires in the dark, no flashlight of course, and when I got THAT one to the service station it had a break in it too, and once again I had to buy a new tire. Right before Christmas too, it was enough to make you want to bite your own tail. Now the car is starting to vibrate when I go downhill and that means it ought to be aligned and the wheels balanced, and the garages are closed until Tuesday. I just won't use the car until that's fixed, is all, I don't want to have to buy any more new tires just yet.

December 28, 1955

I was peacefully snoozing in bed this morning around nine when Jere came in and informed me there was a package from you and when I wanted to know what was in it he said I'd better get up and find out for myself. A dirty trick I calls it. I had gone late to bed the night before and on vacation time I consider my day starts at ten. Anyway, I managed to pry my eyes open and climb out of bed and darlings, thanks a million. You are both sweet angels and I don't deserve nice parents like you. Jere beamed all over when he saw the stollen and the kids get so tickled when you send them things, coming from Grandma makes it extra special good. We thank you.

Bob oh boy, this has been one heck of a vacation...! Tuesday I took the car to be aligned and they informed me that the bolt I had found in my driveway a week ago came from the steering gear. Hah! That breeze I felt on my neck right along was no draft but my guardian angel hovering over my shoulder. This afternoon I thought I'd go visiting our old neighbors who'd moved down to Los Altos, and before I even got out of the driveway I had a flat. I took it down to the service station to be fixed, because I don't like to drive without a spare. Sure enough, not more than ten minutes after we left the Howard's house there was that strange noise again and right in the middle of practically nowhere on the mountain road I had me another flat. But a nice man came along and changed the tire for me and also told me not to go ahead, the road was too bad from there on on account of the storms we've had, so we turned around and went back along El Camino. I hate that, it's full of little towns and lights and traffic. But at least it is also full of service stations. That makes it four flat tires in ten days, and two in one afternoon. I had to buy two new tires the other times and just before Christmas, too. Oh nuts, I wish I had a horse...

Monday morning
February 20. 1956

Hi, Parents:

I really ought to be busily bustling about getting some semblance of order into this madhouse, but I don't feel like it. It was raining yesterday and every time I opened the typewriter to start my weekly letter to you all the kids found their way to the breakfast nook and hung around. Who can think with two little girls sitting as close as my elbows permit, busily working with clay and every second or so want you to admire their works of art, Cammie kept wanting me to take her to the store, though what could she be wanting in a grocery store that was urgent enough to drag me out in this weather is beyond me. Bob got some new records and even though I like The Great Pretender, after having my heart wrung twelve times in a row it begins to pall on me. Ruby and Mac popped in to tell us about their new T.V., Jere kept calling me downstairs to look at HIS T.V. and assure him it was a better picture than any I've ever looked at. Gripes, I can't call my soul my own, let alone concentrate on a letter.

Jere had been working on Ruby's television set, she had a great big twenty-one inch Muntz set, and in the past two years she's had to spend about five dollars a month to keep it in working order. Jere thinks it's a lemon and he wouldn't have it for a gift. He had a heck of a time with it, and he wouldn't charge Ruby for his time, only the tubes and parts he put in. We finally talked Mac into giving up this love of his life and trade it in for a smaller screen but better set. Being a Scotchman he did right well for himself, too. He got a two-fifty set, plus the blond table for a hundred and fifty. Works nice, too. I guess sometimes Jere wishes I didn't have so many friends who know he fixes TVs, he can't refuse when they ask him to look at their set and he won't charge except whatever he has to pay for tubes and stuff, and wholesale, at that. Janet called all the way from Redwood City and he hates to take the time to go way out there. I keep telling him it's good experience and he says 'Phowee on experience.'

Oh boy, this last week was a hectic one again. Monday Princess got her pups, that's the Min-Pin, and I had to go up and keep Ruby calm. I kept telling her to leave the dog alone, she was perfectly capable of having the babies without assistance. All she wanted was to be let alone and quiet. The first one was a normal size, the second one a great big brute, and the third one a wee little mite of a girl. Both mamas doing fine.

Tuesday I went up to school for the Valentine Party. I'm room mother you know. It was fun, too, but then I had to rush over to the church to help cook the dinner we put on every year for the Scouts Father-Son dinner. I had to be there anyway, on account of Jere and Bob, so I might as well make myself useful. And how. I set table, waited at table, cleared table, sorted silver, washed and dried and put away and didn't even take time out to eat my cold meal. We got home at nine and all of a sudden I felt pooped. Could hardly hold onto a cup of coffee. But I was very proud of Bob, he got his Star Rank, he is well on his way to Life and then Eagle. I know he'll make it, he hasn't lost interest yet. Wednesday

Sears took my washer away to be repaired, and it took me the whole darned day to farm out my washing to my friends. Everyone offered to do a load, and I can't just drop off the wash, I had (or did I?) to stay and have a cup of coffee and a cigarette and wait for the load to get done. Thursday I gave my girl scouts a party and the pins THEY earned. Friday I stayed home all day waiting for Sears to bring the washer back. It looks like new and works beautifully again. I hope it gives me another eight years of good service. Saturday I took the girl scouts to a play in Redwood City as part of their program, and we always make a day of it. But it seems to me that every day something was hanging in the fire. Friday night I had my sewing club and it was just as well I had to stay home, that way I got the house polished up without being tempted to take off someplace. Cammie went baby sitting across the street and I can never go to bed until all my chicks are in, so I stayed up until a quarter to four waiting for her. I knew Henny was going dancing, and when you wait all year to go dancing you don't come home at midnight like Cinderella, so it didn't surprise me any to find it getting late. But you know how I am, if I don't get my beauty sleep I'm a dead duck the next day. Bob had gone to a party and came home with his father's shirt covered with lipstick. At the tender age of twelve, bet those girls put on several layers of lipstick, just so they could rub it off on the boys. Deedee had gone to stay with a friend. That left only Penny to keep her daddy company downstairs. Cammie had her party last week, and honestly they were no better. Times don't change much, do they? and kids will 'spin the bottle' and play post office twenty years from now. I fixed her though, I kept going down to check the fire. After all, it gets cold down in the den, and we wouldn't want her guests to catch cold, would we?

I started to sew some new dresses for Penny, who seems to shoot out of her clothes so fast, I can't keep up with her. She'll be going to school this fall, you know, and I have to start the sewing now. So I guess I'll cut this letter short and get back again.

Bye now, till next time.
With love from all of us.

Mumsi, this is in answer to your note. Of course Ruby's got papers for her dogs. A darned good pedigree, too, there are several champions and Bonnie herself has won a lot of blue ribbons, though she never made the championship because Ruby got tired of trotting to all the shows, same as you did. I'll copy out the pedigree one of these days for you. Yes, she registered the litter. It will cost about fifteen dollars to ship the pup by air express, TWA. Mac has made a darling traveling case, which you will enjoy no end. He will have to charge you five dollars for it, which will barely cover the material I know for a fact, because he made one for Ruby, too. The puppies are seven weeks old now, completely weaned and paper trained, so you can have it any time you want. I named it "Belmont Beau", and he is a little darling. I spent most of my spare time up there playing with the pups, and this one was always my favorite, I can't think of another person I'd rather have him, than you. We would put the pup on the plane about ten at night and he'd get there the following evening about six o'clock. TWA had the best rate. The other lines wanted twenty five dollars and their shipping crates which would be seven-fifty more.

Boy, wouldn't I just love it if you came out in June!

P.S. I'm sending you a picture of Bonnie when she won one of her blue ribbons.

March 5, 1956

Hi, Parents:

Gripes, I just changed the ribbon on this typewriter, and by heck it's worse than it ever was. I was going to type out some pedigrees for Ruby and bought one that has red ink at the bottom, but at this rate I'll have to write at least four letters before it settles in a groove. Either that or take it all apart to clean the type.

Sweetheart, Angel Mother, do you really mean it? About coming out for Cammie's graduation??? The kids went wild at the idea, they thought it was just wonderful. See, if you can talk Pop into coming, too, he can't be a stick in the mud all the rest of his days. I have the most wonderful surprise for you, too, and it would certainly be a lot simpler to give it to you if you came out here.

The only thing is, I don't know for certain yet when the Graduation Day is. It will be a really big thing, because it will be the first graduation class in Cipriani. It's a new school you see, and this is the first year they've had an eighth grade. Cammie has asked for a watch, a little one. And because she really has been a good student and a wonderful girl all around, we had planned to give her whatever she asked for.

With Deedee's birthday coming up, I'm really on the spot. You see there are three of 'em having a birthday in the same week, three of my Girl Scouters that is, and with every one of them having a party it would mean waiting a whole week, think of it, a whole week! to Deedee that is absolutely tragic and unfair. She is still such a LITTLE girl, everything has to be right now. Gail, the first one to have her birthday on the twelfth is going to have a skating party. Ruby, on the fourteenth is going to have a luncheon on Saturday, and if Deedee wants a party she'll just have to either wait until the following Saturday and take her guests to the park for a picnic, or just invite two of her very best friends to a Chinese Dinner and a game of miniature golf afterward or a movie. Us three mothers would just as soon lump 'em all together in one big slam-bang party and get it over with, but the girls won't cooperate. They each and every one want a party of their own. Well, we'll see what happens. I made her a dress and have already bought two nylon petticoats and a small gift for her. I also bought the material for her Easter Outfit. Lavender corduroy for a jumper and a matching plaid for a dress to go under it. I think it will be cute. Last year's nylon dresses are still around, but since Easter comes so early this year I wasn't going to make anything so frilly and thin. I wish Cammie could make up her mind quickly whether she wants to buy her dress or have me make it up. I KNOW I can make it better and cheaper, but you know how they get just around that age, so darned particular. The last dress I made for her I did practically to order, she told me what she wanted and I made it, a pretty scoop neck, sleeveless dress, with a full skirt. So what does she do? She cut the top off and wore it as a blouse with her other skirts, and the skirt part is lying around waiting for an inspiration from me to put it to use.

Ruby has sold all her Bostons, but two. One is promised for a stud fee, and the other one has developed a hernia. Ruby can either sell him 'as is, for thirty-five dollars or pay the vet fifteen dollars to have him fixed up when he's three months old and then add that to the selling price. She's made at the woman who took the pup as stud fee and now expects Ruby to keep him and sell him with the others. You know you have to keep advertising all the time. Oh, People come and look at them and say sixty dollars is too much money. Pretty soon she'll have the Min-Pins ready for sale too. Right now she feels she never wants to have pups again and is seriously considering selling Toby. Toby was given to her in exchange for a pup, and though she is supposed to have a wonderful pedigree and always has a big litter, she has to have a caesarean every time, and doesn't get along with Bonnie at all, so she has to keep her separated all the time, and it bothers her.

We got another member in the family and I'm going around in circles. Ever since I got rid of Tarbaby because he was such a dirty cat and I just couldn't stand having to wash things over and over again because he left his messes in the closet and on the bed and even in my nice clean wash. Anyway, ever since then Penny has been clamoring for another kitty, so I told her in a weak moment I'd get her one if she kept a dry bed for a week. She did and I did. Strangely enough when I was asking around for a cat nobody, but nobody had one to give away. I finally found one in the animal shelter where I got Bootsie. A nice grey tomcat, full grown, but very gentle and mild mannered. Of course Bootsie turns green every time he looks at him, but so far I've managed to keep the dog from laying so much as a tooth on the cat. I wasn't that lucky about the canary. no, he didn't get the bird, but he darned near succeeded. He leaped on top of the cage and knocked it down, tore the hook right out of the wall, he did. So now the bird is hanging in the den, the cat is kept upstairs and what all my coaxing didn't accomplish the cat has. Bootsie hates to go outside now, he thinks he misses something. Before this, I had a terrible time keeping him in, and I don't like a dog running after cars and bicycles, and barking at every little thing, so I prefer for him to stay in the house when I'm in it. Now he does, he hardly budes from my heel, he's so doggoned jealous of the cat. Penny adores the pussy, and lugs him around all day long. He's a good kitty too, and uses his cat box, so I don't have any worry on that score, now if he will only earn his keep and get rid of the field mice for me, that have taken up their abode in the kitchen, I shall bless him and keep him.

More fool things happen to me. A week ago I wanted to go downtown and stopped at my neighbor's house, across the street, to pick up Penny. Well, ordinarily I put the car in reverse and set the brake automatically, this time I was in a hurry and shoved it into second by mistake, I had no sooner knocked on the door and asked for Penny when she looked behind me and said: "Mummie, the car is rolling," and roll she did, right smack into the gully. It was hung up by the right front wheel, and only by the grace of God didn't turn turtle. Well, I stood there and wrung my hands, figuratively speaking, when some telephone linemen came along to ask if they cold help. And help they did, they pulled the car out with their big old four-wheel drive truck, but in the process a rod broke underneath on the cement parapet. I went around for a week making the most goshawful scraping sound, with the broken rod going 'clank, clank scrunch' on the road until the

garage man finally got the part in and fixed it for me. Jere was real sweet about it, only pointed out to me they put an emergency brake on the car for people like me to use, not hand a purse on. He says...

Cammie went swimming again tonight, and it's just about time for me to get rolling and pick her and her friends up. Honest to gosh, I run a regular taxi cab service around here. Anyway, I'll close for tonight and get this letter into the mail in the morning.

Bye now, and best love to you both

P.S. I took the shirt back to the store, and the girl almost had a conniption fit. They are just about now putting out their spring stock and there is absolutely no warm shirt to be had for love or money. Nothing but lovely pinks and lavender Chinese neckline, gaucho neckline, and such sporty things like that. What shall I do? Send him the money so he can buy his own, or what? Such a pity, it was a beautiful shirt and cost me all of eight bucks. I had to trade it in for some underwear for Jere and a lightweight sports shirt, the kind he wears here in California. But that doesn't mean I want to slight Pop, just tell me what he wants and I'll see he gets it, somehow.

March 24th 1956

Hi, Parents:

Well, here we are, a week older, but not one bit wiser. Honest to Pete, if I was the type to run to grey hair I would have sprouted a good crop by now. I was trying to bake some doughnuts for the kids to eat when they came home from school, you know I have those Melmac dishes, and every once in awhile I have to soak them in a bit of Clorox to clean out the coffee stains, so I had them sitting in the sink and for no reason I could figure out Penny decided she wanted a drink of water and took it from the cup. I looked up and she was screwing up her face, too frightened to cry and when I asked her what the matter was she pointed to the cup, of course I knew right away what had happened and dashed to give her a drink of milk, stuck my finger down her throat to make her vomit, and then rushed over to the hospital with her. No kidding, if she had been seriously hurt she'd have been dead before somebody looked at her. The nurse took all the information, the doctor came, they looked through volumes of books, they asked me over and over how much she'd taken, and then the doctor went away. He came back about fifteen minutes later and said I had done all that could be done, her throat wasn't very raw and to take her home, keep her on a liquid diet for a day or two, and give her lots of milk and eggs. By that time she was feeling pretty chipper again anyhow, and by supper time she had her eggnog, was still hungry, ate a raw hamburger patty, was still hungry, ate MY cooked hamburger right off my plate, and as far as I could tell none the worse for her experience. Me, I was ready for the booby hatch... Meantime, I forgot to mention, my doughnuts and fit burned to a crisp, I was at the hospital so late I went after Jere fifteen minutes after I should have, so I missed him along the road, waited for half an hour at the appointed spot, and came home sore as a boil. Rushed Cammie down for her music lessons, and when I went back to pick her up I didn't see hide nor hair of her, so I made a couple of trips back and forth wondering where on earth she was. She was inside reading a magazine and 'waiting' for me. Oh well, such is my life...

