

# 1957

*Myra, April 1957:* Roger has a trip this coming week and I will be nervous and uneasy about all his driving until he gets back next Friday. He goes up to Brainerd, about 750 miles north of here to a Crippled Children's Clinic. He leaves tomorrow to make a two-day trip of it in his old car, and will take two easy days on the way back. I finally talked him into getting a seat-belt, so he has that small protection – and small it is in these days of high-powered cars and irresponsible drivers.

*Myra, July 1957:* So Friday and Saturday were spent getting the yard and house in order for these parties. I served turkey so it was not too difficult a task to get dinner – never the less I still do not entertain easily so I found plenty to occupy me for those two days. It was a lovely evening – we all sat outside till dark then came in to the screen porch. It was a nice party – but entre-nous I begrudge the money spent entertaining – particularly the liquor bill – think how many enduring books it would buy!

*Myra, October 1957:* Roger's vacation is past now – he made an overnight trip to Red wing with Kip and Jeff to watch our football team upset the Wingers. Then Friday he went to the Cities for 24 hours – a break he seems to enjoy – though inexplicably to me.

*Grandpa, writing to Myra, March 3, 1957:* What fun it would be to spend an evening with you as we examine these 97 [old books]! Maybe we can bring it about, humsow! Hate to postpone it till you go through them alone. Fact is, sister, we have so much in common interest, we ought to live nearer to one another! Once a week, on a new old book! Once a week, to live through the Battle of Shiloh, which I read in Catton this evening. Best account of this bloody fight I know of. Almost as good as anything in Freeman. . . . Am moving along in *This Hallowed Ground* and the next few pages will have me back in Gettysburg. Shall be interested to see whether the General [Longstreet] gets the blame again for not taking Little Round Top. Some day I want you to stand with me on that summit.

*Myra describes the Charles Van Doren "scandal," March 15, 1957:* For the past four or five weeks, we have spent half an hour of every Monday evening next door watching Charles Van Doren, about whom you have no doubt read in TIME. But as you will also see in next week's TIME, he was finally beaten by this lady-lawyer, who albeit is very learned is also very conscious of her intelligence and succeeds in offending me. She won from Van Doren by technicality of the rules and won very ungraciously." • **A quick peek at any history of popular culture will show that soon after Myra wrote this letter Charles Van Doren and the producers of the show "The \$64,000 Question" were exposed as frauds and the whole show a fake. One of America's first bubbles to pop.**

**Myra, March 18, 1957:** And now, sit back old dears, and hear the big news of 1957: the last of the little Sullivans is on his (?) way and will arrive about September 6. I am delighted as always to be pregnant again, but I am a little saddened to be carrying the last little baby of our family.

**Grandpa describes the simple joys of his new dishwasher, May 18, 1957:** Do you know this Blue Book [form of letter-writing] is becoming a pleasant habit. I have it lying around handy and whenever the mood strikes me, I take pen in hand for a few words. This kind of letter I never attempt with JRL. But you seem to find favor in it and it seems to be a manner of conversing with you into which I have dropped unbeknowingly (if there is such a word). It seems that a 16-page BB is just about the right size for a continued-day-by-day chat over a week. I confess that usually I do not talk about our doings here, but rather about what we are reading. Would you prefer a little more of the former? . . . Mama has found great joy and relief in her dishwasher. It is a GE and you may remember we bought it about 14 months ago. Mama's pleasure in it is a joy to observe. It does save her lots of work. Now, I want you to get one. It will save you at least one hour of work weekly. And that is something to think about. . . . it is a portable. Rolls up to your dinner table, put your dishes in it, roll to sink, attach hose to spigot, turn switch and water and take a knappe. Just like that. We are serious. Get a portable Kenmore right way.

**Myra, May 24:** Your BB habit is the best habit you've taken on in your old age. When your supply of BB ran out a few weeks ago, I tried both stationery stores in town to get a boxful to send you as a token of my approval and encouragement. But this not being a real university center, there were none to be had. I even had to describe what I was asking for. But, believe me, I look forward to your BBs with an eagerness paralleled only perhaps by receipt of a package marked "BOOKS." So don't get out of the habit, Poppa. This year I've know what you are reading, how you are using your books, and much more of your mental activities than in any previous year. One of the small drawers in the Betsy Ross table is reserved for your Blue Books -- there is almost a year of them.

**Myra, in an early description of Roger's alcoholic moods, June 3:** Kip has put in a tremendous amount of yard work this spring with very little supervision. Roger so despises yard work and is put into such an irritable mood when faced with much, that the three bigger boys and I have tried to relieve him of most of it this year. We have a chore list we tackle every day and it is surprising how much work we can accomplish on this five-acre area without its being noticed! Kip still handles most of the mowing (though he is very envious of our neighbors' new scooter-like type of mowing machine). Christy is an adequate de-dandelioner, Jeff clips and does odd, very-objectionable-to-him jobs, and Danny runs errands here and there. Between us, the paterfamilias is unwittingly restored to better humor. -- On re-reading this, I've made my poor, hard-working harassed husband sound like an ogre, but it is not his intention you realize to put his family to hard-labor. We do it by choice and with a little amount of slyness and amusement.

**RJL, August 1:** And horrors, we now spend such sums on the military. The Senate last night voted some 30 billion just for that.

***RJL, August 1, 1957:*** ". . . Stop there to refill pen and wipe carefully in trouser's cuff. . . . Took out [tele]scope. Hope yet for a sight of Saturn's rings. All my life I have heard of Saturn's rings and I want to see them once before I have chance to observe them from another sphere!"

