

1981

Dear \_\_\_\_\_

Christmas has crept up on me and I'm going to be as late with my cards this year as I was early last year. And what a year it has been! My usual one page letter will grow longer as I share with you my experiences this year and especially my joys in visiting with so many dear friends and relatives from coast to coast (Florida to Calif. ~~that is~~).

Last Christmas was a truly unique and fun experience. Bill Giles and I joined the Detroit to Florida I-75 moving parking lot -- 2-3 lanes of solid bumper to bumper cars for 1200 miles to get to Florida and visit his daughter, Sue, and the "Florida Giles," in West Palm Beach. We enjoyed the mild weather and traveled all over Florida during the 2 weeks we were there. On Christmas Day in Gainsville, as the Gileses opened all their gifts, I recorded the whole proceeding with my new color Video camera and recording unit. Then Bill, Sue & I went south to Bonita Springs to see 2 of their relatives, and discovered that my cousin, Geraldine Rusk, also of Bonita Springs, and Bill's aunt and uncle had been close friends (totally independent of Bill's and my friendship) for 25 years! It's a small world! And how wonderful, as Geraldine and I talked and visited, to discover an awareness and a true sense of "family," though we had hardly known each other. On the drive down to Fla, I called and talked with Leah Melton. Then, going from the west coast back to West Palm, we quickly drove through Clewiston and I thought of Dot and Bob Stacy -- but there was no stopping since Sue was about to be late for a BIG DATE for a rock concert. We enjoyed several more sunny joyous days on the beach and a jaunt down to Miami before heading back to the frigid North - spiritually and physically rejuvenated. I could get addicted to that 2 week mid winter break in the warm, sunny South!

This has been "The year of Sue" -- and I have suddenly had "instant mother hood" thrust upon me. Years ago I made the offer for Sue to use "her room" at my home, that she has used on visits here for the past ten years, as a base to go to the University of Cincinnati. To make a long story short, on February 1, she took me up on the offer and

and said, "I want to go to U.C." Two weeks later I had her enrolled and mid-March she moved up here to start spring quarter. It was great fun sharing her joy of discovery of a whole new world different from Florida, - A complete new and necessary cold weather wardrobe ~~wardrobe~~, the ballet and Baryshnikov, the symphony, and especially the ~~chaix~~ the challenge and excitement of learning in college in contrast to highschool.

After our wonderful spring together, at the end of June, Sue and I started on a 6 week, 10,000 mile trip through southwestern United States. Starting with a 4½ mile, 4 hour hike through Mammoth Cave, we traveled <sup>h</sup>rough Nashville, Tulsa, Santa Fe, Mesa Verde, Colo., and northern Arizona. Especially exciting was a one day raft trip down the Colorado River through Glen Canyon (no white water!) Then we drove on to Bryce (snow in July!) and Zion Nat'l Parks, Las Vegas, Death Valley (120 degrees +) Sequoia and Yosemite ~~Nat'l~~ Parks, Lake Tahoe and Virginia City, Nev., San Francisco, down the Pacific Coast past Monterey and Big Sur to rest and recuperate in Los Angeles. The homeward leg of our journey began with the Wild Animal Park in San Diego, on to Joshua Tree Nat. Mon., then to Palm Springs, Cal. and Phoenix, Ariz (really the pits in the heat of summer). In <sup>IN</sup> Contrast, Sedona, Ariz. and Oak Creek Canyon was beautiful, as was Grand Canyon, Meteor Crater, Petrified Forest, El Paso, Texas (and Mexico for one hour), and Carlsbad Caverns and the bats. San Antonio ~~Texas~~ was a refreshing oasis in the eternity of driving across Texas. Baton Rouge and New Orleans, La. broke the long drive across the Gulf to Gainesville, Fla where I let Sue off for a short 36 week summer with her family - and I headed for Cincy to "rescue" my poor beleaguered Brownie Bulldog. She had a wonderful home with a good friend, but shared it with 2 other rambunctuous male dogs. Bored she was not!

It was a fantastic trip and I loved it - the scenery, the experiences, and especially ~~The trip was truly wonderful and I'm glad I did it, and I wouldn't give anything~~ the marvelous opportunity to renew friendships and visit with family & friends: Jeanne, ~~in the world for it~~----- But it was also a very exhausting trip with all the driving Pam & Dean; ~~Dick~~ Morris (Dick) & Ellie Dent; Myrian Baker; Bill & Harriet Lovett----- -- and especially the constant daily planning. I came home physically and mentally drained as much as I was mentally and spiritually fulfilled from the trip. Then the 3 weeks before school started were crammed with housecleaning, sorting and labeling the

1000 slide pictures I had taken (I'm only  $\frac{1}{2}$  done) and stripping and rewallpapering my large kitchen. I really was not ready for school to start - and 3 weeks later Sue returned to start fall quarter. She arrived with a completely different attitude and I've had to contend with some of the "typical teenage" problems that normally occur in growing from H.S. to college and eventual maturity that occur about this time.

I have thought so often of the many times my dear friends with growing families would write (with obvious envy) -- "HOW do you do everythingk you do????????? I can TELL you how I did it -- I did not have children to raise!!!! Now I know! Frankly, I have done nothing this fall but work at school (including UC), keep house and be a parent of sorts. I feel I am never caught up and always tired. But things look to get better. The life of a commuting student - off campus - especially in a strange town is not the best situation and this is part of Sue's problem. So she is going to move on campus. Fortunately she also has a really terrific boy friend. All this promises to lighten my load.

And so my year seems to have oome full circle. Last year this time I was leaving with Bill for Florida and so began my year with Sue as friend, travel companion and instant parent. This Friday (Dec 18), Bill and Sue will leave for Florida as I stay here and cherish the 2 weeks alone to rest, renew, and regroup for the year to come. It has been an enriching and educational experience. I am glad I could help Sue make the transition and get established here, but I also have the satisfaction in knowing it is time for her to move on and out on her own. I am reminded of Gail Sheehy's Passages and feel that Sue and I shared a year of transition, each ~~was~~ to a new stage of our lives that was additionally enriched by new and renewed friendships and family, <sup>like</sup> John and Bonnie Bowyer dropped <sup>in</sup> to visit in Nov with their son who is also a Freshman at UC.

Some things seem to stay the same. I still do the photography for our theater group; still teach at UC; still change room, "travel" & get new courses at Oak Hills;

still do make up and attend the Boar's Head Christmas celebration each New Year's weekend; still have my farm and camp in Indiana; <sup>and</sup> still marvel at the energy and endurance of my father -- now 90 years old and actively attending Masonic Lodge, driving to Tulsa, Cleveland, etc, and playing 9 or 18 holes of golf - WALKING !! Heaven forbid he should ever stoop to riding in one of those silly carts.

To all with whom I've been lucky enough to be in touch and share some moments of this year; to the rest who have been more strongly in my thoughts because this year was unique and special, I send my love, my blessings, and my hope for joy and happiness, for equanimity, for courage and strength when it is needed in your daily lives. This is my wish to you not only for the Christmas season, but for the coming year as well.