Deedee had decided to have me take her friends to Playland, so last Sunday we took off, the five girls and me, and oh my aching back, was it ever cold there in San Francisco. Playland is right at the beach, and I do believe the sun never shines in San Francisco. Each time we've gone, I optimistically thought we'd have a nice day and each time I've been fooled. The sun shines bright and warm in Belmont and the closer I get to S.F. the colder and more overcast the skies get. Well, they had a good time, but I caught a heck of a cold in my back standing around waiting for them to get off the rides. I went on some of them just for the heck of it, but thought it would be better to save my money and let them have the benefit of it. I planned to spend about six dollars and ended up nine dollars poorer. But it sure was worth it, they had a lot of fun. Next Thursday the Junior M.Y.F. from our church is going to take the youngsters from the church and of course Cammie volunteered my services as driver. Excuse me while I dig my red flannels out of the mothballs

March 30 1956

Gosh, Mumsi, I never meant for this letter to lie around for a week. But Easter vacation hit me, and though the kids are really not very much trouble, still, they are home. That is, most of the time they're home. Cammie is baby sitting from eight to five every day, Bobby is off playing baseball from the minute breakfast is over, and I never see him again until late afternoon. (Unless he gets hungry in which case he comes home gobbles up every thing in sight and takes off again.) Deedee is the most useful and has been the best little girl all week, so far. She cleaned the house for me, and took care of the dishes, made the bed and really had everything shining and spic and span. Which worked out very well for me because Jere and I got ourselves all wound up in a couple of local situation and it's kept me hopping all week. First we found out that the council was going to move the Cipriani Center where the boy scouts had been meeting and were planning to sell the property to finance the moving. Well, it's about the only playground here in this area and ideal for the little children because it's on a dead end street and they don't have to cross any highways or busy streets to get to it. Our kids usually go there to play baseball or ride their bikes and roller-skate. Jere, the neighbors and me got together to see what we could do to stop it, and it means meetings and going to the council meetings and getting people's opinions and petitions. For me it meant searching out all the records pertaining to it, and I learnt more about the city hall in Redwood City than I ever know before. Then while I was talking to some friends of mine it came out that the school was planning to fire Bobby's teacher. Now we all think he is an excellent teacher. Any man who can get Bobby interested in his school work and actually get him doing home work and looking into the dictionary on his own can't be a bad teacher. On top of that all the parents in the seventh grade feel the same way about him, so we got together on that. More meetings, petitions, phone calls and what have you. I don't know that we can get to first base on either case, but we surely are trying. I've gone to all the council meetings and school board meetings, and honest to Pete, I found them absolutely fascinating. Even when they have nothing to do with me personally I'm learning a lot about my town and the people in it.

Cammie's gone swimming again tonight. And Penny is in the bathtub so I have to keep a weather eye both on the clock (to pick Cammie up) and on Penny to see that she doesn't drown herself or something.

Deedee got your letter and she asked me to translate the enclosure. Who in heck are those kids anyway? My nieces and nephews in GrossHausen? Or what? You know you're lucky you even get a letter from my kids, they are always so darned busy with their little private affairs, and they don't all have their mother's talent for writing lovely long newsy letters. Have you by chance saved the ones I wrote you when I was twelve? Boy from what I can remember they were neither very neat nor well written. And I loved to write.

Well, anyway, I guess I'll finish this off and go back to my lists. I have about three hundred names to type out complete with telephone and address, for Jere's lodge. As if I didn't have enough to do these days. That's what you get when the news gets around that you own a typewriter and know how to use it.

Bye now Baby, and isn't it a good thing I sent you my Easter card early this year????
That was last year's card. This one is brand new and will probably be late again as usual.

Best love to you both from all of us, as ever

April 5. 1956

Top o' the Morning to You:-

Well, the Easter Bunny has hopped in and out of our lives, thank goodness! Cammie spent her Easter vacation babysitting from eight in the morning till five in the afternoon and earned herself ten dollars. Which she promptly spent on clothes. Anyway, that's one I hardly have to worry about anymore. Oh, I do help her out now and then with a little extra, but mostly she takes care of her own clothes and cleaner's bills. I finished Deedee's dress and jumper and she looked just darling in it. Since Bobby never wants to go to church or Sunday school anymore there was hardly any point of outfitting him in new clothes, he has the suit I bought for him for the wedding and his shoes are still in good condition because he wears tennis shoes most of the time. Penny got some new dresses, but nothing fancy. I registered her for school, she'll start in September and I've been putting by some dresses for that momentous occasion. But the rate she is growing I guess I'd better let her wear them and start all over again. Neither Jere nor I went to church this year. They didn't have an Easter sunrise service and that would have been the only thing that appeals to me. I kid of got out of the habit of going. I get the girls there, and that's it. I got much too involved in other things, and unless it's something special they want my help on I don't want to bother anymore. I did take the kids to Playland the week before, and we didn't get home until midnight. Cammie had asked a boy to go with her, imagine, practically her first date! But they did have a wonderful time. As for me, all I did was stand around and freeze and drink one cup of coffee after the other, and all I got out of it was a cold in the shoulder. But what the heck, it was all in a good cause, wasn't it?

Well, Graduation is coming up in June. June the 14th, to be exact. Darn it, Cammie has grown so, her formal is now way too small for her. They decided at school not to wear formals, but simple dresses, with the shoulders covered. So Cammie is going to wear her Easter dress. She looks so darned grown-up in it, I can hardly get over it. With her high heels on, well, they are higher than she normally wears, she tops me by an inch or two. She wants a little watch for her graduation present. It was either that or a new formal, and she'd rather have a watch. Unless, that is, if her fond grandparents come to the rescue with the dress. (hint, hint, hint) Anyway, we have to figure something out. She needs the formal for Job's Daughters, you know. Once a month they have a stated meeting and have to be dressed in formals. Gollies, we spent this last week poring over the courses the kids are supposed to enroll in high school. Camille is so undecided and right now she's going through what you might call a phase. She works only what she must, in school that is, and can't think of much beyond boys and clothes and getting married. But really, she is much more sensible than some of the other girls whose mothers I've been talking to. Actually I have nothing to worry about, sure she loves her popular music, her records, her swimming, she's always busy with her social life, and that's as it should be at her age. She's simply awfully bossy with poor little Deedee, impatient with Penny and insufferable with Bob, but she's fine with me. We're still friends and she never squawks at anything I ask of her. Of course, once she goes to high school it might be worse, but we'll see. Gee, it makes you feel positively ancient to have a teenager in the house. So far,

Bob hasn't given us much trouble. He's much too busy with his baseball and scouting and bugling, and comes home only to eat. He can take the girls or leave 'em alone, he gets a spell now and then where he'll take a girl to the movies or roller skating and then he goes back to hanging around with the fellows again.

Oh by the way, that girl called me up yesterday. She sounds awfully nice and I shall go and see her one of these days. She tells me she fell in love with California and is trying to talk her husband into coming out here. She said nothing but nice things about you.

Ruby got herself a brand new Ford. After driving a little English car for so long she could hardly get used to it. Every time I take her up on a ride in her car I heckle the daylights out of her. She is such a doll though, we get along just beautifully. D'you know in all the three years we've known each other we've never said a cross word or gotten mad at each other for anything. Like she put it the other day. We've never even FELT made. It's too bad little Ruby and Deedee who are in the same class don't feel that way about each other. They don't get along too well. Oh they play together and are in the same grade and in the same troop, but are not exactly bosom pals.

April 10. 1956

Well here we are a week later, as usual. Not much happened, but I ought to get this letter finished anyway. I usually try to write you on Sundays, but his past Sunday was so beautiful I just couldn't get out of the garden. Monday was a lost day as far as housework was concerned. Jere had to go to Redwood City on business and I spent all afternoon sitting around in the car reading a book. Very educatin' and all that, but I think of something better to do with my time than sit in a car and read a book. We didn't get home until five. Then the mad rush to start supper, get after the girls to clear and wash and get dressed to go to that curriculum meeting for Camille. They were telling us all about what to expect when they go to high school next term. Just about all I gathered from all that was that we can't afford to send her! I'm kidding of course. Her teacher gave us a test sheet of which we were both very proud. She ranks among the top three or four in her class and does work comparable to the tenth and eleventh grade. Her I.Q. is high, she is rated as excellent, which is the top. So really she's got the brains (she ought to with her smart father and mother!)

I got after the girls to get some of the ironing out of the way, I told them if and when Grandma ever comes out to see us she'll really give me the dickens for letting things pile up so. Jere grinned and said I could use an overseer like you to get me on the ball.

I keep telling the kids, oh boy, if Grandma was here we wouldn't do that, and better not make a mess when Grandma comes out to see us. I really hold you over their heads like a whipping post, (not Penny of course, she wouldn't understand) but the older ones get a big kick out of it.

Nightie night now, Darlings, I've got to get me some shut-eye. Will mail this on the way down to town with Jere tomorrow morning.

Best love to you both from all of us

April 27. 1956

Hiya, Soph:---

Are you still speaking to me? I have the creepiest feeling as if I hadn't written to you for ages, and I DO know there hasn't been a sign of life from you reposing in MY mailbox lately. As usual I filed your latest letter in such a secure place it took me the last fifteen minutes to locate it. You'll just flip when I tell you where I'd stuck you! Right smack in the middle of my account book which I'm supposed to keep up to date and judging by the date of your letter I haven't laid eyes on since April, April my foot, it's MARCH. Oh dear, I am SO sorry, and I've missed your birthday, too, may I wish you a belated but most sincerely meant HAPPY BIRTHDAY. And many more of 'em...

I'm really a most unhappy soul right now. Last Sunday Jere and I took our Sunday afternoon constitutional, and when we got down into the canyon Jere kept saying "What is that lovely smell?" and because I've been so very botanical minded these days, what with doing plants and flowers with the girl scouts and forestry with Bobby, well, I went and stuck my silly face in the stuff and sniffed, just like Ferdinand the bull. And just like Ferdinand I got stung. I broke off a branch to bring it home and identify it in my wildflower book, and Diane took one look at it and screamed "Get the poison oak out of here, who brought the poison oak in the house?" and Wisenheimer Me said it isn't poison oak, who ever heard of poison oak with flowers, and such a sweet smell. Well, I identified it all right. Rhus Toxemia, or poison oak to you. Oh, the Shame Of It All, and me an accredited Girl Scout Leader and a veritable Oracle when it comes to Creamcups versus Cowslips or what species of Lupine we are dealing with, Me, who knows Ithuriel's Spear from a wild onion, I have come down with poison oak but good. My face felt and still does, as if it were on fire, I woke up the next morning and only my children could recognize me, my right eye looked so peculiar. Peculiar is hardly the word for it! My face and neck is so scaly, you'd believe in auto suggestion when I tell you I just read the most fascinating book on leprosy. Believe me, I feel like a leper. If the word gets around, I know I'll never be able to hold up my head again. Jere got it too, in the most awkward spot, he has to look around to see if anyone is watching before he DARES rub his itching self. P.S. He sat in it.

Jere and I have been attending a First Aid Class lately, boy are we cramming. They're giving it to us in two weekly lessons, Tuesday and Thursday and we daren't miss one or we won't get our card. It's been such fun though, but I tell you if what Jere has been doing to me is any sample of his skill, his victims had jolly well better be unconscious. Is he ever rough, and his bandaging is guaranteed to cut off circulation. This has been such a hectic week what with Public School Week. Tuesday it was First Aid, Wednesday it was going to school for Deedee, Thursday it was First Aid again, with Girl scouts wedged in between and running up to school to catch Cammie and Bobby in their act because I couldn't be there in the evening. All I could do was to drive them up and hope to goodness somebody would bring them home, it was raining the proverbial cats and dogs and I knew we wouldn't be home till nine-thirty. As it was it got to be closer to ten,

because right smack in the middle of tying bandages like crazy the lights went out and there we were, cozily cuddled on our blankets in the pitch dark. More fun and laughter, until my helpful spouse came up with his little pocket flashlight and the search began for the fuse box. I think I'm going to like First Aid.

I had really wanted to be on the ball Thursday, and got the house cleaned up and the cookies baked, and had them neatly laid on a plate when the dogs got in the house and ate half of 'em. Oh I was mad. No time to bake more and if I could have had my way it would have been Hot Dog on a bun for my girls. My neighbor had asked me to look after her little boy who was supposedly too sick to go to school, but to judge from what he and Penny did to my blood pressure, he certainly was not too sick to get into mischief. You see, whenever I have Johnny I also have his dog. And when his dog and Bootsie get together and the little dog from across the street, it's a three ring circus with me cracking the whip to try to get some sort of order into this melee. I also have acquired a rabbit, name of Peter, and he is such a tame little fellow, no, not so little either, we bring him upstairs. I have never in my life thought a rabbit could housebreak himself, but ours does. He used the cat box believe it or not, he uses the cat box. Oh yes we have a cat, too. Our house was overrun by field mice and because Penny had been wanting a kitty and her dad likes to indulge in his youngest, a cat it was. A nice grey tomcat, about a year old. And now we no longer are troubled with mice. I would far rather have gotten a trap, but at the mere thought of a trap my kids set up such an outcry I suggested a cat, and for some reason a cat didn't bother them at all, even when Kitty neatly laid out one mouse after the other on the scatter rug. For awhile it was touch and go between the cat and Bootsie, and between the cat and the canary. But now we have all learned to live amiably together. The cat never so much as blinks an eyelash at the bird, the dog tolerates the cat, and loves to play with the rabbit, the rabbit doesn't bother about either of 'em and just gaily hops around the house and searches for pieces of bread that he invariably finds, due to my youngest daughter's careless habits. He also found out in which corner I hide the dried bread and when he gets hungry noses around that particular spot until he gets what he wants. I sure get a kick out of him. He even goes up and down the stairs to the den, and the only thing we have to remember is put him in his hutch when Papa is due to arrive home. He thinks that rabbits just don't belong in the house, no matter how clean they are. He thinks it's just a fluke, even though I know better...

Gee, Soph, I wish I had had you here with your knowledge of parliamentary procedure when we had that little run in with the Council about the Cipriani Center. That's the building the boy scouts had been using for their meetings and it had been built by the people hereabouts and turned over to the city. Apparently some of the folks who live near it thought it an eyesore and were not too favorably impressed with forty-eight or so boys whooping it up once a week blowing their bugles, etc. etc. and wanted the building moved. There had been some plans afoot last year to build a swimming pool on that ground but since then a swimming pool was donated to the city and ostensibly they wanted to move the building to the swimming pool and make dressing rooms out of it. They said it was built three feet over the property line. Jere and I and some others fought them tooth and nail to leave it where it was. I did more leg work and found out that such

was not the case, and though every record was supposedly 'lost' and all I got was word of mouth statements from the people who had built it, I couldn't get a satisfaction from either city hall or the hall of records at Redwood City and finally it came up at PTA and was voted down. I still think Jere's motion was at fault, but at the time I didn't know enough to question it. It seems the dear ladies that made up the executive board had made up their minds the Center has got to go. And we lost our motion by four counts. It occurred to me afterward that the president counted her vote and also those of the people on the platform with her who were not even members of the Cipriani PTA, but members of the City Council. Jere and I attended every meeting of the council and made ourselves certainly noticed if not obnoxious, and the issue is still undecided. Meantime the row was a hot election and we now have a new council, we'll have to wait and see what they decide to do. But we'll nevertheless be in there pitching whenever the issue comes up. They keep telling us about the new multi-purpose room at the school which is supposed to be used for such gatherings as scout meetings etc. but who wants to turn a bunch of boys loose in a brand new building. It just won't work.