***RJL, on one of his first encounters with a television, August 17:*** "Dorothy just called to say there is a big TV football game on and do I want to see it. Guess will take in part of it, just for the novelty of the thing. The only TV I have witnessed so far was some sort of biz last Saturday or Sunday evening and not worth the effort."

***Myra, describing the purchase of a "Hi-Fi," August 29, 1957:*** "Momma will have written you the extraordinary news about our bonus! It is almost double what we hoped for! So we are going to be able to get our Hi-Fi!! The check isn't even in our account yet but we're already spending it -- with our usual prodigality. Today we bought a magnificent Hi-Fi combination. Gave a check for \$695 but we are going to change our order to a smaller outfit and save about \$175. We'll give you more details over the weekend. Tomorrow noon we hope to get together to buy our first record! When Luke was born, we bought a house; when this last one is almost here, we are buying our long-awaited Hi-Fi!!!"

***Myra, writing from hospital to her mother who is at The Millstone, taking care of the older five, September 1, 1957:*** It's about 6:30 -- last night at this time we were all greatly excited about our new toy in the front room and having fun at the supper table watching the dog and the bird react to that noisy thunderstorm. Then when we finally remembered the windows, the momentous dash up the stairs was made! That was a precious secretive moment for me, standing before the open window in my bedroom with the wet grey twilight on the big fir tree; and with the almost certain and so sudden knowledge that our baby was on its way! When I came downstairs Roger was in the living room putting the Hi-Fi units in our console table -- I told him, then went to the kitchen to tell you. (From that moment till almost 11:00, only you and I were certain about the imminence of the baby's arrival -- funny that we have never been able to impress Roger that, in this one business at least, we know whereof we speak.) I did not stay to hear our new and so-lovely music because there were so very many things left undone. I put Roger's socks on the line, straightened up the Rumpus Room, swept basement stairs and most of basement, put Kip and Jeff's rooms in order. Then gave Christy his haircut. By then I was ready to give over and sit. I was fast approaching that irresponsible state in which I am highly immovable. It was still raining a bit after the storm just as it was raining the last time I left, remember? I was glad to see Kip and Jeff come running to say goodbye. The last time upstairs I'd stopped to kiss and sniff at their necks of our three little sleeping ones. So my goodbyes were said and we rolled out the driveway through the stone gatepillars and were on our way from the opposite direction to our three previous approaches to St. Mary's. I had several hard contractions during the drive and had to wait one out before climbing into a wheelchair. Then onto the elevator and out on familiar and welcome Fifth Floor, past the nursery (and that delicious sound of new babies crying) and up to the desk where the nurse was on the phone saying "Here she comes now." Rog had phoned Jim

Hunter before we left home and he had preceded us to the hospital. Roger 'drove' me into the admitting room, kissed me goodbye, and went off to chat with Jim while I was being prepped and weighed and (oh misery) given an enema. After all those preliminaries I was put into a labor room -- and there realized that my pains had subsided. It was by then midnight and Jim came in to examine me and had to wait ten or twelve minutes for a good contraction in order to check the cervix. He stayed till almost 12:30 then left saying that I was in early labor, that I was in the hospital to stay, and that he'd rupture my membranes fully in the morning. As the door eased shut behind him I had a hard painful business-like contraction, followed within three minutes by another. Rog came in to say he was going home but I asked him to sit with me another ten minutes because I felt certain I was in sudden full labor. My pains became quickly harder and longer -- and about two minutes apart and by 12:45 Roger was gone from the room. (I do not remember his leaving and the Fellow was timing my pains, checking the dilation, and ordering sedation. Then began the preparations for moving into the delivery room -- the climb over from the bed to the cart and the cart to the delivery room table must be nicely timed between pains. As I rolled through the door into that exciting delivery room I trembled in my excitement and anticipation and memory of past times! I had already risen to three of the peaks in my life in that very room -- I was about to undertake a fourth great adventure there. The pain I had as I climbed to the table was the last of the almost-overwhelming pains. The next one was done with the nitrous oxide mask over my nose and mouth and I gulped mightily you may be sure. The Demerol and scopolamine hypo I'd had, plus the intoxicating gas made me almost free from physical sensation yet I was intelligent of all surrounding me. There was a Fellow wrapping my legs and putting them up in the stirrups and another strapping my arms where my hands could reach the grips. It sounds very inhumane but actually the bonds seem only like something to lean on and brace against. I check the clock and found it to be 1:23 a.m. and I foggily determined that our baby would no doubt arrive by 1:30. Those last few pains are shattering and irresistible and there is nothing existing in this world but the need to push push push. But Jim says 'take a deep breath, Myra, breath in deeply!' So I suck in through my nose and mouth and then almost feel myself tumbling into that last stupefying straining pain with that searing fiery ring between my legs and only the sound of little gasps straining high in my throat and the mask on my face and bright lights and many quiet unruffled people about me. Then sudden release from that tremendous pressure and Jim's far distant cheery voice, 'You have another little boy, Myra.'"

***Myra, in one of her happiest letters, September 4, 1957:*** I've been fortunate in the week I've chosen to be in the hospital. This floor is almost deserted. My nearest neighbor is four doors down the hall -- I am at the extreme south end. Consequently, there are very few visitors and none whose conversation I must listen to -- and very little traffic of any sort at my end of the hall. It is like living in an empty hotel, the utter quiet is an unexpectedly welcome feature of this week's vacation. . . . I am eager to get home if only to hear our Hi-Fi; it arrived within a few hours of my departure so I've really not had a good opportunity to listen. I do know that it gives out music such as I've never in my life heard or expected to hear. You will remember that I had never previously heard records played through such a magnificently engineered instrument. It is incredible that sounds can be reproduced as they are in these Hi-Fi units. But I do see a serious drawback to

owning such a set -- the temptation to buy records will be as bad and more expensive per record than the irresistible temptation to buy books. Perhaps we could exchange records - - can they be safely packed for mailing? Before this I could scarcely go to bed at a decent hour because of the reading I wanted to do -- now that Hi-Fi will be an excuse to stay up. We've been inexcusably extravagant in the speaker we bought but I believe we'll not regret it. I only wish you could be here to enjoy it with me -- you must visualize me in my living room through the long winter's nights with a fire burning itself out late in the evening, a selection of books by my chair, and beautiful beautiful incomparably beautiful music all about me. Do you not often think upon my good fortune, Poppa? To have married such a highly intelligent, thoroughly good man -- to have him attain the highest possible position in the most honored of professions; to live in such a uniquely beautiful home set in such a perfect piece of property; to have borne six healthy sons; to have a library of my own (not just a bookcase, but a room for my books) a round library with French doors and a balcony and a select shelf of old books; and now to have music in my world! Could you, as a fond father, have deliberately chosen for me any better than fate or fortune or chance has already done? It does not seem fair that I, through no effort, no privation, no personal achievement, should have arrived at such an elevated station with my every slight ambition in life easily satisfied!! But so it has been ordained and not deserving it perhaps I should be uneasy in it -- but I am not. I am grateful and sometimes incredulous -- and always happy.

***Myra, September 5, 1957:*** Dearest Poppa, I had not expected to write to you again from Room #549, but this evening Roger bought me your BB begun a week ago today and still in your hands when you received Mother's wire bringing you word of Collin's arrival. Before I had come to the last page there were tears of great thankfulness in my eyes that my new little son is blessed with having such a grand old man for a grandfather! Such an incomparably good man. I only wish to add one virtue to your many virtues -- that of propinquity! You are much too far away from me, my father -- much too far away from one who loves and reveres you so much. My sons would profit by association with you -- and I regret their not seeing you oftener than a few weeks a year. But I miss you most for my own sake! I flatter myself that you and I have much in common -- our profound love of books and the reading of books, our need to be in our own corner, our joy in fine music -- and our need for very little else. The ability that I find to be happy within myself I owe to you. This is just a short little love note to you Poppa before I leave this seclusion, this scene of my final accouchement. Goodnight, Poppa. Myra.

***Written in large script, a letter from Myra to #4, Danny:*** Danny-Boy: Now you have two little brothers, and three big brothers. Isn't that nice? You are Lukee's big brother and Colly's big BIG brother. [She drew six stick figures, each with the name of a brother below.] There are our boys -- can you find Danny? Be good, Little Moomintroll. Mommie.

***Myra, September 24, 1957:*** Yesterday Roger came home for lunch because he knew that I'd be lonesome. And indeed I was most glad to see him. The house did seem mighty empty and Lukee did not make it any easier by asking every few minutes, "Where's Monnie?" Nor was it as much fun to listen to our lovely records -- each one of those I

have heard for the first time with Monnie -- the Schweitzer Bach record I have not yet played since Sunday night -- it was playing when you left, Monnie. Those were hard moments and a difficult day to live through. I was inclined to keep busy, even as you, and could find little to talk to you about. I had said to you that I'd be glad when Monday came, but even so the last few hours after supper evaporated suddenly and you were gone. When I took Collin from your arms that evening I did not give you a chance for a last look because I had expected you to come upstairs one more time before leaving. I tucked our little infant into his Kiddie-Koop and arranged his circular blanket (that you made) around his head so that he'd look particularly angelic when you came to tell him goodbye. But when I came back downstairs you and Roger were comparing watches and the time had run out.

***RJL describes the racism and hate in Little Rock, September 26, 1957:*** I have had the radio for the past few days, a submission that reflects my concern about the Little Rock situation. Today is the second day of what is hopefully called 'integration' but is it integration at the cost of American prestige. It is a shocking spectacle, is it not? Bayonets on our streets? ... The outrages committed there [in Little Rock] by the poor white trash are scandalous. I cannot foresee the outcome of all this. I believe it will require a generation of time before the thing has worked itself out. If ever the sins of the fathers were visited upon their children, we live in it now.

**October 4, 1957: The Russians sent up Sputnik, making all the Republicans in America fill their diapers. According to TV Guide, the top 5 TV shows for the '57 - '58 season are *Gunsmoke*, followed by *The Danny Thomas Show*, *Tales of Wells Fargo*, *Have Gun Will Travel*, and *I've Got A Secret*.**

***Myra, November 14, 1957:*** This Rumpus Room -- where this letter is being written -- is beautifully finished for a playroom. The shelves and cupboards and trim are of solid walnut; the floor is smooth, hard, scrubbable tile; and the fireplace is faced with Minn. fieldstone and brick. A new coat of paint on the walls and curtains at the windows is all it needs. The furniture will not be improved for another six or eight years (presuming there are no Sputniks landing on the Low Forty).