My Dearest Sophie Mae:--Can it be? Is it TRUE, is that letter still sitting around??!! I would have sworn on a stack of bibles it was mailed ages ago, but no, here it still sits, buried among my correspondence. And I thought you really were mad at me or something 'cause I hadn't heard from you.

Gee, now I really am stuck, I guess it will take a lot of doing to fill you in on a whole month's doings, not that anything much ever happens except trouble. Dad blast it anyhow. Do you know how I can get a hold of a new car without the necessary evil of having to pay for it? I knew it had been giving me trouble. It shimmied and rocked and rolled and it was a kick, boy, was it ever a kick to ride in it. I kept telling Jere something should be done about it and he kept saying it was okay and not to worry about it. Well, there came a time when it went 'crick' every time I turned up the driveway and I had to make allowances on going up or down hill, keep it either very high or very low in speed with one foot hovering near the brake in case of trouble. It would start to shimmy and I'd either have to put my foot hard on the brake or go around a curve or throw the wheel right and left to bring it back in balance. I remember distinctly the night I got mad at Jere for one thing or another and stormed out of the house with the car determined to drive and drive and drive to get it out of my system and I didn't even get out of sight when the darned car acted up and I had to park someplace and fume and stew and smoke a pack of cigarettes to cool off. Well, one fine day Jere asked me to drive him to San Mateo on business and we went the back road, and you know how bumpy the back roads are, and each time we went over a little unevenness it would start to shimmy and shake. Well, I had gone to the garage and told him I was bringing the car in the following week (payday you know) and the nice man changed the tire which incidentally was worn to the thread and I was told at that time that aligning the wheels would do no good unless the front end was worked on first. Anyway, to make a long story short, while Jere was going about his business I was bound and determined to have it aligned even if it meant throwing the eight-fifty away, just so I could get through the week. I might have known it, the fellow they checked the car over and said we needed new tires (that was not news) just then Jere

came back and I was sort of glad he had a chance to talk to the man himself. Seems we had a worn steering box, gear or something like that, and the upshot of the conversation was there would be about sixty-five dollars worth of repair to be done, not to mention tires. Well, we drove home at the leisurely speed of twenty-five miles an hour and I dropped the car off at the garage, I wasn't going to drive that deathtrap any longer if I had to walk the rest of my days. Four days and several conversations later I got it back, and the bill was a hundred and sixty dollars. Jere got talked into four new tires. So what happens, the next day they're having a one cent sale of tires in San Carlos, and Sears has a special and we had to shell out almost twenty dollars each, with new tubes. Oh well, it's only money, and now all I have to do is grit my teeth and worry how we're going to pay for it.

My mother and Dad are coming out in about four weeks for Cammie's graduation, and I'm so excited I can hardly wait. I feel I ought to wash down walls and make new slip covers and get a rug and new furniture, wash windows, fix the garden to look its best, and I shall be lucky if I get the floors waxed. I work myself into a nervous state and the next day the house is right back in the same old messed up state. Why, of why, can't they ever come out to see us when our house is brand new, the car is new and the wall paper not full of traces of the past year's dinners! Oh well, I'll have to sprinkle star dust in her eyes so she will see nothing but my loving face. After all, if she wants to look at a model home I can always take her down to Carlmont and show her the latest built beauty there.

Well, dear, my kids are hanging around my neck again and I can't concentrate anymore, so bye bye for today. Give me a chance and I shall try to catch up later.
With my best love as ever

May 11. 1956

Hi, Nell:--

Well, here we are--back home again and right smack back in the same old groove. Matter of fact, it took practically an act of congress and the fact that the dishwater got too hot for my lily-white handies, to make me sit down and report to you that we got here. Safe and sound and in one piece. Tell Rex a Ford will ALWAYS bring 'em back alive...

It does seem as if it were a dream. Did I really come down and stay with you? Bless you, Nellie, I had the most wonderful stay and a visit I shall remember for a long time to come. Thanks a whole million, and give Radd a pat on the head for me, for giving up his bed to me, and so graciously allowing me to muscle him out. You do have the nicest kids.

The trip back went awfully fast, or so it seemed to us. And I can tell you one thing, we were a whole lot quieter than when we went down. We all three of us sat and think our thoughts, where we chattered like magpies before. As our last fling we stopped in Gilroy at the swankiest place, THE HOTEL, called the Steak House, and blew ourselves to a snazzy dinner. Even had a cocktail. Of course it took my very last dime but it was worth it. May as well go home broke and happy. We rolled up to the door at ten-thirty and my loving family welcomed me back with open arms and whoops of joy. Much to my surprise they had gotten along just famously, the house was spic and span, my chief cook and bottle washer had done a good job, the meals were good and the ham she'd cooked that day really was delicious, so all in all, I guess it was a good thing all around. I had a few days off, and they learned to appreciate all the things a wife and mother does around the place.

Monday I lost no time getting back on the treadmill. I picked up the car and got the shock of my life. Seems like the fellow talked to Jere and talked him right into buying four new tires, so instead of having at most a sixty dollar repair bill to worry about, right now I'm worrying how I'm going to pay off a hundred and sixty. Oh well, I shall just file it with the rest of the bills and periodically worry about how I'm going to spread Jere's paycheck to cover a multitude of bills. Anyway I had no sooner reported to my darling that we were once more able to travel under our own power instead of hitching a ride or walking when he informed me we (that editorial WE) we were going to have to go to San Mateo after lunch. Well, so we went to San Mateo and I spent an hour reading a book as usual, then on to Redwood City for some more waiting. One of the first things I got hit over the head with, figuratively speaking, when I came home last Sunday was Deedee waving her school shoes in my face with the soles flapping so I spent my hours of waiting getting her some shoes. For a change I picked the right size. Anyway, we didn't get home until almost six and the whole darned day was shot as far as I'm concerned. Tuesday the phone rang incessantly with all my friends and neighbors wanting a blow by blow description of my trip. I don't know what happened to Wednesday but Thursday means Girl scouts, so here we are--Friday, and I just happened to think, this is our sewing club night, so good night for now. Let the dishes wait, I'm off, and I do mean OFF.

Saturday

Well, at this rate it will be a diary style letter, a paragraph a day...right now I'm sitting here and am just too tired to think straight. The Casagrande Taxi Service is in full swing again. Bobby and his friends had to go downtown to open the Barret School Capers (carnival to you) complete with scout uniforms and bugles. Our troop buglers are in such demand that nothing ever happens but that they are present and accounted for and blowing their brains out, no kidding, they do very well too. Anyway, after lunch Deedee wanted to go skating and Cammie wanted to go swimming and dutifully mother trotted off, first in one direction toward Redwood City and then in the other toward San Mateo. Came home and there was a frantic phone call from Sonny Boy to come and pick him up. Seems the dear boy had been lucky in the games they have at those carnival deals and had won me a mess of plants. For Mother's Day, you know. Bless his little pointed head, I was so touched and delighted. He had two good-sized bushes in two stone pots, two plants that climb and I understand have lovely flowers on 'em, but the name of them I haven't discovered in my Sunset Garden book yet. Then he had a Veronica a Jasmine and something else. So naturally I had to find a spot in my garden for them, and believe you me, all that rain not only made the flowers grow like mad, but you should see the crop of weeds I've got all over. I went to work with the grass whip and frankly I'd rather play a set of gold than swing that thing around. My arms ached and my back ached and I was beginning to wish I had a goat. Then I got to work on the front, and didn't stop until it got so dark I was pulling all the Linaria up along with the weeds and thought it was time to quit. I sure wish I could get Jere interested in gardening, well, anyway, weeding that is.

Oh yes, now I remember what happened to Wednesday. I went to Palo Alto go get that camera for Cammie. We do thank you a whole lot for giving her that book of stamps. It really is a little dandy, and now, if I can only get it away from her long enough to take a few pictures myself, you will get a good look at the way my little sprouts have shot up.

Thursday

Days later. This letter has been taken out of the machine and put back so many times it will really be a work of ART. Oh, but it's been HOT this past week, I tell you Nellie, I wished I could have gone into hibernation under a nice cool rock until today. I took the kids to the beach after school, Monday Tuesday and Wednesday, and didn't pick them up till about eight. I s'pose you read in the paper that even San Francisco sizzled.

Well, there really is not much else that's new, and this being the end of a hard day Girl Scouts, you know, I simply can't get my brains organized enough to write a decent letter anyway, so I shall close this impossible epistle and bid you a fond adieu for today. I haven't forgotten my promise, and I shall really and truly keep you up on our comings and goings, and who knows, maybe next time around I'll have something more fascinatin' to report.

Bye for now, and I really am ashamed to let this letter of thanks wait around so long. Honest, that's not the way my mother brought me up

With love to all of you, once again
as ever

Monday May 21. 1956

Hi again, Sweetie:

Well, I got just thirty minutes before picking Bob and the boys up again to write that long promised letter. Honest I thought Deedee was kidding me when she said Grandma called and she want you to call back. Grandma? I said, are you sure you mean 'GRANDMA' Well, well and well again. Oh, but I really am sorry you are worrying, and doubly sorry you are not well. Gosh why don't you just pack up and come closer to us, I know my three little Red Riding Hoods would gladly take over a basket of goodies to their grandma any old time of the day. You need never be lonely again or worry over us, if you lived a little closer. I mean it! There is nothing to hold you in New Jersey, is there?

You know sometimes I think you never even read my letters, if you did you must have know that every Monday night at seven I have to take the scouts bugling and every Monday night at eight I go to pick them up again. I keep telling you over and over my weekly itinerary and anybody could see I'm not exactly sitting around twiddling my thumbs. Well, that's neither here nor there...

To get back to your letter of May the sixth (good grief where does the time go!) Ruby called me up one night when I was practically dragging myself to bed and excitedly told me 'the ears are up, the ears are up' and it took me all of two minutes to figure out what she meant. Billy's ears. They are up, and honest he looks cute as a button. When I went down to L.A. to stay with Nellie I was telling her how we've tried to fill a book with green stamps for a camera and she gave me one for Cammie. Yup, a full book. The grocery store she deals with gives green stamps and the way she shops she fills a book in no time. I really was grateful to her and the very first chance I got after I got back home again I waltzed to Palo Alto and picked one up. Of course I haven't had a crack at it yet, every time I put a film in it my darling daughter uses it up. But she did manage to save one to take Billy's picture, and Ruby tried to get him to stand like a well-bred Boston Champ-to-be should stand. Oh, but he's so adorable. That picture does not do him justice. I'll have to try myself. Ruby had some awfully bad luck with her min-pin. Remember me telling you that some man bought the little male for fifty and the teensy weensy girl for a hundred and fifty. (Gosh some people don't know what to do with their money, do them?) Anyway, he had paid for the dogs but had not taken them home yet. So what happens, the little male got kind of quiet and mopey, the day we had it so hot here. When I say 'hot' I mean the temperature got up to eight-five, but to me that's broiling. Anyway, we thought it was the heat, but Ruby thought she'd better call the owner and tell him the dog didn't act right. So he rushed over and took the pup to the vet. The vet gave him a thorough check over and couldn't find anything wrong. Gave him a shot and told them to take the pup home and watch him. Well, poor Ruby stayed up half the night watching him. His breathing was rapid and shallow and his little heart just raced. Well, he dies around two in the morning. The vet performed an autopsy and found he had fluid on the lungs. A condition that could arise anytime without anyone knowing or being able to prevent it, and in each case the dog dies within a few hours. It was remarkable and showed the little

dog was strong and healthy to fight it as long as he did. But of course Ruby was heartsick about it and so was I, and the two of us cheered each other up for two days. The new owner took it pretty well, except he felt badly to think the pup was dead anyway he took the little one home Sunday, and I hope to goodness nothing happens to her.

During that hot spell I took the kids to the beach after school and picked them up around eight o'clock. I was not sorry after the hot spell broke on Thursday. We may as well make hay while the sun shines. Goodness knows most of the time the beaches hereabouts are mighty cold. To my way of thinking anyhow.

Had I ever told you how much Bootsie, our pooch, troubles me with his car chasing? Well, the week before I went down to L.A. (notice how everything hinges these days on before and after I went to L.A.?) anyway, I had taken Jere back to work and when I came home the kids told me that Bootsie had been hit by a car. I looked him over carefully but could only find a skinned paw, which healed up in no time. Well, when I went away I left strict instructions for him to be chained while I was gone because I couldn't trust the kids to watch him. So two days after I noticed that he was awfully touchy and grouchy and his tail, his beautiful plume of a tail has hanging at half-mast, so to speak. I tried to get him to stand still so I could look at it, but he simply wouldn't. I thought he must have broken it, and figured to leave him alone and let him take care of himself. But he just stayed in the corner and licked and licked until I noticed he had made a raw sore on his tail. It took the combined effort of the whole family to get a dressing on him, which we changed each day. Well, last Sunday night I thought I ought to change the dressing again, and got hold of his tail, very gently, and doggone it, the darned skin and hair and all came right off in my hand and left a naked, bloody, boney stump. It made me almost sick to look at it, what with the smell and all. However, being Sunday night I couldn't get a hold of the vet and had to wait until morning. Jere suggested chopping it off, he said it was dead anyhow and he wouldn't feel it, but I thought we'd better not, I wouldn't know how to stop it from bleeding. So I took him in to the vet in the morning and he kept him there overnight and took the tail off and sewed it up. He said apparently his tail had been crushed in a door and the blood vessels and cells had been crushed and the tail was just dying off. Well, he certainly appeared to feel a lot better after the tail came off, not nearly so grouchy and cross, but now he keeps licking and biting at it until he got the stitches out. I keep putting the B.F.I. powder on it to heal it and he's doing just fine. He doesn't look too bad when he carries his little stump of a tail erect and cocky, but still, to us he looks mighty peculiar. And he is sure a changed dog, never budes from my heels and hardly ever goes outside. Of course it's still too early to tell for sure, but if his habits have changed all I can say is that it was all for the best. Like I said, Doll, never a dull moment around here.

Are you feeling any better now? For goodness sakes, I hope you're not getting an ulcer now. You'll probably say it's all my fault and worry me into acquiring one myself. Do take care of yourself, and remember you've just got to come out and see us in three weeks. We're all counting on it, holding our breath for it, and the kids and I just would die from disappointment if you didn't. Don't fail us now.

Mac, Ruby's husband, is home today and she just stopped by for a minute to tell me they've just come from the doctor and believe it or not, he seems to have the mumps. The mumps yet! The poor guy. I took Penny in to have hr polio shots yesterday, and will take the other kids next Thursday. I haven't felt quite sure whether I ought to or not, but Jere persuaded me it would be better if they got them. They have all been so darned healthy so far, I'd hate to think of them getting sick now. Well, I guess that's all for today. See you soon. And please, darling, I wish you would remember that although I may not write as often as you think I should, but you are never out of my mind or my heart.