***Myra, November 15, 1957:*** Roger's little car churned its way deep into unfrozen muck on the road near Weld's house and had to be dragged out by a tow truck. The boys walked to school through deep drifts and down-coming snow -- and probably considered it high adventure -- but their father is in voice about "this #%@!\* climate!" . . . The excitement of moving into this house has been equaled only by the day Roger and I were married and the days our six sons were born. Eight great days in my life! . . . Lukee has gathered all the toothbrushes into one heap on his closet floor, poured enough milk to fill three glasses into one glass, chased away with Jeff's socks while Jeff was dressing, shouted and banged and growled till his dad sent him from the breakfast table, scribbled on Kip's arithmetic homework, wakened the baby early, blown into a full ashtray, spilled Cheerios on the pantry floor, and taken off his snowy clothes in the middle of the kitchen . . . and it's only 9:45 in the morning!!!!

***Myra describes what little boys do on a winter day in Minnesota, November 19, 1957:*** 9:10 a.m. No more snow falling but there is so much drifting before the fifteen-miles-an-hour wind that the plows are not operating yet. To the unspeakable joy of all mothers, there is no school today! My boys have been outside since 7:00, very little shovelling being done, but a prodigious amount of rolling, stomping, diving, rooting, kicking, borrowing, throwing, sliding, eating, wading, and eating eating eating of soft clean new snow! Now they are back inside -- Kip and Christy playing with Kip's new electric football game (and fending off Luke), Danny is cuddled up with his blanket and his finger and the instructions from the football game board, Jeff is rigging a wastebasket as a basketball basket in the Rumpus Room, and Caesar is in the basement melting snow out of his thick coat. Things are at a momentary lull but little prospect of its remaining so for long. I don't know yet how much snow we've had but the view of and from our house is lovely!"

***RJL, same day:*** What Sputnik means I am unable to fathom. Like you I have a deep depression about the thing 'in orbit' as they, so facile, put it.

***Myra, on her #4 boy, November 22, 1957:*** This first one is my favorite -- a picture of little 'Moomintroll' [Danny] curled up in the living room chair with his blanket and his finger [in his mouth]. Bless him, he's still the cutest one in the family -- greatly interested in physical comforts: food, sleep, soft blankets, Momma's lap. Such a lighthearted blithe little boy, seldom losing his temper; never depressed for long by anyone else's crossness; self-reliant -- so tough but oh so tender. He's easy to spoil -- he so seldom get into trouble, and is so very easy to love! This picture Roger took of him last week shows him in his tender mood -- and couldn't you just cuddle him?

***Myra, December 15, 1957:*** 10:00 p.m. Dear Begettors of Begettors: Today we trimmed the Christmas tree! And I do love that family enterprise! Roger has the traditional and exasperating job of making the light strings work. The task is somewhat simplified, compared with your struggles, Poppa. I remember you so clearly down on the living room floor experimenting and interchanging bulbs and almost, but never, throwing up the whole thing. When Roger like you is through having successfully arranged the strings on the tree to everyone's satisfaction, the boys take up the work thereafter -- each at his own level so that the entire tree is trimmed in short order. But I never put tinsel on the top of the tree without picturing myself leaning over the top of the banister at 610 [Braddock Ave. See my mother's history of her childhood.] within easy reach of the top tip which by requirement touched the ceiling. We had good years there on Braddock Ave. And I never realized how blessed I was till grown and with children of my own. And there I come to the tie in with my salutation. And thank you for begetting me so that I could beget my own.

***Myra, December 17, 1957:*** Our warm weather continues. Kip and Jeff came home from Hockey practice cussing at this 'hot weather.' The rink is almost gone and has been rough all week. Jeff has surprised us by being interested in this rough sport this winter and by improving rapidly in his ability to skate with ease. Danny however is the biggest surprise. Rog put skates on him more for laughs than anything else -- and he skates.

Actually he walks -- he hasn't learned to glide yet -- but his ankles support him and he is well-balanced. He probably has such a low center of gravity he can't fall readily. He patters along like a sandpiper -- Roger's simile an apt one."

**RJL, same day:** I do have some very happy memories about Christmas at 610. The most vivid memory, and the latest, is the Christmas of 1941 and of '42. I guess especially the latter. I had a premonition that it would be the last for us all together. It was, too, wasn't it? I kept the trunk of the last Christmas tree out in the garage.

**A school essay written by Kip:** Topsey-Turvy. When I came back from hockey practice at 4:00 the day before Christmas things really went topsy-turvy. Everyone was excited over the coming of Christmas. Lukey was making his usual noise only louder. When I entered the basement I could hear Caesar barking. I took my skates off, put my hockey stick away, picked up my jersey and started up the stairs. I was reaching for the knob on the door at the top of the stairs when the door jerked open. Danny fired a gun at me and Lukey started yelling at the top of his never-ending lungs. Caesar wagging his tail started barking. I lived through it to see "Men In War" plus "Attack" after supper. Before we went to bed Mom and Dad told us not to come downstairs until the next day. At 8:15 Jeff and I raced down the stairs and saw our electric train running in a figure eight in the living-room. Christy, Danny and Luke were playing with their presents too.

**Myra, Christmas Day, 1957:** Something has gone wrong! It's nearly eight o'clock and all is silent! I've been up since seven with Col but no one creature has stirred above stairs! To my great delight it is snowing! . . . Yesterday we played our carols and other Christmas music all day -- and had fire by early afternoon -- gifts -- and still the great anticipation of Santa Claus. And in the evening Kip and Jeff helped fix gifts for the little fellows under the tree. They went to bed without a murmur of protest at 8:30 -- with a gentlemen's agreement between them and their father, not even to come down to second floor to go to the bathroom. Roger then . . . [here she is interrupted and begins again at 8:45 a.m. on the next line] . . . It's all over! Paper is strewn everywhere and great confusion and excitement and hilarity reign supreme at The Millstone. . . 1:15 p.m. Daddy and Lukee and Collin are in bed, the other are flat on their stomachs watching the electric train. There has so far been tolerably little argument about whose turn it is at the transformer. Why they slept so long I don't know, but Rog finally came down, turned on carols to a high volume, switched on the train and in a few seconds there was a thundering on the second and third floor and down they came -- all but Luke. He was in bed looking at his bird book and had to turn to the last page before stirring out of bed. We made no attempt to open gifts individually -- each man dived into his own pile -- three of them that is today -- the two big ones were much too interested in the train to open other packages or look into their stockings. I sat on the parlor floor with Christy and Danny and Luke, Roger was on the living room floor with Kip and Jeff. Collin had gone to bed before they got up. But by 9:00 he was awake again and jumping in his swing in the very center of the greatest activity. We had nothing to eat (Rog and I had coffee several times) until almost eleven o'clock and even then Kip and Jeff had to be pried away from the trackside. Eggs, bacon, toast, and cocoa was our brunch and while they ate I put the living room back in order. So here we are on early afternoon on Christmas Day -- Jeff



and Danny running the train, Kip and Christy playing Bingo. Roger and the little ones in bed, and me in the corner chair where I can see all that goes on. . . . Good night and one more Merry Christmas.<sup>44</sup>

*Myra sums up 1957, December 26:* So here endeth the last BB of 1957. It has been a good year for us, bringing us our Collin as its best offering. We added much to the aspect of loveliness about our home. Our Music Box was a triumphant purchase -- and the little Prefect still seems good to Roger (though far from paid for). Our boys have all remained well and given us no major troubles. Another of the blessed gifts of 1957 is the renewed pleasure Roger and I have found in each other's company. We have developed several new interests this year that we share -- always an assured approach to greater respect and knowledge of one another -- which for a man and his wife, contribute to the depth and wisdom of their love. Life has been inestimably good to us here in Rochester. God be praised. My love to you both, dear ones, Myra.

## 1958

*Myra, January 14, 1958:* The plans to begin converting our cozy Room into a study for Roger go into effect Monday. The prospect of carpenters and table saws and dust and pounding and the invasion of my privacy for most of next week is not a pleasant one -- nor is the bill, which will finish this month's demolition of budget, bank account and savings fund. But Roger has been so anxious to have a place to work, a place to gather all his necessary papers, books, x-rays, and other equipment about him, as well as a place to receive the people who come to see him personally that he has been obsessed with the idea that he can't get by any longer without it. So carpenters arrive Monday (they say) and the work begins. Roger intends to stain and varnish the shelves himself so by the end of next week, when the workmen clear out, there will still be many a day's work to do. After the shelves are finished we must wallpaper behind the shelves, hang The Nose [sawfish nose Grandpa found as a young man], get desk lamp, floor lamp, desk chair, arm chair, fire set, rug, drapes -- and by then the room will have become Roger's Study, much-needed, long-anticipated. It has taken us three years to furnish the living room and we are not yet through, though there are only a few ornamental pieces yet to buy -- we want a grandfather's clock against the wall between the radiator and the windows (looking towards the front of the house) and we need sitting space in the parlor and something on the wall by the coffee table -- and a new fire poker and shovel. (We're not so nearly through as I thought, are we?) This week I've been moving things out of the Cozy Room in preparation for Monday's assault. The desk (my little maple desk that has seen so much service in so many corners of the U.S.) is now in the big boys' room and has become the Home Work Desk. Christy has been graduated to the third floor (to Jeff's disgust) because Roger wants the room at the top of the stairs preserved (I use the word intentionally -- instead of the less precise 'reserved') for company use. So it becomes dead space in the house -- to be used a few times a year -- I don't hold with the idea of building

a house for company and a living room big enough for cocktail parties. But be that as it may, I have a Guest Room -- though I prefer Luke's name for it -- Monnie's Room.

***Myra, describing Roger's anger, January 30, 1958:*** I seldom see Roger lose his patience with Clinic policy or pronouncements but he came home last evening in a monumental rage. His [business] trip had been worse than halved! He goes down early to set up an exhibit he has planned but has to be back Tuesday. . . His exhibit and paper prove a theory of his that the blood supply to the talus is not through a single artery but several -- "It simply stands to reason that God wouldn't have made it that way."

***RJL replies, March 3:*** Imagine, cool CRS in a "monumental rage." And so long, yet, to top of the cussed pole. [Promotion]

***RJL waxes philosophical, March 11, 1958:*** When I read about men and women long since dead or about countries far away in time and space, I often ponder the fact that these were people like us -- and what were their fears and loves and thoughts? I suppose that some poor gladiator in the Roman Amphitheater was happy and unhappy, angry and pleased. What did he think about? Did the poor peasant in 17th century France rebel against his miserable lot? Or were these people so accustomed to their hard life and so inured to economic slavery and their place in society that they really did not suffer emotionally about it? But surely there were superior minds among them who were thereby very unhappy men and women indeed. We do live a life within, do we not, which we cannot share with anyone else. There is the sad isolation of just being born! But what is more interesting than the thoughts of others? Hence our love for books, I suppose. Save that we are never sure what sort of face the author is putting on. . . As your Mother remarked recently, my first year of retirement has gone pretty well. I have had enough to keep my mind busy. I hope it will remain that way for a few years to come. I doubt very much that I could be the kind of retired man who watches a cork bob in the water, or shove a square of wood over a concrete slab -- as I have seen these oldsters here and there in Florida -- "waiting to die" I say.