June 1, 1956

Hi, Parents:

Honest, Mumsi, it wasn't the lack of a 5 cent stamp that stopped me from writing to you sooner, it's just that I simply never seem to have a minute to myself. It's rush, rush, rush, with one eye on the clock all the time. Gollies, it seems so unreal that in another week I shall actually throw my arms around you and hug you clean to death. YOU ARE COMING, AREN'T YOU! If I had my way, I'd have the weather just glorious, not too warm and not too hot, and the kids would be perfect angels and all in all your visit would be something to dream about for years and years to come. (I wish you'd live next door!) I hate thinking you're not feeling well and I can't run in and see you. Are you feeling better? Please don't let it stop you from coming. I shall gladly get you milk, cream, goat's milk or what have you, to keep your little tummy happy. But I suppose if you're like Ruby, you'll have to forgo innumerable cups of coffee and rye bread with sausages and chili con carne and pizza. Well, we'll just have to lay in a supply of pabulum and strained apricots...

Billy Boy is the perkier little stinker. His ears are up now and honestly he is getting huskier all the time. We took some more pictures but you know how it is when you try to take a snapshot of a puppy dog, they simply won't stand the way you want them to. We spent all afternoon and the results and 'pheeiey) Well, you'll see him for yourself.

The Boy Scouts have their Scout-A-Rama again this week. That meant I took Jere and Bob there Thursday night and then again Friday and picked him up at ten o'clock at night. Today Cammie has been driving me start staring mad. She got that check from Pop, and incidentally she hasn't written to you because she hasn't had the time. They've been boning up like crazy on the Constitution tests, even though I feel certain she would graduate in any case on the strength of past performance, still, the teacher threatened to leave them back if they fail these tests, consequently they all study like mad. Anyway, she got the check, plus her monthly allowance and went forth to shop. I'm losing my marbles. She can't find anything suitable for the price she can afford to pay. And to pay more than twenty dollars for a formal is ridiculous. I'll maybe end up having to make it for her. Anyway, I spent the whole doggoned day ferrying kids hither and yon. Cammie to San Mateo with her friends, and Deedee and her friends to the skating rink in Redwood City. When I got back I found your letter, HURRAH. Now I know I can hardly wait. Oh Boy!

Well okay, I'll make one more try at your 'questions, questions, questions.

I'm going back to your letter of May 6. Cammie takes a size ten in stockings, she wears those stiff petticoats with ruffles, and nylon net, oh you know, surely the kids wear them back in New Jersey with their bouffant skirts, the kind that stick out. Ruby wears a size but she said you really shouldn't....

I will honestly try to write to Rose on Sunday. Cammie did write her for Christmas and we sent a package too, you know, each time that is almost the first thing she does with the money, is to pick out a little present for Rose.

Mac has gone back to work again, whatever was bothering him, must not have been mumps but another kind of glandular infection. And do you know, that little tiny dog she sold for a hundred and fifty? We, the man had to go away for a few days and asked her to keep her and darned if the little thing didn't get sick, too. Ruby worried herself into a frenzy about it, especially when she took the pup to the vet and he told her she had the same thing as the other little dog. Fluid on the lungs. Said there was nothing could be done but nevertheless he gave her some medicine in the hopes of drying the fluid up. Ruby was up all night for two nights giving the medicine every three hours and looking to see if the dog was still alive. She still is, and seems to me to be much better. I never did think she acted like the other dog. Didn't pant as much, and is much livelier. To my way of thinking the dog just had a cold. However, we're still watching her with eagle eyes. Gosh, it would be just too awful if something happened to her, too.

Well, dear, I'll close for today, I must get this in the mail if you're to get it before you leave. Really, there is nothing I want you to bring except your own sweet selves.

Don't I know it's eight years! Eight years, and you've never even seen Penny. The monkey...

Bye now and shall see you soon, sooner soonest!
Love to you both until next Friday

June 24. 1956

Hello, Folks:

Gosh, the house sure seems awfully empty after you left, and we all miss your face across the table from us. I sure do. Ruby and I have waited with bated breath to hear from you, whether you got there safe and sound and picked up the excess baggage and whether the shock of that pretty near killed you. We hope with all our hearts that it was all right, but honestly the way you two feel about Boston, Toby couldn't have a better set of owners.

Please, mother, loosen up and write a nice long, newsy letter. I realize you probably put your nose right back on the grindstone the following Monday but have a heart and give...

It's been one hectic weeks for me, I've gone job hunting starting last Monday. I went to Lenkurt in San Carlos, they always seem to be taking applications and from what I hear they pay well. Since I'm doing this strictly for the money I thought I'd start with them. When I got there Monday they handed me an application to fill out and told me to bring it back next day. I also stopped in several other places but no luck. Tuesday I figured to just drop the application off in the morning and told the kids I'd be right back. Didn't even bring my cigarettes from the car. Well, to my surprise they told me to take a seat (along with about thirty-six others) and wait. So I waited and waited and waited. They called them in in bunches of six, some came back and some didn't. The suspense was about to kill me. Well, around ten-thirty it was my turn. First they handed me a set of questions to determine my I.Q. Fifty questions to answer in twelve minutes and some of them mathematical problems and you know right well arithmetic was never my strong point. Well, again they called three of us out and the rest of us sat and waited. Next came another test to put pieces into a pegged board. That was okay too, but on the eye test I failed. I couldn't make out the fine details on the smaller little squares and the girl suggested I have my glasses checked and come back again. I made an appointment with the optician for that afternoon and also made an application in the five and ten down here in Belmont. He didn't say aye or nay, just said he'd call me. Well, when I went back for my eye test I found to my dismay it was no wonder I couldn't see to thread the needle on my sewing machine--my glasses were badly out of focus, and it's a wonder I got by for so long. Well, even if I don't get a job, at least I had my eyes checked, only trouble is, my new glasses will cost my about thirty-eight bucks. Seems I have to wear bi-focals from now on. When he adjusts them for far vision I can't see close up, and when I can see good close up I can't see in the distance. Now I know I'm getting old--bi-focals yet!

June 26.

I'd better get this letter written because something tells me I won't have too much time to write pretty darned soon. I got my glasses yesterday and went back to Lenkurt this morning. Got there a little before nine and the place was jam-packed with people already. Once again I waited and waited AND waited. Passed the eye test with the greatest ease thanks to my new glasses, and oh, what a difference they make, I don't see how I bumbled along with the old ones for so long. I can see objects at a distance with clearness

and clarity and the printed page close up a lot better. It's just getting used to that in-between space will be a little tough at first. Anyway, next I was given the aptitude test, fitting pegs into holes with both hands and putting washers, collars and more washers on as quickly as I could. Then I waited some more. By that time it was twelve and they sent us out to lunch until two. As it was I picked Jere up half way home and it was one gosh awful hot day. What I call hot anyway, around eighty, nothing like your hundred which would kill me for sure. Anyway, I went back at two and waited some more. Had my interview and was told to report for training classes on July the 9th. In other words until I'm told to the contrary I am now a working gal. I'm just a little leery about my citizenship status. What if they ask me for my papers? Which I ain't got. They did ask me to bring my birth certificate when I report. I spent another half hour making out forms and more forms. Seems I have to join the union, at twenty-five dollars. Gosh, that and my glasses and I have to work a week for that alone. I'm going to start at a dollar and fifty-five cents an hour, and boy, that ain't hay. Maybe if I work just for a little while it will put our financial standing on an even basis. I was also told I'd be on a probationary period of sixty days. Oh well, if I just work for sixty days I'll have a nest egg.

I got your card and today the letter. Gosh, you sure kept us in suspense... But I'm glad you are both home safe and sound and it's okay wit the doggies. I'm so very sorry I couldn't be with you those last few hours, but I'm kind of glad I stayed at the graduation, I wouldn't have wanted to miss it for the world. The girls and boys looked so serious and sweet walking up the aisle in pairs, and when it came time to hand out the diplomas and awards you could have knocked me over with the proverbial feather. They said: And now for the award of merit for outstanding scholastic achievement--Camille Casagrande. I was so darned proud of her. The honor student of her graduating class, think of it!

This has been such a hot week, and I'm always so thankful for that cool breeze that springs up just around the afternoon. All I do is sit around and pant until it cools off. Anyway, I just wanted to finish this letter even if it kills me, my fingers are so sticky and the kids have the record player going full strength. I would have done better to give in and take them to the swimming pool this afternoon. But I had told them payday was Friday and I simply couldn't afford to run around and use up the gas. I made up my mind to pay for the gas in cash even after the Richfield bill is paid up. Boy, I can hardly wait for my first paycheck. I know it's going to be rough on the kids this summer not having me drive them hither and yon and having to take care of Penny and do the housework, but after all, it's for them I'm doing it, not for myself.

Bobby had a windfall last Sunday, he was walking down to the store and found fifteen dollars, a ten and a five, one right after the other. Gollied that kid is lucky. Of course he lent it to me and it couldn't have happened at a better time. I got the films and I do think they turned out swell. Bye now darling, until the next time.

With love from all of us, and we do miss you a lot.

Friday, at long last
July 13, 1956

Hello there, Fellow Wage Slaves:-

Well, here is my first progress report, and it sure looks as if I'm going to be a lot more faithful in writing than you are, in spite of the fact that I, too, am punching a clock at eight in the morning. Today we graduated from training school, and for awhile there it looked to me as if I'd never make it. To get back to the beginning (in case you're interested) we started in bright and early last Tuesday, remember Monday I spent sitting and waiting most of the day. Anyway, we were instructed to clean wires and solder them together, teensy weensy wires the size of sewing thread, and great big ones with insulation on 'em. We learned to wire bare wires to lugs and solder them, and to wire tube sockets. Wednesday we were given a test board to do, and I sure flubbed that one. I got so nervous my hands were shaking and I had to brace my elbows on the table to do it. The best thing my instructor found to say about that was that it was a nice 'neat' board. Oh brother! Finally on Thursday we were shuffled around in new groups that were going to work on the same thing and my job seems to be to make transformers. Beastly little things there are four little wires about the thickness of a hair which you pick up with a pair of tweezers and solder to a thicker wire, four different colors and they have to be right or they won't work. Anyway, it will be my pleasure to make the best doggoned transformers I can turn out.

The company is an excellent one, and they sure do take care of their employees, once you're hired they give you all the help they can and make every possible effort on your behalf to place you SOMEWHERE. Their slogan is "There's a place for everyone in Lenkurt" the only thing they don't tolerate is tardiness. You simply can't be late, three times late and you're discharged. So after hearing that from every side for a week I've tried my level best to be on time. Makes it awfully rough on Jere, I want to leave at seven-thirty and after dropping him off at twenty-five to eight I barely make it to the parking lot and hurry to the plant and no matter how hard I try the clock always rings up 7:49. I'm supposed to be at my bench at two minutes to eight. Now they tell me I'll be in Plant #4 and will start to work at a quarter to eight, that means I'll have to leave before seven-thirty. Yoiks, poor Jere, he'll just have to buy himself another car. At night it takes me about fifteen minutes nevertheless, to get clocked out and to the parking lot and out of that mad bedlam, and I never get home before five. Jere has consistently beaten me home all week, somebody else always picks him up on the way.

Oh, incidentally I'm still on a thirty day trial, and then another month to see how I fit in, if I manage to get past those sixty days, I'll be okay for as long as I want it.

The kids have been just wonderful this week. I get up at six and before I leave I stack the dishwasher and make Jere's and my bed, and start the washer if there's a load to be done. I've got me a big notebook and every morning I write notes to the kids what I want each of them to do. They make notes to me or if we run out of something I have to buy. Works

out pretty good that way. Cammie has worked awfully hard keeping the house clean and tidy, and they each take care of their own bed and clothing and room. That leaves just lil old Penny at loose ends and Cammie sure takes care of those loose ends. She's harder on them all than I ever could be. When I come home at night all I do is cook and take care of the things I want to wear the next day. I did some baking at night and yesterday I cooked the stew ahead of time and just added the vegetables. That will be my biggest problem-- what to cook that doesn't take too long. Besides hamburger that is. And since I haven't gotten that first pay check yet I can't buy steak and chops every night, can I? Wednesday night we had a Court of Honor for the scouts and although I'd much rather have gone to bed I had to attend it. Naturally I ended up in the kitchen, which was all right too, we had much too much food, and a great big sheet cake left over that we divided in four quarters and each of us mothers took one quarter. It was the yummiest cake with real fresh strawberries under a layer of creamy frosting, and a lucky thing for me that I took a piece for my lunch, for believe it or not, that enormous cake was all gone when I got home that night. I've been taking my lunch, although I'd much rather eat at the cafeteria. But I have to fix Jere a lunch and this week we've been rather short of funds. It cost me about ten or twelve dollars more to eat the way we did and I didn't want to add the expense of a cafeteria lunch to it. As it is we go out for a coffee break sometime in the morning and also in the afternoon, so naturally I have to have a cup of coffee and a doughnut. (I miss Ruby and those morning cups of coffee...)

Monday night

Mother DARLIN', where is your letter???? Please give me that information before I lose my marbles completely. As it is it will probably take all of my probation period to get that blankety-blank citizenship paper.

I spent such a restful weekend, I could hardly wait for Monday morning so I could go back to my nice peaceful sitting-down job again. Jere was putting up a thirty foot aerial that insisted on falling down. After the second try and a new aerial later, I was about ready to leave home, and I know for sure that Bobby was. Poor little guy, he sure got it in the neck... We wasted the whole darned day on it. Saturday night we got a couple of extra boys as guests. Remember Gary, from Hawthorne? He and his brother have come to spend a couple of weeks with us. So what the heck is a couple of kids more or less, they are on their own anyway. Sunday went by so fast with the kids wanting to go swimming and me and my clothes ready. I am now about eighteen dollars in the red already, I went out and bought me some pedal pushers and blouses. About time I got some new clothes out of this deal.

Today I went on the assembly line and they put me to work stacking transformers. I worked diligently all day long and didn't even take time out to smoke or go to the bathroom and at the end of the day I found out that I was twelve short. Good grief, I wonder if I'll ever get fast enough to make my quota. I can tell you one thing, I certainly am not going to smoke myself into an early grave on THIS job. I just won't have the time. Incidentally, I had my physical, too, and a in excellent physical health. It was a great satisfaction for me to come home and report to my darling husband that I thumped clear

as a bell, and he needn't think I put another coffin nail in with each cigarette I light up. As he seems to think.

I finally got a snapshot that is fit to send to you. Like em? We sure enjoyed the pictures you sent us. I think they came out just fine. Did you get the colored film back yet? How did Cammie turn out?

Well, Doll, I think I'll finish this off tonight, my bedtime these days is ten o'clock on the nose. I have to get up at six, you know, and must have my eight hours sleep. Now that I've been assigned to a permanent department I have to be at work at a quarter to eight. Poor Jere he keeps coming to work earlier and earlier, but I get so worried about being late I stand around, straining at the gate at a quarter past seven. Ready, get set, GO...

Bye darling, and for heaven's sake don't forget to write, will you?
With lots of love from all of us, as ever

Sunday July 22

Hi, Parents:

Thanks for your letter and the card which came yesterday. Oh gollies, this heat today is wearing me out more than five days work...Why couldn't it have been like that yesterday when I took the kids down to San Francisco. Boy, oh boy, did we ever have ourselves a ball! I got my first paycheck on Friday and was as proud as Punch, wished I could have framed it or something, I was that proud of it. Fifty-two dollars I earned, think of it! The first money I earned in about fifteen years, real money that is, not a couple of dollars for baby sitting. Well, needless to say it went as easily as I got it. The kids and I went off bright and early Saturday morning and our first stop was the Marine Museum and then Fisherman's Wharf (of course) we went on that excursion boat, but oh my, it was jam-packed. We went all over the place and ended up at the zoo. It was awfully cold and foggy there and I practically froze to death dashing from one animal cage to the other. But the kids had such a wonderful time they hardly wanted to leave. We got tickets for the Shiner's Circus for this afternoon and to tell you the truth the very thought of going out today just kills me. But I did promise the kids I'd make it up to them over the weekend for being so good about doing the house keeping during the week. Cammie went off with her girlfriend and their family to Yosemite, camping out, and won't be expected back until tonight. Gollies, I miss that girl. Especially when it comes to fixing dinner.