***Myra describes the scene of her leaving for a trip to Florida, April 15, 1958:*** Tuesday morning, aboard The South Wind [train to Fla.]. Dear Momentarily Closer Ones: Collicharlesin [Mom's nickname for Colly after Luke called him that one time] and I are a morning's nap south of Chicago. I left Rochester last night an hour late and for five minutes my roomette held eight people. I kissed each one goodbye, holding little Lukee to the last and sneaking a few extra kisses on to him, the left-behind baby. Roger shepherded him into the Turtle and drove up beside my window. There for five or eight minutes, they all waved and blew kisses and mouthed unintelligible last-minute messages. The last glimpse I have of them was of the light gleaming on the back bumper."

***Rare letter from Roger to Myra, now in DeLand, Florida:*** Tuesday 7:30 a.m. Darling -- The boys were so good this morning that here we are all ready for school and Claydons about an hour early. Guess we didn't need to get up at 6 a.m. All of us took showers -- really scrubbed-looking bunch. Jeff even has the morning trash burned -- dishes done,

etc. Everybody withstood your departure last night very well until we got outside the train, then Danny began to bawl and this started Lukie off. "I'm sleepy." Even Kip was asking me, "Dad, what makes that lump in your throat?" You must be pulling into Chicago about now. (Just at this moment Lukie arrives and says "Can I get in oor lap?" Of course, I disciplined him severely for indiscretion -- standing in corner at attention.) [Smiley face drawn in here.] Give our love to Monnie and Grampaw -- we're off to school. Don't let Collie play with any big alligators. I love you dearest -- XX Rog. P.S. -- Nearly stabbed myself on your note pinned to the bed. Just one or two sutures required.

***A letter from Roger in Chicago to Myra, addressed c/o RJJ in DeLand, April 18, Friday: [Written on The Allerton Hotel stationery, 701 N. Michigan]*** Friday night. Wonderful Wife: In early -- missing you very much -- so will write a note to tell you so. Do wish you were here -- weather has been exceptionally beautiful, clear and sunny. Yesterday's temperature, in fact (83°) set a record for Chicago for this time of year. Particularly beautiful along Michigan Avenue with the beautiful galleries, shops, etc. Makes one wish for more money, there are so many lovely things in them. Stopped in your friend Chandler's Book Store on Van Buren Street and picked up a first edition of Christopher Morley -- won't tell you which one (hope you don't already have it). Didn't cost much -- think maybe if you hitch-hike back and get a refund on your train ticket, we'll come out even all right. [Little smiley face drawn in here.] Called home the other night and everything's OK. Talked to everybody except "Moomintroll" (think he must have been in bathroom). By time you get this, I should be back home with those wonderful boys. Do hope you had an easy (if prolonged) train trip and that Collie didn't fall out of bed. Also hope you are getting lots of rest and sunshine. Am enjoying this course greatly -- several speakers -- not too many poor ones. Am getting a coccygoclymia however from sitting on my duff from 8 am to 6 pm. Time to turn in -- I love you so much. Rog. Love to Monnie & Grapaw.

***Another letter from Roger to Myra, April 21, 1958:*** Darling -- Sure is good to be home, but gosh how strange it is to arrive without you running out the door to meet me. (As usual right at this point 'you-know-who' comes up and says 'Can I sit on oor lap?' He not only climbs up here but scrambles around and sings.) Wonderful. Everything seems to be in order. The kids are well and the house still standing. The weather, as usual -- left Chicago in beautiful hot sunshine -- arrived in Minnesota with cold gray skies. Surprised to find no letters here when I arrived. Do hope you're OK. This will be a busy week -- always lots of patients plus three papers to give to the traveling British Fellows. Also Dr. Strobel asked me to speak to a rehabilitation (vocational group) the following week. ... [Later:] Just got Danny and Luke to bed. Kip is doing his homework and Jeff is down in the basement making something out of wood and Christy is getting ready for bed. Mrs. Buttuert's husband and son arrive just after supper and she asked if she could go home tonight -- so she just left. Have a radio program on -- violin music Hungarian Dance #7 -- Bell Telephone Hour. But gosh! How empty the house is without you! 6 more days. Love from us all, Rog. Don't forget to send Mrs. Buttert's check.

***Myra writes about juggling schedules to allow Dad's mom to come visit The Millstone while keeping guest rooms free to allow her parents to visit, May, 1958:*** I told [Roger's

mother] you would be here in August and September. She says Aug. and Sept are the months she plans to be away from Florida but that “the fate of the nation will not be affected” if she does not see us this year. Roger is too provoked to be allowed to write to her just yet, so the task is mine to try to soothe her and reassure her of our love yet try to make her understand that our guest room's occupied during the only weeks she insists she can come. Roger says there is no reason that she can't be away from Florida at any time for any length she desires.

***Myra, May 31, 1958:*** Jeff just ran in in high excitement wanting me to come quick look at the goldfinch in the fish pool! Kips disdains to move from the couch – “I've seen a goldfinch before.” And Jeff with wonderful élan, “Yes, but not today.”

***RJL alludes to tension in life at Millstone, September, 1958:*** We speak of much of you, of course, and of your life there, and all the things you do and the pressures under which you operate. But I do have to agree with the statement you made to me that you surely “have it a lot better than most women.” We shall envision you and your brood faithfully about the radio tomorrow night as Faribault takes on your Rockets.

***RJL, on contemporary politics, September 27, 1958:*** CRS said a few days ago that he does not see how we can let the Commies bluff us out of Quemoy. Probably that is a correct analysis. But the more important question is, Why did we get ourselves into such a place originally? I do not know. But it is already obvious that to question the judgement of the General at this time is tantamount to treason. Just last night the GOP national chairman said that the Dem. criticism is a handicap to the General in this precarious moment and is about the same thing as exposing our boys to Commie rifle fire. The GOP did not so speak during the Korean War. In fact, the General expressed his horror of the whole thing and said “I shall go to Korea.” -- a glorious statement of intrepidity which probably helped elect him. Well, it is all to deep mor fee. If those blood capitalists feel that way, maybe it is not wholly treason to question the current brinksmanship. There's a word to go down in history!

***The top 5 TV shows of the '58 - '59 season are Gunsmoke, followed by Wagon Train, Have Gun Will Travel, The Rifleman, The Danny Thomas Show.***

***A disturbing note from Mom, October 20, 1958:*** The package of books came too -- Roger pounced upon them in suspicion and I was quick to prove myself innocent of having spent more money on books.

***Myra describes a tense Thanksgiving, 1958:*** Thursday was Thanksgiving -- by noontime we had made two pies, stuffed the turkey (13 lbs.), housecleaned the pantry, cleaned first floor, mopped basement -- I forget how much else. The boys did everything except the turkey -- Christy and Danny helped make the pies, Christy cleaned the pantry and the two big boys cleaned the house. At 1:00 Roger took the five (Luke's first) to see Walt Disney's “White Wilderness” -- movie about the Arctic. They were home at 3:30 and at 4:30 we had our Thanksgiving dinner.. . . Last night they caught you-know-what from their father. He was sleeping on the couch and they made so much racket playing with

Caesar -- so everyone was sent to bed about 6:15! He relented at 8:00 and allowed the big ones to come down again, but it dampened the evening. We read a bit in Kidnapped and soon went back to bed. • **In the margins of the actual letter, in Myra's handwriting: "Another ruined Thanksgiving."**

*RJL on the Cold War, December 15, 1958:* I am not one to expect the worst in international affairs. But now I am becoming fearful that 1959 may be the year of Armageddon. What is the opinion of your associates out there at Berkley -- smart and well-informed men that they are. I can only say that it looks bad to me. I think of Myra's closet-full of groceries, laid there against Bomb-day, and guess her foresight is wise. I understand that the local Civil Defense people up there have put on a drive for families to lay in supplies. I would look upon that much as I looked upon the air-raid wardens of WWII -- which was a joke. But I guess we are not exactly in the joke business at this time. One shivers to contemplate. . . . but maybe even yet the good Lord God Almighty will extend His hand and save His creation from self-imposed destruction. If it be worth it, which one sometimes doubts, until he thinks of his own, and then everything, all, is worth it. Even so.

*Good ol' RJL describes his curiosity about a gift-wrapped book sent to him by Myra, December 19, 1958:* I am greatly puzzled. There is a bit of a tear in the green paper wrapping, at the spine, and I have peered in hopefully but all in darkness. I cannot detect an "old book" odor, but homesow, its general feel I think that is what we have. I promised your lil brother I'd wait until Christmas day, so will have to possess my self with patience. If only that tiny tear could be enlarged a bit. I was gingerly picking away at it but your M caught me in the act and whisked the package away without so much as a "May I?" So I am deprived of all further investigation in this respect. . . . I keep popping outside hoping to see the 'Atlas' [capsule] but no luck so far. Marvelous achievement, especially the thought of sending it along with a broadcasting outfit to send back to the Earth the President's voice.

## 1959

*Myra talks about family life, May, 1959:* Luke likes to draw faces on small pieces of cardboard 1" x 2". One of his many, square, Indian-impassive, colored faces. He likes to make one and put it up on some unexpected place to surprise me. I do regret your not seeing him this year. He's a little devil! He was digging in the night-crawlers bucket, a forbidden game: 'I was just visiting wif the night-crawlers. I spose if I wasn't so cute you'd spank me!' What would you have done? -- He still has the loudest most frequently raised voice of any of the boys and still looks surprisingly like Christy. But his most appealing quality is the way of saying the most unexpected things. He'll grab me around

the leg and say 'Oh Momma, you're a cutie! I wish we had two of you!' Our Danny learned to ride a bike last week. We had bought the largest boy's bike, second hand, for Kip, moving Jeff up to the next size and expecting to teach Christy to ride Jeff's. But after much frenetic running on Roger's part and many tears on Christy's side, the attempt was abandoned. Dan was given a shove and away he went. He crashed into walls and trees, sustained man-killing bruises and cuts, but like big brother Kip, persevered till now he's a demon rolling. Roger wonders if Christy's polio accounts for his unwillingness to participate in big muscle sports and games.

***RJL throws down on the medical profession, June 2, 1959:*** Sat for one hour in doctor's office (having an appointment at 11:10) and walked out. My time is as valuable as the doctor's. No sense in telling me to be there at 11 and still one ahead of me at 12:00. So I now have a June 17 appointment instead.