I bought me a tree to celebrate my first paycheck. A Chinese Elm and wore myself to a frazzle trying to dig a hole in that stony backyard of ours. I managed to get it in, too, now all I have to do is keep my fingers crossed that it will grow out there.

You poor darling, I feel sorry for you, working when you don't feel too good can be quite a chore. Not like me, for me it is positively a vacation. I just love it and hope I can keep it up. Not the work, that's a cinch, but with the kids and catching up on the house between times. One good thing about this job of mine, it never gets monotonous, there is always something else coming up. We do make transformers, but they tell me there must be about a hundred fifty different kinds and they all get put together a little different. Some are easier than others, but that's the breaks. I have ceased worrying about making my standard, all the other girls told me to quite worrying myself into a nervous breakdown, and each time I think I've mastered the particular kind I'm working on, they switch me to something else that I have to learn all over again. So what the heck, I do the best I can and that's all I can do.

Those pictures of Cammie are just darling. She is such a cute girl, isn't she? And that one of the excursion boat is pretty enough to be on a postcard.

Yes, dear, I burned that piece of paper you sent. Oh incidentally, just to show you I love you all the time, I bought you a little present with my first money, 'tain't much, but just to let you know you are always in my mind and my heart. Now all I have to do is remember to get it in the mail. I also picked up another spoon for you when we were at Fisherman's

Wharf. Oh, you remember that three-mastered schooner we took a picture of? Well, it's open to the public now and the kids went through it. They made it a sort of museum, very fascinating, though the kids were a little disappointed, for their quarter they expected to climb all over the rigging and go down in the hold, but most of it was closed and roped off.

Well, doll, I better stop for today, I still have to do some ironing and another load of wash to go out, it sure is drying fast today. AND I have to buy some milk. Honest to gosh, we ought to have a cow the way those kids can put that milk away is really something. But I made up my mind there will be no bills, not for milk or gas or anything. Even if I have to make three trips a day to the store.

Well, angel, I must write another letter to my girlfriend who is anxiously waiting for me to write for the last two months, so bye-bye for today. Maybe I'll get a chance to drop off a card during the week.

Take care of yourself and Pop, you too. I miss you both no end.
With love from all of us, as ever

Tuesday, July 31. 1956

Hello, Darlings:--

Well, I only two days overdue writing my weekly letter, and although it's pretty near my bedtime, I guess I'd better write you a few lines first. I got your latest letter, and do thank you, sweetheart. It was a miracle I got it at all, I never see the mail anymore and unless I remember to ask for it nobody remembers to give it to me. Jere handed it to me in an off-hand sort of way saying, by the way here's a letter for you, hah! Anyway, thanks.

Jere is home on vacation for the next two weeks, and although I could have had two weeks off, too (without pay) I decided for the sake of my nerves it would be better to work and get paid for it. The whole plant practically closes down for two weeks and only a few departments are working through, of which ours is one. It's kind of fun, there are only a few people in the place and everything is very cozy and friendly like, especially since we're all new together and so we all learn together and are in the same boat so to speak. I'm beginning to feel like a veteran now that I'm going into my fourth week, things are a whole lot easier and today I even made my quota. Although they keep telling me not to worry about making the standard, just go as fast and as well as I'm able. Seems they are much more interested in turning out good stuff than a lot of pieces that have to be rejected. That's okay by me. So I go along my merry old way, and you know I can work pretty fast with my hands once I've caught on to the hang of it. Saturday Jessie Griswold came by with her husband and daughter, she used to live across the street from me in Hawthorne and we had a nice long chat. It was kind of hectic at first because Gary and his brother were leaving on the seven o'clock bus and I had to take them down. I had promised to give them some money (they were broke naturally) and on the way down I found I had forgotten my purse. So I left Cammie and Pearl with them and hightailed it back, got as far as the R&S store and stopped in and asked him to lend me a couple of dollars in a hurry, turned around and chased back only to find the bus had just left. So I hightailed it to Redwood City and caught them just in time to hand them the money and say goodbye. What a merry-go-round! Sunday Jere wanted to take the car to Palo Alto to his friends for him to look at it and work on it, it had been running awful lately. I wanted him to drive himself and give me a chance to work a little, but he insisted it wouldn't take long, and you know how he hates to drive, so I gave in and went. We left around ten and didn't get home until pretty near five in the afternoon. I was fit to be tied. In the first place, what with Jessie and all I didn't get any washing or ironing done nor watered the garden or anything on Saturday and here as the whole of Sunday shot too, and in the second place I got nothing to eat except a piece of toast with a thin slice of cheese on it and a cup of lukewarm coffee. I was hungry and mad, but what's the use. Jere said he'd take care of everything on Monday. Well! The wash finally got out on the line today and I took some of the ironing up to Ruby's tonight so I could visit with her and work at the same time. They took the car back for a transmission job today so I started to walk home from work. All the girls in the neighborhood that work at Lenkurt are on vacation and nobody went my way. Ruby was supposed to pick me up but missed me on the way and I

was halfway home before she flew by again. Well the walk did me good, I needed a little exercise in the fresh air. She got your letter and will answer it soon.

Darling, I shall have to make this a shortie letter, it's ten now, and I have to go to bed. Tomorrow morning I'm going to work with a neighbor and he leaves fifteen minutes earlier so I have to get up a little earlier myself. And you know me, I have to get eight hours sleep or I won't be able to stay awake to stack my little transformers. Oh, I still love my job, I really do. I enjoy it very much. Anyway, there's not much more to tell. The kids are still doing fine about the house, and I guess I'll get the eating situation under control one of these days. Sure I have the meat in the locker, but I have to remember to get it out, you know. I still have about sixty dollars to pay on it, and I feel sort of guilty getting meat out when I haven't paid up yet. Sure I know he doesn't care, and half of it is paid for and surely I haven't eaten a quarter of a beef yet, but that's the way I feel. And anyway, I don't want to eat beef beef beef all the time. Of course with those two extra boys to feed it was kind of rough, but it ought to be better from now on. Surely fifty-two dollars should be enough and some left over for frivolities, too. Like taking the kids to the show and things like an extra lipstick. Well this is it, the end, goodnight. With love to you both as ever.

August 8, 1956

Hi, Doll:-

Got your letter today and thank you. My, of, my, it must have been Blue Monday around your way when you wrote it, poor baby. Still feeling low? Remember you can always come back and live in our rabbit hutch in the backyard..., get a job at Lenkurt and make little transformers for the rest of your natural life. Gollies, it seems hardly possible I've been working for six weeks already, my how time does have a habit of flying by. You know it isn't so easy to find the time to write letters and visit friends and that's about the only thing I miss about working. I still love it and go to work anxiously and am not a bit tired doing it. What bothers me is coming home, cooking supper (after stopping at the store) and after dinner is when I let down all of a sudden and seem to have very little pep left to do all the things that need doing. I sit over my cup of coffee and tell myself to get on the ball and water the garden, iron that blouse, write that letter and all I do is sit. You know what I mean, I'm sure.

Besides nothing ever happens anymore. I go to work and come home. No, that's not strictly true, lots of things happen and I have a whole new set of new friends and life histories to listen to, and no kidding, aren't people funny. There's this gal that sits next to me and she really is a corker. She had her two weeks vacation and went to Reno and came back six hundred dollars richer. Got it from those slot machines. Golly, aren't some people lucky. Anyway, today she really floored me. We got to talking and she said I'm going to see my baby lion tonight. I thought I hadn't heard right and asked her. Yes, that's what she meant all right. Baby LION. Seems she owns a baby lion, paid two hundred and fifty dollars for it. She (it's a female) stands about as high as a collie dog right now and the little thing got bursitis (whatever that is) and is at the vet's right now, and she's going to see if she is well enough to come home. A baby lion. I couldn't get over it and sat stunned for the rest of the afternoon trying to visualize a lion romping around the house with her three Siamese cats. I asked her what she would do with the animal when she gets her full growth and she said very calmly, why, keep her, of course. Aren't you afraid she'll bite or something, said I with wonder. No, says she, I'll train her and she is very gentle. Well, I thought to myself. Well!!!! I'm still stunned. Seems her friend down in Los Angeles got a tiger cub and takes it all over on a leash. What tame potatoes we are with only a cat and a dog and a white rabbit running around the place...

September 7th

Oh my goodness, has it really been a month since I started this letter? Now my conscience really is bothering me. I never meant to make you wait so long and I really don't see how the weeks slip by so. However, enough with the apologies or I won't have room to write a letter.

It seems so fantastic to think I've been working two months already. and I still love it and go to work with enthusiasm and enjoy every minute of it. We have such a good bunch of gals working with us and we sure do have a lot of fun.

Honest, Sweetie, it seems to be almost impossible to get a few spare minutes to write you a decent letter, it's just in snips and snaps and a thought at a time...Saturdays are so very busy, and I feel I must do something with and for the kids, they've been simply wonderful about keeping the house and looking after each other, I've been able to go to work with a clear mind and without a worry, and after I come home everybody helps (even Jere) to get things done that have to be done. However, like I say, I feel I owe them something. So for the last few weekends Saturdays have been spent buying clothes and sewing a few things, and Sundays go by so fast what with having to water the garden and do the washing and ironing for myself anyway. Two weeks ago we went to the Mason's picnic and this Sunday I took them swimming. Well, school is starting this week, and I'll see how things will go. It will really be a madhouse I guess, maybe not, but that would surprise me. I'll let you know how it turns out. Right now I guess I'd better just sign off and send this or you'll never hear from me.

I got your letter, and will do my level best to keep up with you. I had a visit from Sophie, or did I tell you that? She also wrote me and so did Nellie after all these months, and I got a letter from a friend I haven't heard from in three years. I really ought to sit down and write but somehow I just don't have the initiative.

No, doll, I don't need any money, that seems slowly to solve itself. We're digging ourselves out a little at a time. If only the ding danged car would hold up a while longer. I noticed the other night when I picked the kids up from a dance that the car wouldn't start, and we've been on pins and needles every morning since, whether or not I'll be able to start it. Tonight Jere had the car and he made the mistake of putting on the radio while he was waiting for me and lo and behold--dead battery. Honest to Pete, now I won't know if it will start in the morning or not. Oh well, I ain't worrying... Pretty soon Jere will have to go to Palo Alto, and I think we'll have to seriously consider getting another car. Nobody lives up here in Belmont to ride with, and I can't see any other way for the both of us to go to work in different directions and at different times, unless we have another car. Well, that's another bridge I won't cross yet for the time being. Just something to think about. Well, darling, I think I'll mail this off and try to write you another one of these stretched out missiles when and if I get around to it. I suppose you got my cards by now. Bye now and our best love to you both as ever,

Thursday Night September 20, 956

Hello, Sweetheart:--

Got your letter tonight, and gollies, what a lift it gave me. Thank you, dear. I really don't much feel like writing--I wish I had a tape recorder hung around my neck and could just talk into it. My head buzzes with all the things I want to say to you and when I just sit down to the typewriter I feel 'blah' and don't know where to start. You know every once in awhile I get so discouraged and feel as if I was getting nowhere fast. This always happens when I have my monthly rendezvous with our unpaid bills and spend a jolly night madly writing out checks and watching the old bank balance dwindle away. Right now I have a hankering for a drier. And by golly, I shall have a drier before the rains come. I spend much too much time hanging out the wash, piece by piece, and remembering to bring it in. You know Jere is so funny. During his vacation we had him really housekeeping, and he hung the wash out a couple of times and decided it was time I got a drier. That, and to finish the half-bath downstairs is really what I'm aiming for before I quit work (if and when I quit, that is).

Next Tuesday

See what I mean? A line a day and nothing to say at that! Honest it really is terrible the way time slips by so fast, isn't it? Saturday we spent cleaning out the bedrooms and living room and switching rooms around. (That's one sure way of cleaning all the corners.) I had told the girls it simply had to be done, no ifs buts or maybes if they expected their allowance or have me chauffeur them anywhere. And they did it, even though we're having our hottest days now. I moved all the wash downstairs and ironed like mad. Fact is, we took turns at it, and the pile is still high. I watered the garden and washed all day Sunday (another pile to add to the ironing) and so on. Monday night it was the same old routine, after supper it seems everybody, but everybody needs help with homework and I get positively dizzy hearing spelling words and listening to speeches. Incidentally Bob is running for president of the student body and we had to work up a speech for him while the girls made up some posters for him. He gathered bottle caps and painted them with the slogan "Vote for Bob", to pin on his supporters. Of course he probably will not win, but it's worth trying. The other candidate is a very popular girl.

Oh, we got us another bird. Two birds, to be exact. I bought a beautiful black and copper birdcage and it is so big and my little canary so lost in it I bought him a buttercup yellow wife, and it was so cute to watch them get acquainted. Then last night Ann, the girl next door came rushing up (if you can call it rushing--she's expecting her first baby any day now, and rushing is not the word to use for her getting about these days) anyway she wanted to know if our bird was loose, there was a yellow bird hopping around her backyard. We put some seeds into the old cage and set it out and like a good little lost bird he got in it. It turned out to be a yellow and green parakeet, but he looks hurt, as if he had either been chewed by a cat or got shot at. We'll see if he lives, he seems to be getting along okay. There's also still the bugling every Monday morning. Now I got a notice in the mail about a PTA meeting at the high school that Jere wants to attend

because he wants to meet Cammie's teachers and see what cooks there at the school, and another letter about a Mother's meeting for Job's Daughters that I don't think I ought to miss. I feel I owe the kids some interest in their doings. They also called me up to ask me to make some more of those fancy flyswatters for the Cipriani Sooker-00, which I have absolutely no intention of doing. I just don't approve of that Spooker-oo and worked my fingers to the bone for the last time for. Anyway, I'm working now, and that covers a multitude of excuses, doesn't it? Anyway, I'd a thousand times rather put in eight hours of sitting down and working with my hands and get paid for it, than run myself ragged and get no further in my housework anyway. One thing, though, I never seem to have anything exciting happen to me anymore. And I don't even mind, not just yet anyway. Makes my letters kind of dull, though. Mornings are hectic[.]time even more so, and afterwards I want nothing so much as to go to bed with []or otherwise. And that reminds me, you did promise to send me those Robert Kr [] souvenir ashtrays, the first chance I get. How are the plants you took home []

Mumsi, I'm sorry to say I did nothing about my citizenship papers yet, after all the rush and hurry and hounding I did. But I tell you, one part of me wants to keep working and one part of me doesn't. They have never asked me about them anymore, and it's over two months now, and I sort of feel in the back of my mind, if they ever say anything, or let me out I won't care too much because our finances ought to be better by then, and the need for working past. So I let it ride. Besides, Jere had said he'd help me compose a letter, he didn't like the one I'd written up, and if he isn't any more interested in my getting those papers and continuing to work, why should I. He's been in San Francisco on business a couple of times, and after all the errands I ran for him in my lifetime he never thought to take a little time out to see about it. He said he couldn't find it, and he doesn't like to drive around downtown (I believe him) but just the same, I just let it ride up till now. I do think I ought to do it anyway, and one of these days I'll just take it into my head to get on with it.

The car has perked up again. Jere looked it over, and got his friend on the phone to give him some pointers, and between the phone and running downstairs and looking under the hood between the two of them they must have located the trouble. Some kind of short someplace, anyway, the battery built itself up again, and so far I've no further trouble. (I hope)

Well,, darling, it's getting late again, almost eleven, and I'm bushed. I washed the kitchen tonight and am sitting here enjoying a nice clean spot for a change. I know by tomorrow it won't be. Did I tell you that Penny has been giving me a bad time about complaining about a pain in her neck. The little stinker. I know she had fallen off the bed some time ago and off and on when things didn't go to suit her she would say her neck hurt. Finally came the day when she absolutely refused to go to school, and came out in the morning with her full cowgirl regalia on instead of a school dress. I had just about five minutes to snatch those clothes off of her and stuff her into her proper things, comb her hair, wash her face and insist she'd better go to school or else (or else what?) Anyway, I worried about it even though I felt in my heart of hearts that she was just putting it on. I called the

doctor for an appointment and like a good soul he let me bring her in on a Sunday morning. Gave hr a complete physical check up. And I mean complete. And told me she was a perfectly healthy specimen of girl child. Nothing whatever the matter with her. A little tall for her age but her weight matched her build. I looked Penny firmly in the eye and said I wanted no more talk about a pain in the neck or she'd get a pain in her bottom. Now she pleads a headache whenever she has to do something she doesn't want to, like going to bed. But it cuts no ice with me. She might as well learn it now as later. All my kids go to school while they can still crawl. And if they can't crawl they sty in bed.

Well, sweetie, once more, it is later than I think. Nightie night and another letter soon.
Bye now, baby, and our very best love to you both
as ever

Wednesday Dec. 5. 1956

Hello, Angel:-

Just got your letter tonight, gollies, has it really been a month since I last wrote you? I never meant to let you wait so long. It sure has been a hectic month for me, I can tell you. This allergy of mine has been a thorn in my side, but I think maybe I have it licked. (I hope) I thought I had after I got rid of the parakeet, but then it started over again, off and on, and I never could put my finger on exactly what it was. All I know was, I'd start to sneeze and my nose would run, and the pills no longer worked. I got a new supply, blue ones this time, the pink ones, besides no longer working, made me sleepy, and the white ones I took when I got those asthma attacks at night would keep me awake and give me the shakes, so I took the blue ones every four hours during the day, and the white and pink ones at night. Oh, it was really great fun. Then I got rid of the feather pillows and got me a foam rubber one and at long last I could sleep during the night. Then one day I noticed I was sneezing at work too, and what do you suppose it was? The girl next to me brought in a pillow to sit on and she was always shaking it up just before I got to my place, and I suppose the dust hung around long enough for me to set up my sneezing. But like a good girl she took it home and brought herself a foam rubber one, once we realized what it was doing to me, and I had peace again. The day before Thanksgiving I went back to the doctor for a patch test to see exactly WHAT I was allergic to, and after losing a half a day from work (and almost not getting my holiday pay) and the tests turned out negative, so we still don't know, but suspect feathers. Anyway, last week sometime I caught another cold and strangely enough, it seems to have stopped my allergy. I went to play with Ruby's bird and nothing happened, but one night I fell asleep on a feather pillow downstairs and woke up sneezing, so I guess I better keep my nose away from feathers and play safe. Speaking of Ruby, she got the cases, and I believe she wrote and told you about it. I paid her the five dollars it cost, but don't bother to give it back to me. Mac helped Jere fix the back stoop, remember how it came away from the wall? and it just wasn't safe anymore, so Mac came up and fixed it. He was supposed to 'help' Jere but you know my darling, I'd bet Mac did the job, I wasn't home when they did it, however he wouldn't take any money for doing it, and I thought this way I could repay him. See?

We had a lovely Thanksgiving, and I'm so glad the Kidds came up to have dinner with us. I didn't do anymore than I'd normally do for our family, and it sure was nice to have company.

Gosh, I had such a small paycheck, I suppose I'm spoiled, and not working two Saturdays I sure notice the difference. But next week I expect to get our retroactive pay and it will amount to about fifty dollars, then I really can go to town and start my Christmas shopping. I hardly have done any so far. I intend to go out and buy and buy and buy all sorts of foolish tings with it, we budgeted for our regular Christmas buying and this will all just be extra. I guess we'll buy Deedee that bike she's been hankering for, and Cammie and Bobby just want clothes, which is okay I guess, but not nearly so much fun

as when I could still surprise them. I have to take them along for sizes and preference, and it takes all the joy out of it, as far as I'm concerned. That leaves just Penny, and if it weren't for her, what would Christmas be? I'm buying her a Tiny Tear doll, already have it picked out and paid for but haven't gotten it yet, she also wants a gun and holster and hat, one part of her wants to be a GIRL and another part is still a tomboy.

We gave her a birthday party last Sunday, it makes it hard to give a party so close to Christmas. This way, she got a party, her presents and she was happy.

Oh yes, I took a tumble down the backstairs the Sunday after Thanksgiving and knocked three teeth loose. The dentist took an x-ray and we found out that two of them would probably tighten again but one was fractured and had to be extracted. I went last Saturday and I must say we have an awfully good dentist, I never even felt the needle go in and there was absolutely no pain at all, except when the Novocain wore off I felt sort of dopey. Tomorrow I have to go back and have an impression taken and the day after will get my new bridge. Imagine going around without my teeth in the front. Sometimes I wish he'd take them all out and be done with it.

Sweetheart, it's getting late again. If I don't finish this letter tonight and take it with me to mail tomorrow it will lay around too long. Will write again soon as I can. Bye now.

Just read it over and decided you're probably wondering how on earth I fell downstairs, but you know how I am, always dropping the dirty wash on the stairs, and I caught my foot in a sheet and flipped. Let that be a lesson to me, and keep the stairs clear. Bye again.

I still like to go to work, and enjoy it, it makes me less tired than if I stayed home. I noticed it those four days I was home over the holidays. All I did was work, work, work, and get no place. I washed and ironed and ran around for this that and the other. Did I tell you I gained five pounds? And now that I can sleep again nights I feel and look ever so much better. I bought that lovely suit, I did so want a slim dress for once, and now I look like a sausage in it, and had to give it go Cammie. They were kidding me at work, saying all my weight settled, I didn't get fatter, just spread in the wrong places. Maybe they're right. Bye again and this time I mean it.
Lots of love to you both, as ever

January 27, 1957

Hi, Baby:

Wouldn't blame you if you threw this letter in the wastebasket saying you know of no such person, and even this won't be much of a letter. Anyway just a few lines to let you know I'm still around and kicking. There was a time I had lots of TIME to write and nothing much to say, nowadays things are happening all the time, and I never have a minute to sit down and pound this own machine. (Ever since Cammie has taken typing at school she has referred to Poor Old Faithful as 'that old machine') Incidentally, daughter has made the honor roll at high school, and we are really quite proud of her. But the way she has been going socially these days I don't know where she finds the time to do her homework. Here we are with the old TIME again, it seems to be at a premium around here. She also joined the Mariners, that's a Girl Scout organization with a SHIP, or boat to you and me. Two Saturdays ago a troop of Sea Scouts (boys that is) invited the girls for a boat ride with the purpose of looking them over, getting acquainted and choosing a queen for their annual ball. Of course Mama, that's me, had to go along to chaperone and here we were about twelve of us, and it started to rain and how it rained, and all of us practically drowned. We were wet to the skin, and how in the world they could choose a candidate for queen among that bunch of drowned kittens was beyond me, but choose they did. Cammie, natch. She got her picture in the paper and it came out real cute, too, as soon as I can get a hold of a copy I'll send it to you. Last night they had their dance, and once more I was elected to bring them home. Them I say, four boys and four girls got squeezed into the car, but I can honestly say I'm just not cut out to be Cinderella's Godmother and stay up until midnight. My bedtime happens to be at ten, and after that my eyes begin to close. Oh, yes, by the way, Cammie was not chosen to be queen, they picked an older girl, she was really nice though, but they knew this other girl better and as I said she was older, and these boys are all over fifteen. But just the same she had herself a wonderful time, and maybe next year she'll have better luck. She said herself she was glad she wasn't chosen, she would not have known how to act, in such a conspicuous lime light. Seems the boys picked a candidate from each troop, seven in all, and out of these they chose the queen. I still think it was quite an honor even to be candidate. So there we are. Music lessons one night, mariners the next. Job's daughters on Thursdays and the movies on Friday never any time left over to pick up her room. Though I still remember MY rat's nest, so girls don't change much do they? Deedee is going great guns, too, and Bob is doing very well this year, he's getting his block letter for scholarship this year, and for him that's really going. Penny is her same old ornery sweet self. And me, I too still got my nose to the grindstone and loving it. Oh yes, I finally got my dryer and it's been like a kid with a new toy. We washed and dried like crazy from the minute Jere said it was all ready and set to go. It sure is a great time saver and things come out so fluffy and nice, hardly need any ironing. We cleaned out the furnace room and put the big table in there so I can fold the wash and the ironing board and all the ironing is down there so at long last my room looks like a bedroom and not a junk yard. I bought a new bedspread for the girls and a rug for the floor, so really it looks quite nice (most of the time). We also got us some of those basket chairs for the den, the kind that look like a hat with

...now everyone has a chair and there is no fuss as to who sits where. Maybe now we can think of having the bath finished downstairs and fix up the den, floor and all. So maybe my working hasn't been for nothing.

Hey, did you get the package yet? The glasses and ceramics are from the kids, Cammie made the little figures herself for you, I never did get that 4711. I tried all over and the girl at the drugstore ordered it several times and each time it didn't come. Where DO you buy it? That's all for now, Dear, and don't be too mad at me. I also had to do some typing for Jere this last week in my haha, so-called spare time and you know what a fussbudget he is when it comes to things I have to do for him. I'm sure glad I don't have to make my living doing it... Anyway, goodnight for now, and I'll try to do better. Are you feeling okay now? Legs and back and all all better? Pop working? The dogs still driving you bats? Write and tell all.

Jan, heck no February Feb. 26/1957

My Darling Mother:--

Got your letter today and my conscience began to hurt before I even got a good look at it. "Elfriede" brrrr. But no kidding darling, I AM sorry, but I've been so darned busy lately, and simply never did get a chance to write. Not that I haven't been thinking of you, I sure did, why, I even got you a present and a card for Valentine's Day, I just never did get to sending it. One of these days, one of these days (preferably before Easter).

Now let's see where were we. Busy, naturally, but outside of that where were we. I'm sorry you're not working now, I know just exactly how you feel, I would too, if I had to stay home now and I haven't even been working as long as you. And it isn't even the money so much either. Though goodness knows, it comes in handy. We've had the half bath finished downstairs and I've been working overtime to help pay for it so we could get it done sooner. I've also been roped into taking Cammie and her friends around for things like going to San Jose with a car full to attend the wedding of their Skipper, and now we're all doing First Aide again. I'm chaperoning the girls, and it will last about four more weeks, once a week. Tonight, in other words in about three minutes I have to quite writing and get going. On top of it she tied up my weekend, we had Friday and Saturday off, in the most beautiful way that almost makes me wish she had never wanted to join the Mariners. Their boat was in dry-dock for three days and all hands fell to, to clean, scrape paint, putty screw, put on water repellent stuff, and if possible paint it before it's going back into the water. I forgot the caulking, and that is most important. Anyway, on Friday I had to get up at six and pick up four girls and be in the Palo Altos Boat Works by eight. We worked up to our ears in mud, until four that afternoon. I might add that it was raining on and off mostly on, for all of three days, and by Sunday had turned into a regular storm. Saturday I got there at nine, worked until every bone in my body ached from the strain, went home when my relief came at one, and on the way home my windshield wipers quit working. I stopped at a gas station but they couldn't fix it, so I had to creep home at a very slow pace. I ate lunch, rested a bit and then started back to pick the girls up. Halfway there the car gave up the ghost altogether. I had to call Jere to pick me up in the little car, took him home and then started out again. Try crowding four healthy big girls into a little sports car, it ain't easy! By Sunday morning it stormed so bad I didn't care whether I ever saw the boat again, and the father who was supposed to take the girls called and said he wasn't going, well, neither was I. Monday morning I went back to work feeling as if I'd been through the mill. I ached in every muscle.

No doll, I didn't faint dead away at the suggestion that I save some money. I'm sure enough trying, and who knows, I might even succeed. Your last letter tickled me, you old sweetie. Please don't get cross, you know I love you, it's just that it isn't easy to come, do a thousand and one things, do things with and for the kids, and I simply can't neglect them because I'm working, and still feel ambitious enough to sit down and write.

Oh by the way, did I tell you Jere changed jobs? He's in Belmont again, almost a stone's throw from where he used to be. So now he's driving himself in the little car and comes home for lunch. He takes care of himself, and that way I have it a little easier. I'm starting at seven-thirty these days and get off at four, makes it nice, I get home in time to start a decent supper and we won't have to eat so late. I know I'm going to like it when the nice weather comes and I can go out in the garden awhile before supper. I miss that no end, and everything is starting to grow and blossom now, though we still get an awful lot of rain.

Let's see what else goes on around here. Nothing really I guess, and anyway I see by the clock it's time to get going.

March 25, 1957

Dearest Mumsi & Pop:-

First of all let me assure you that the reports of our demise have been slightly exaggerated, and the reason you have not heard from me is not because the earthquake swallowed up all of San Francisco and the peninsula, but for the simple fact that your darling daughter has not found any time to settle down to a cozy chat via the typewriter. Isn't it awful? Gosh, I meant to drop you a card to let you know we are all okay, and there IS a letter here that Cammie wrote but which I forgot to mail. She told me "Never mind now, it's all stale news now", but I'll mail it anyhow.

Well, I ought to start someplace so I'll go over your letter first and try to answer all your big and little "?????"s. No, I don't always have to take the girls, but you know how much I enjoy the kids, and they like me, too, so why not. Somebody has to. I want very much for Cammie to be with girls her own age, nice girls like that, and would do a great deal to make it possible. I've seen too many nice kids turn bad because nobody took the trouble to do things with and for them. If you don't keep them busy and happy goodness knows what mischief they get into, hanging around movies and snack bars and going about with the wrong crowd. I want her to have fun and have things to do, and belonging to the Mariners and working on the boat is good clean wholesome fun. I took them again this past Sunday, even Bob, to help with the painting and cleaning up.

About vacation, well, I don't know. I will get only one week with pay, and I'll have to take the other, but I still want to keep on working, so I couldn't very well come out for the summer much as I'd like to. Ruby will be pretty busy planning to build their new house, hasn't she talked about that yet? Anyway, I haven't made any plans at all yet.

Yes, and what about those books? You mean I have to come all the way to New Jersey to read them again?

I don't want a new car, the old one is good enough to take me to work, and when we go out or I want to put on the Ritz I can always drive our little Doodle-Bug. She's pretty.

No, Jere will never change, and anyway, in his profession there is always more demand than supply, and he can get what he wants anytime. (Darn it)

Spaaren, sagt sie. Hah! Da muss der Gaul lachen. I couldn't save two cents, for some reason or other there is always a use for money. But it will be better in another year, when those big mortgage payments will be off and we'll only have the 75 a month for the house. You'd be surprised how much it costs to have a kid in high school, it's a dollar here, and five dollars there. But I don't mind, I'm glad I have it to give, and next term it will be Bob's turn.

You know Mumsi, it was the nicest feeling to go out for a party dress for Deedee, and for once in my life, we looked at the dress first and then at the price tag. I wanted the prettiest, fluffiest party dress I could find, and we got it. An adorable pink nylon, with an overskirt embroidered with little flowers. I also saw a sister dress, in white nylon with velvet bands on it for Deedee and Penny to wear at Easter. And I bought Penny a little shortie coat for Easter. Now all we have to get is shoes for Penny, Deedee had gotten black patent leather party shoes, so she used your five dollars to buy a bathing suit and cap. She's taking swimming lessons every Saturday for the next eight weeks, and needed it. You know, our kids are awfully good that way, they never waste their money, but always buy something they need or want to wear. Bob had wanted a Rock and Roll coat (the very latest the boys are wearing) and he saved eight dollars from his allowance and we put in the difference. He had brought home such a good report card we said he could have anything he wanted and that's what he wanted. But he did put in his share. Cammie, she made the honor roll for the second time, and we're so proud of her, she wants a record player, and just as soon as she can supply a part of it, we'll make up the difference and get it for her.

Boy yes, we had a birthday party, too, and wasn't the joint jumping. j Wouldn't surprise me none if it caused that earthquake. Fourteen youngsters, seven boys and seven girls, oh brother. But it must have been a huge success, every time I see one of those kids their eyes light up and they tell me what a "WONDERFUL" time they had. Best birthday party ever. I ordered a cake from the bakery and they took over the den, yes they had fun.

Honey Lamb, it's getting awfully late, I think I'll send this off as the first installment and write tomorrow night and tell you all about the earthquake, etc. etc. etc. Okay?
Meantime love to you both
(signed) your loving daughter

Well, instead of hunting around for a florist Saturday, or even busily putting my nose to the grindstone to make the money to buy that gardenia for you I spent sitting around the doctor's office in the dark, while he took pretty x-ray pictures of my insides. For the past two weeks I've had the darndest funny pain in my stomach right under the breastbone so I made an appointment to see the doctor, gave him all my symptoms and little aches and pains and past history and he thought it might be an ulcer. So next step was the radiologist for x-rays and so on. Went back yesterday to get the findings and the findings kind of floored me. I was all set for ulcer and had been going easy on my diet and practically lived on milk and cottage cheese and what he tells me I have is gallstones. Gallstones yet. Next Saturday I'm scheduled for further x-rays for him to study and pore over and then he will tell me whether medication will do the trick or what have you. Whathaveyou meaning an operation. Honest to Pete! Well, anyway Jere was a little relieved, I think he felt if I had an ulcer, the life I lead would have a lot to do with it, and this relieves his conscience, I can't blame a gallstone on him (not that I would have blamed an ulcer on him either). I haven't written you before because I didn't feel too hot, and there was no sense worrying you about something I wasn't even sure yet. And by going to the doctor early enough, it isn't serious at all. On top of it all Jere quit his job and is now working as a sales representative for electronic equipment. It keeps him busy and humming and he has no time to sit around and look for trouble. And as he gets more integrated in his job it will keep him even busier. He might even make more money one of these days, but right now it's pretty much touch and go, even though he is on a salary basis, rather than on commissions. It hasn't been too easy on me, because he expects me to be a sort of silent partner, the man he works for wanted to meet me and make sure I approve of this radical change in his profession. It really was funny. Jere called me and wanted to know if I would go out to dinner with him at eight thirty. So I put on my best bib and tucker borrowed Ann's good little jacket and we went forth. We had a very interesting evening, even though Jere kind of puzzled me by saying I shouldn't mention my job. Seems they were offering less than he is making now and he wanted me to be the one to hold out for more by insisting I couldn't make out what they offered. Anyway, nine o'clock came and went before she finally went out to make some coffee and that's what we had. Coffee and cake. And our stomachs were growling for food by then. I'd catch his eye and sort of giggle, anyway, we broke away by eleven and hunted up a hamburger stand. With fifty cents between us! Laugh, honest, I haven't had so much fun in ages. I kept insisting he must have misunderstood and they said "Come over after dinner" and he insisted there was nothing wrong with his ears and they had said "Come up for dinner". Oh well, I'll let you know what the doctor says as soon as I know. So be patient with me in the meantime, and remember my mind is not exactly at ease either.

Bye for now, and best love to you both.

F

May 27. 1957

Hello, Parents:---

I'm restless as a doodle-bug tonight--it's been so doggoned hot again and I have no ambition to do anything, so I might as well sit here and see if I can turn out a decent letter, for a change.

Thanks a million, darling, for answering so quickly, it's really more than I deserve.

Well, I've had my appointment with the doctor last week and the verdict is that I'm scheduled for an operation on July 12th. I've arranged for a leave of absence of five weeks, including the two weeks vacation in August. That should give me plenty time to get on my feet again. It's really not so very bad, and incidentally, the doctor says they can't dissolve a gallstone, that that is a popular fallacy, he says that people go along with a gallstone or two for years, but that eventually it will give trouble, and you get jaundice and pain and they don't like to do emergency operations. They like to do it when a person is in good health, and I am in the pink of condition(?) right now. Oh, he gave me a long lecture on gallstones, and while he didn't exactly twist my arm to have this operation now, the upshot is, do you want to live or don't you. And I do. Anyway, with the group insurance from work it won't cost me too awful much (I hope) and I will draw about forty dollars a week while I'm off work. Apparently it is something I've lived with for quite a long time, judging from the size of the stone in the x-ray, and I really am not a bit worried about it. Don't worry about me, Angel, I'm fine, really I am, and this is as much a surprise to me as it is to you. And honestly, do I look like the kind of person who would have a nervous breakdown, do I? Going to work, well, it still is fun, and more relaxing to me than staying home. It lets me off the hook from so many things, from PTA to church right down to Jere. In case you haven't heard, I declared my independence from the day I started to work. No more running errands, no more struggling to make the outgo match the income, all I do is worry about how to stretch my sixty-one bucks to cover food, cleaning, baby sitting, gas etc, etc. etc. and have enough left over to pay off Sears revolving charge account and the account at Hartfield's for my clothes. That's all, hah! You know very well, dear, that I don't mind doing things for the kids, after all, that's what I'm working for, so they can have a little extra, and it pleases me to see them all busy and active in things like Mariners, Jobs Daughters and Scouting. Now that Jere has the little car he's taking quite a load off of me, by doing his share of ferrying them around. Matter of fact, he is the one who is insistent of my going to bed at ten, and no waiting for the kids to come out of the movies at eleven. He goes and picks them up. So really, I never had it so good. This gallstone thing is just one of those things that will happen in the best regulated families, at least it ain't no ulcer. Which I'd really have minded.

Jere likes his new job very much, and something tells me I'm going to, too. Gee, he called me at work last week and said would I like to go to dinner. (Here we go again) and I said "Dinner? You're sure you said DINNER?" and he said yes, someone would pick me up at

six and we'd meet him down in San Francisco. Well, I rushed home and Cammie said to call Mrs. Dalton (the boss's wife), I did and she said she'd be picking me up at five. Holy Cow, and here it was four thirty already. I jumped into my bubble bath, put up my hair, looked over my dresses and found I hadn't a thing fit to wear, the last dinner, if you'll pardon the expression, had left relish spots all over it and I hadn't noticed it before I hung it away, so luckily Ann, bless her little heart, came to the rescue with a darling navy blue sheath dress, that fits me like I was poured into it, and which made me look like a million dollars. Cammie's little white shell of a hat, Cammie's black shoes, and isn't it nice to have a daughter whose clothes you can wear? And I was turned out looking like a lady about to go to dinner. We had a simply marvelous time, too. Turned out we were entertaining an out of town manufacturer. We were a party of six, so we really had a swell time. We went to a really swanky place down there in S.F. a nightclub with entertainment and all. Four Daiquiris and I'm floating lighter than thistle down, boy, it was fun. Came home at midnight but it was worth it. Last Friday I was supposed to go to another dinner, but begged off, I simply have to get me some clothes first, I can't go around borrowing my friend's clothes all the time, can I? And now I wished I had gone, seems they were giving Jere a birthday dinner, cake, card and all. Oh well. I didn't know. You know it's fun to have friends, the girls at work were all working hard gathering data on clothes I could borrow if I needed to, one offered a black velvet sheath dress, another her fur stole, and so on, so actually I could have quite a few changes if I want to. But gosh darn it, I want to buy some of my own. I do have that lovely Easter suit of mine, but you can't wear a suit all the time. I went out tonight, window shopping so to speak, to see what there was, and believe me as soon as I can I'm really going to splurge. And I don't mean any old little eight dollar number either. If I have to dress to fit the occasion, I'm going to buy good clothes. And that will be fun, after all these years.

Darling, I was reading your letter over, and you simply don't understand. I'm not spoiling Cammie, but when they start going to high school they simply have got to have clothes and good times like the other kids, I'm not able to do nearly as much as I'd like, because after all, there are four to spread around. As it is now they get what they absolutely need and that's all. That's the reason I went to work, so we could send Deedee to camp, and buy shoes, always we buy shoes it seems. They all get their fair share, and not one of them feels that the other one gets more. I know when Bob goes to high school this fall we'll be starting all over again, they wear different clothes, no more jeans, but ivy league pants, no more simple shirts but the really snappy ones the boys wear out here, and we started with a bang buying his graduation outfit. The kid really has good taste and likes to be a snappy dresser. Boy, wait till you see his picture. You know, Mom, you only had the two of us, but you must remember what it was like. I don't want them to feel they have to go to work too soon. Already Cammie is talking of taking a job for the summer, and good God, she is only fifteen, time enough for that when it is necessary. I want them all to have good schooling, as much as they can take and make something of their lives. They don't get spoiled by no means, but they should have what their contemporaries have without feeling they are left out of things. Bob is about ready to join the Sea Scouts now, and I'm very pleased about it. It will keep him out of trouble for a few more years.

As far as our debts are concerned, you knew this would go on for a few more years. It gets easier with each month. I don't even think about it anymore, it just goes on and on, I guess.

Oh well, I rambled on enough for one night. Time to sign off. But put your mind at ease, sweetheart, everything will come out all right, sooner or later.

I'll write again soon, so bye-bye for tonight,
and best love to you both

P.S. How about dropping a little line to Deedee, she's anxiously awaiting a letter from you, or even a card will do.

June 16, 1957

Hello, Darlings:-

Well! It isn't my birthday--?Christmas is a long way off, so how come I rate a package in the mail????? It was a lovely surprise and I do thank you for it, but how come??? It fits like a dream and both the dress and the coat is just darling, but again, HOW COME? Honestly, Mumsi, did you really think I had NOTHING to wear when I told you in my letter I had nothing to wear? I meant nothing truly suitable to wear out to dinner when you don't know exactly where you're going. I meant something sleek and check like a navy blue or black sheath dress, something really elegant like taffeta, oh you know something that looks at home at a cocktail bar or in a show or restaurant. And I shall have a dress like that one of these days without having to borrow it. Telling you about the girls at work was a joke and we all took it as a joke, I never meant to take them up on it. But thanks anyhow, you are a dear and I know you love me (and that's the nicest thing about it).

You know, Mumsi, I wish now I hadn't put that operation so far ahead, it kind of is always at the back of my mind, and though I'm not worried I still and all wish it were over with. Well, I go in on the twelfth of July and I won't go back to work till the nineteenth of August, so that gives me plenty of time to get well. And if by that time I decide not to work anymore, well, I can always stay home. Everything is all arranged and you're not to worry your little head about it. The kids and Jere can look out for themselves and believe it or not I have lots of friends that are willing and anxious and ready to stand by to see that I take it easy.

I've had a pretty bad cold again last week and I really was miserable from it, seems whenever my system is a little out of whack I get those stomach pains and the wheezy allergy again. So it probably is just as well to have it out. The weather is so screwy too, hot one day cold the next, and for the past week it's been a real scorcher. Luckily our new plant is air conditioned and cool enough to make me want to wear a sweater, and then when I go outside at four-thirty it hits me like a blast from the furnace. And oh last Sunday, boy was it ever hot. I should have gone to the beach, Cammie did with her boy friend and she said it was downright cool there.

Well, Bob had his graduation and he, too, made the Award of Merit for Scholastic Growth, and was we ever proud, boy, our chest puffed out a mile. He was on the honor roll too, and so was Cammie, well, they may not be the best kids in the world, but they sure are smart! Jere got Bob a television of his own for ten dollars, and very good looking piece of furniture if I do say so, and it works too. All he needs is an aerial to make him a completely happy boy. He sure does keep his room and his person nice, not at all like his sloppy mother.

Darling, I still have that pretty nightie you sent me a few years ago and I have a bed jacket and I got a new bathrobe so I really am all set and don't need a thing. Thanks anyway.

No, Jere has no hospitalization right now since he changed jobs, but mine takes care of most of it. Yes, I found the stamps, didn't you recognize them on your letters? Yes, I got the seeds, and planted some, I sure do love a green salad and borage makes it taste better. I've been putting the radish leaves in to give it a little tartness, and it works fine, but there's nothing like borage.

Well, it's getting late again so I'd better sign off for tonight.

Thanks a whole million for your lovely present, and you take care of yourself too.
Bye now, and best love to you both

July 17, Wednesday

Well here I sit on a bright July morning blankly trying to think back on these last few sort of hectic days. Let's see now...Thursday afternoon Jere was waiting for me to bring me in. The only ones that seemed to be at all concerned were the two little ones. Honestly now, what did I expect? Bob and Cammie were watching TV and hardly even noticed me going. Oh well! I might as well get used to it.

Anyway, at the hospital I was checked in and escorted upstairs. My suitcase weighs a lot...those magazines no doubt. The room is lovely and cheerful but I didn't quite know what to do next. So sort of aimlessly I got out my pajamas and climbed into bed, feeling awfully foolish all the time. Jere and I [] felt very ill at ease, so I told him he might as well go home. I got supper served to me, a very light lo-fat one, but more than I expected. Talked to my roommate, a nice elderly lady who had had surgery on her breast, read my magazine, and finally went to sleep. Oh my, I forgot that the anesthesiologist came to see me and told me they'd give me a shot at six and presumably make me feel he had no intentions of putting me to sleep permanently. Just before lights out [] stuck her head in the door and handed in a package from the girls, I was astounded and delighted. A lovely leline duster and card signed by the girls, bless them. It made me feel all warm and good knowing I had friends. At six the next morning they gave me a hypo and I must have gone to sleep for awhile but I woke up when they came with the gilder and I was able to move myself and enjoy being wheeled limpidly up the aisles and into the surgery. I got a dime for ey sksdf and Dr. Howard and that's all I remember. I have a very hazy feeling of someone next to me moaning and moaning (could it have been me?) and then there was Jere holding my hand and looking worried. I guess I just did a lot of sleeping that day and it was the best thing I could do. I know I was awfully thirsty but they wouldn't give me anything by mouth. Had a sleeping pill which naturally didn't keep me asleep much past midnight. Needed the bed pan twice. In the morning I got an intervenes feeding--two bottles--and Pearl called me on the phone. That phone sure is a blessing. They were bathing me, kdk, at the time so I asked here to call me back later.

In the afternoon the nurse came into my room and asked me if I would mind to be moved across the hall. They had a very sick man who needed this quiet room. Apparently it was the best room in the house. I enjoyed looking out of the window and seeing the green rolling landscape of Redwood City and at night the moon would come up and shine into the room and lying awake wasn't nearly so lonesome.

The elderly lady went home at two and the little lady I could watch obliquely across the hall must have gone home too because it was here space I was to occupy.

Naturally I said I would gladly give up the room, and they moved me. I watched with a great deal of interest when they brought in the patient. He is a young man who was badly hurt in an accident and they fear his back will be permanently paralyzed. I felt pretty good by then even though I had an awful tendency to cough and everything hurts like fury for ldkjf yet. But that night Dr. Howard relented and said since I was doing so well I could

now take my nourishment orally. Starting with a cup of tea. How lovely that tasted. I still have to cough and learned to do it in a ladylike manner holding my stitches meantime.

Meantime phone calls and visits poured in and I feel enveloped in a warm glow of friendship, oh it's so wonderful to have friends about you who care.

Ruby and Pearl came and brought me the loveliest bouquet of posies, pretty pink marguerites.

Jere came and brought me the radio which doesn't work and I don't even care. There is a gay little sprite across the hall whose radio entertains us all and she laughs and laughs like a silver bell all day long.

Wednesday, July 17th

My Dear Helen!

You are on my doctor's blacklist, as of right now...don't you know I'm only permitted a polite ladylike "haha" and after sorting through your "mail" I had all I could do not to burst my stitches. Tsk, tsk, you wicked girls. Oh but I wish I were sitting next to you right now playing post office for you and Christine. I do so miss you all. Not that Life at Sequoia isn't exciting. It is, there is enough excitement passing my open door to write a book about but unfortunately time is so relative sometimes it drags by at snail's pace and then again it seems incredible how so much could go on in so short a time. Anyway I never will understand hospital procedure. They stood me up and said "walk" the very first day, and now that I'm used to "ambulating" around and sticking my nose in every door, now all of a sudden they discover I have a sore on my foot and before you can say "Jack Robinson" I'm down for the count with wet compresses and concern from everyone. All this time the nurses would wash my foot and never even notice the sore, which incidentally was NOT healing as I thought it should. I'd say coyly "look at the sore, its getting bigger" and they'd say "yes" and keep right on scrubbing. But yesterday when the doctor came by to check on any new or old complaints, I had my foot up and you'd have thought he had discovered a new world or something. What's that, he cried...oh you know, that little ol' sore I mentioned last week...and boing before you know what happened a nurse bustled in and slapped a hot towel on me! I still hope to go home Friday...Everyone has boon most kind, and I never realized I had so many good friends. Every mail brings me lots of cards. The phone is constantly ringing and visitors have come afternoons and night. Of course my "steady" is the guy I said yes to, so many years ago, bless his heart. I got three gorgeous plants and a bouquet of pink daisies, the loveliest things. Jere's boss' wife brought me a lovely nightie and her cheerful presence and one of my girl scouts sent me a pair of earrings, the little doll. And Dear old Lenkurt...LRA...sent a plant, bless them.

July 25, 1957

Hi, toots:

[picture of little girl sitting in rocker reading huge book]

Gee whizz, Soph, you are truly a good and faithful friend, and you make me feel like low man on a totem pole. I know it sounds like the lamest darned excuse to say I meant to write, but...but please believe me, time is the culprit not I, it has such a nasty habit of slipping away. But if I'm to write that book (see sketch) I'd better not waste the first five chapters on apologies. Not that I wouldn't if it were necessary, but again Time, that subtle thief, won't permit it.

Come to think of it now, Time I happen to have a lot of right now, so maybe I'd better start at the end and work back. I was going to write you from the hospital but like a dope I remembered to bring stationary, pen, and even stamps but no addresses, so all my letter writing had to wait until I got back home again. I can just see those question marks sprouting over your head. Hospital she thinks, what on earth can Frances be doing in a hospital, not a baby (I hope), not an accident I trust, What??? Well, to make a long story short about three or four months ago I got to having the funniest feelings in my little insides that had all the earmarks of an ulcer. Yep, calm, placid, even-tempered (I think) Frances with an ulcer. So I went to see my doctor and told him all about my little aches and pains and vague symptoms and he thought it was an ulcer, too. But to make certain I had a series of--oh gosh, what do you call ums--fluoroscopic x-rays taken. And much to my surprise and everybody's amazement it was no ulcer at all, but a perfectly beautiful gall stone. Well, the doctor gave me my choice, have it out while you're in the pink of condition or wait until you're really in trouble, live or die, it's up to you. Sooo, since my group insurance policy would take care of most of the bills I thought I might as well take five weeks off and have it over with. And that's where I've been. Matter of fact I've only been home a week, well not quite home, I persuaded the doctor to let me go last Friday and my girlfriend Ruby offered me the sanctuary of her home for four days, and then when they thought I was fit enough they let me stagger back to my own homestead. There are times, believe me, when I think I'd like to check out of here for good and by Ruby's favorite star boarder.

I've booked a cabin at Ben Lomond for a week, and we'll be going there next Friday, Deedee, Penny, Cammie and her girl friend and I, just us girls. I'll be back home on the eighth and that makes it just perfect for your visit. Gosh, all this time leading up to saying you will be more than welcome, nay, you will be eagerly looked forward to and welcomed with open arms. I have so much talking to catch up on and no job to go to until the 19th of August (if I have one then) it will be a real treat and a pleasure to have you with us.

You know, Soph, one of the nicest things about this operation is that it showed me how many wonderful friends I've got. I checked into the hospital on a Thursday and that evening just when I was feeling pretty darned blue about the whole thing, Lucy, one of

the girls, sneaked in and presented me with a present that the gals on the line had chipped in on. A lovely blue duster sort of a thing and cologne. The next day they must have kept the operator busy answering the phone to find out how I was. I had a phone in the room and so help me, I didn't have time to be lonesome. Every visiting hour brought visitors (besides my favorite character) and I got enough flowers and plants to make you think it was a florist shop. There were gifts of books and nighties and candy and every mail call brought me a handful of cards. I needn't tell you it warmed the cockles of my heart and I'm sure was one of the main reasons I got better so quickly. Seems everyone was pulling for me. I do feel fine now, simply wonderful, and have to keep reminding myself forcibly that I'm still supposed to be a semi-invalid. Although I must confess that this enforced idleness is driving me slightly wild, I finally couldn't sit home any longer and took the car and went to the store. Didn't kill me either so I kept on doing it. I had noticed that I developed more than a slight 'pot' and none of my skirts and dresses fitted comfortably over my fancy stitching that's decorating my tummy, so yesterday I went forth and bought me some housedresses. Of course they may fit around the middle but hung like a sack about the shoulders so I had to do some altering, and am now finally able to dress in something besides a nighties and duster. The doctor put me on a moderate ulcer diet because he found that besides the stone (which I have in a jar of alcohol, simply revolting) I also had ulcer scars and he wants to be sure they are good and gone. So, my dear, if you can stand the thought of giving you a blow by blow description of MY OPERATION Please hurry up her to Belmont and be my guest. I will look forward to seeing you, and if you don't want to get the impression we don't want you I'd better sign and seal and get this letter in the mail, right pronto.

Till the ninth then,
bye-bye and love to you all

September 8, 1957

Hello Baby:--

Feeling neglected lately? Lonely? Blue? Forgotten? With a "Nobody loves me kind of feeling? Cheer up, so have I. It just doesn't seem possible that only about five weeks ago I was flat on my back making like an invalid, and here I am feeling fit as a fiddle with my nose back on the same old grindstone and on the same old merry-go-round. And only those fancy stitchings on my tummy to remind me I still ought to be taking it easy.

October 1, 1957

Good grief, can it really be a month since I started this letter? Well, it sure has been a hectic one. At the plant they have been laying off and each time there is rumors of another one, but so far I've always been skipped, I don't know whether to cheer or feel bad. Oh, I love working all right, but I have so little time for anything else, and the weekends go by so fast just trying to keep up with the washing and ironing and making up beds. Now that the kids are back in school they can no longer be the help to me that they were during the summer. Bob, who had been taking over the kitchen, and doing a very good job of it, nowadays goes to school when I go to work and comes home about five minutes before I do. Same with Cammie and when they stay for after school sports I don't see them until supper time. Deedee is the only one who is stuck, poor baby. She has to get Penny dressed and make their breakfast and clear the table and get the dishwasher started. So it doesn't seem fair to make her work after school, too. Oh well.

I got my darned allergy back again, it seems to me it started last year just about this time too. I get the sneezes and the wheezes just like before and the only thing helps is taking those multicolored pills. I sleep badly at night and consequently I am forever tired. Taking the pill cures my wheezes but keeps me awake. Well, I can only hope that it's seasonal and will go away again by November the same as last year.

We have an awful lot of flu around. All the kids are taking turns getting sick. First it was Cammie and then Deedee and today Bob stayed home with a fever of 102. Thank God for Pearl. She looks in on the kids and gives them lunch and I don't have to worry about them being home alone.

A lot of the girls on my line have been out too, I remember one day a couple of weeks ago, three of them collapsed and went home on the same day, and one girl had a heart attack, boy the place really looked empty that week. Oh well, you see what I mean, I feel real jolly and it's no kind of mood to write a letter.

How is every little thing with you these days? Oh by the way, Cammie insists she took a picture of me in the pink dress and white coat and that I sent it to you. I have no recollection of it, did I? I enjoyed those snaps you sent of Joe and his brood. My how big that Leo has grown, and Susie is cute as a button.

Well, Doll, here it is ten o'clock again, and between running up and down the stairs bringing Bob chicken broth and fruit juices and making toast and writing on this letter I am positively pooped. So I will say goodnight for now. Maybe you will break down and write to me for a change.

Bye now darling, and take care of yourself.
Lovingly, as ever

November 5, 1957

My Dear Mother!

Honestly, you make me so mad, I simply can't understand you... you have a heck of a lot more time than I have to sit down and write a letter and I haven't heard a word from you since July. You wrote to Ruby and asked her to have me call you! For crying out loud, it would have been a whole lot better for the both of us if you'd gotten on the phone and called me yourself. You say the kids don't write, well!!! How often do you write to them? And must you always criticize and say how much better a letter Susie writes or Leo or heaven knows who, you ought to just be happy they think of you at all. Deedee says if she can't measure up to your expectation she'd rather not write at all, and I can hardly blame her. Cami always writes you and you hardly ever answer her letters. When are you ever going to learn not to expect too much from children. I enclosed a dollar in Bob's birthday card because I couldn't bear to see him disappointed in you, I also know he'd never say anything, sure I could bear down on them and say sit down and write, and would it make you happier to get a few lines? No, it wouldn't. You'd say why can't they write a decent letter. As for me, you know darned well I'm up to my neck in things that have got to be done when I come home from work, and apparently a card isn't sufficient for you, you didn't even let me know whether you got my messages or not. So okay, maybe you are sick or don't feel well or broke an arm or something, how in thunder would I know? Oh well, there's no use or my scolding, you'll never change, but I've been standing over the ironing board for the last two hours brooding and getting madder and madder at you and simply had to get it off my chest, perhaps I ought to just tear this letter up and start over again, but I won't, you always let me have it with both barrels when I displease you.

Things have changed quite a bit down at the plant, and for the worse, as far as I'm concerned. I went back into training and am now on the cable assembly line. Oh, it's interesting and all that, but I feel like a dunce, I can do it all right but haven't got my speed yet, and the next person that says 'standard' to me will get his head blown off. I was doing well in transformers and working at a hundred percent standard and better, 106% to be exact and now I'm right back where I was sixteen months ago. I have about a dozen or so different colored wires to solder in exact pattern onto a plug with a lot of little hooks on them, and between looking at the blue prints to make sure they go in the right place and soldering and twisting and what have you I feel like I have two left hands and thumbs on both of 'em. I've only been doing it for a week so maybe it will get better, it had BETTER or I know when I've had had. I almost wish I'd gotten laid off the last time. See, I really feel low tonight. Sure I haven't gotten any of my work back yet, but nobody seems to care about that, only how many of them you do in eight hours. We work different hours, and I get out at four-fifteen and somehow that fifteen minutes makes a lot of difference. On top of that I'm saddled with two riders and I don't like it one bit, but don't see how I can get out of it. After all, one of the gals works right next to me and I couldn't very well refuse when she asked to ride home with me at night. She lives way the heck up in the hills and it takes me an extra ten minutes to get her home and turn around and come back down where I want to go. It seems a small thing, really, and I

ought not to mind it so much, but I'm so used to going my own way, and sometimes I'd go shopping or even visit for a half hour before going home and I can't now. By the time I stop at the store and get my daily loaf of bread and milk and whatever I think I need for supper it's five before I get home. Oh heck I guess I'm getting old and cranky.

I hardly ever get a chance to see my friends, the evenings are so taken up with a number of chores and Saturday and Sunday are a pure nightmare. I catch myself coming and going, trotting to the store, taking the girls to choir, taking Bob down to the sea scouts, feeding the family and throwing the wash in the machine in between times. Jere does most of the drying for me, and that's when I bless the dryer. I see Ruby when she comes down, and of course Pearl, the darling, is always popping in on me. She was in the hospital a couple of weeks ago, and I spent all my spare time going to see her. She did it for me, and I was bound and determined to do as much for her. I know how nice it was for my friends to come and break up the monotony of the day. It sure can get dreary lying in bed waiting for things to happen.

Ruby's house is coming along just beautifully, I bet she will be in by Christmas. It's going to be a lovely house, too, and Mac is doing a nice job. There are a lot of new homes up around the bend now, and I hardly know my neighbors, so many cars go up and down and I don't know where they belong. One of these days they'll be fixing Monserat, but I wouldn't put it past them to start when the rainy season comes, and we'll be in mud up to your ears. But I won't care so long as they get the job done, it will be an improvement (Holy cow this typewriter is a mess, everybody's using it, both Cami and Bob do their homework on it, and I noticed tonight that even Deedee's been using it, the poor old thing can't stand the strain. Of course at the head of the Christmas list is a new typewriter, my stars and stripes, did I say Christmas? It will be here before I know it, or am even ready for it.

Well, doll, here it is ten o'clock again, and I must sign off. You know it's early rise and early to bed for me, and I don't even know anymore what a television is. I sure enough never get to watch it.

The kids are fine again, though we had a siege of the flu there for awhile, only Cami went on a long hike Sunday and her muscles are still sore. Penny has shot out of all her clothes and even though I've lengthened all her dresses already she is about due for a new wardrobe. Their school pictures ought to come any day now, we've gotten Bob's, isn't he a nice looking kid? but unfortunately they lost Cami's pictures. The little ones haven't come yet. I'll send them when they do.

Well, nightie night now,
Best love to you both as ever,
from all of us

December 1. 1957

Greetings, Aged and Respected Parents!

Well, there were no skull and crossbones in the letters to the kids saying I was not to read 'em, so, although not a sign of life has come addressed to me, I am sort of abreast of the times and lives of the Millers in Dover. I hope by now things are a little better with you both again.

I never got around to telling you, but our lives have been encumbered with a very lively, very impish little kitten, a cross-eyed member of a Siamese. Bootsie is very unhappy about her, she teases him unmercifully and is quicker than greased lightning so he can't get back at her, and if that dratted cat lights on my chest one more night and purrs in my ear I'll make mince-meat out of her. Our cat was poisoned about a couple of months ago and Penny carried on so about her kitty that Jere said to for goodness sakes get her another one, and I got this little devil through one of the girls at work. Cute little monster with her blue eyes and her pretty seal point fur, even if her eyes are crossed. She caused me more trouble too, got out the first day we had her and we turned the neighborhood upside-down trying to locate the stupid little thing, and met more nice (or not so nice) people that way. Now we couldn't get rid of her if we tried. Put her out one door and she cries at the other.