***June, 1959:*** Sometime during this month Dad filmed us in our Sunday finest before we all went to Sunday School. You can see it in the family films, as Dad makes each one of us traipse by the camera like soldiers. Orderly. Without joy. Like the good little Republicans he wanted us to be; all scrubbed up, in file by age, in uniform, and silent.

***Myra, August 2, 1959:*** Luke keeps telling Christy in scorn "You're always advertising!" We finally discovered that he meant "You're always exaggerating!" • [Interesting, considering the field I eventually went into.]

***RJL discusses politics, August 4, 1959:*** This day is Aug. 4, and I remember that date very well, for it was the day upon which England entered the conflict. Now, 45 years later, on this date we are all excited about the General and the bloody prime minister of the Soviets exchanging courtesies. My principal fear about the biz is that some hot-head along the side-lines will fire a blast into the corpus of said PM and then where will we be? Nikita has too many people here whose relatives were bludgeoned to death by his minions to lose a good chance to pay him back. It would be just desserts, of course, but I shudder to think what the international consequences might be. We shall all breath easier when his 10 days are over and he is back in Rooshie where he belongs. Who can be decent to a murderer?

***Myra, September 1, 1959:*** 8:30 a.m. He's flown away! My tough, gentle, equable Danny took his lunch bag and walked through the gate with Christy, hardly even looking back at his desolated mother. Two walking, two on bikes -- four gone from home this morning. Poor me!

***RJL, September 9, 1959:*** Your mother has out pictures of our two, dating back to the '30s -- and how we do love to look at them and have our old hearts moved by being thus reminded of the days that are gone and in which are dear children were little shavers. You will know some day what it is to have so many years to look back upon -- and through. You should be here to hear our exclamations and comments! Those days passed so swiftly -- but as we live them we fail to take every advantage of them, forgetful, ever

unaware that they are important because they never will be again. Oh! that I could live more attentively those years with my blessed children!

**The top 5 TV shows for the '59 - '60 season were *Gunsmoke*, followed by *Wagon Train*, *Have Gun Will Travel*, *The Danny Thomas Show*, and *The Red Skelton Show*.**

***RJL, on Myra's sudden cancellation of a proposed trip to the Civil War battle, Chancellorsville, October 15, 1959:*** We are a little bit easier in mind, but not much. We love our daughter too much to be at ease when she is not.

***Describing the letter above, my mother wrote years later (7/28/92) about this cryptic BB entry from Grandpa:*** My father's letter you mention had to do with closing the door on our plan to visit Chancellorsville and Gettysburg. When I approached *your* father about my taking those few days to make that journey, his response was exactly what you know it was: a whiny fretfulness that worked itself into wide-ranging wrath, no longer complaining about my proposed trip but, as usual, berating me with the battery of charges regularly leveled. I gave up the plan rather than face prolonged trouble before and after such a trip. I wish now I'd stood my ground then, rather than several years later when I wanted to go to New York to see the sailing ships. I got exactly what I expected as a consequence of making the trip. For the rest of his life, he dragged that up to prove what a worthless wife and mother I was! I don't remember how I told my folks that I couldn't make the trip. Probably, I sent a wire merely saying I couldn't go. No explanations. Of course, that so troubled my folks that they phoned Betty Bollman to find out if I had been taken to the hospital or hurt in some way. I still hadn't the courage to tell my mother and father the real reason. Again I resorted to the easy out of a telegram; used a line from one of our favorite hymns . . . 'I gotta walk that lonesome valley by myself.' I am supposing that my father accepted my wish to leave the subject undiscussed and merely referred to it rather obliquely in that October 15th blue book.

***Myra describes #5, October 19, 1959:*** Luke wears a towel pinned around his shoulders, a straw hat on his head, rubber gloves flopping on his hands, and flourishes a piece of kindling as a sword. He loves to stand in front of Kip and ask, "Who do I look like?" "Superman!" is the expected answer, but Kip makes him guffaw by saying, "You look like Lukee with a towel around your neck, Momma's rubber gloves on your hands, and a piece of kindling wood over your head." But there are times when he wants a serious answer, none of this frivolity! And if Kip fails to say, "Superman!" the response is passionate. What a boy! What a voice! What vehemence in such a little space!

***RJL discusses the Quiz Show Scandal, November 2, 1959:*** Isn't this Charles Van Doren affair a sad one! I do not know that either of you has paid any attention to it. Myra, for her part, surely never saw any of those 'Quiz Shows' on TV. But the summer your M was up in Rochester and a year ago last summer when I was with Jim, I did see a little of it. I never saw Van Doren, so far as I know. As I watched those few exhibitions I for one certainly did not suspect that the show was rigged. I just gasped at the marvel of memory which some of those people had. And I felt very humble, as I tried to answer some of those questions and failed completely while they raced on with such facile answers. The

whole thing is a disgrace to our country. And what especially angers me is that they pick on the poor suckers who were “used,” like Van Doren. They tempted him with the prize of big \$\$\$ and a national reputation, and he fell for it, probably convincing himself that the argument advanced by the broadcasters that “it was just entertainment” was valid. But it was all a huge hoax perpetrated upon the American public, and don't tell me that those in charge of CBS and NBC and all the rest of them did not know just what was going on. But who gets the axe? Poor beguiled (and foolish) young assistant professor Van Doren -- whom Columbia University summarily let go, as we hear on the AM radio. The poor fall guy is also subject to penalty at law for lying before the grand jury. I do hope they forgive him that. But as for any prospect that they will get after the higher-ups, that just is not done in our society. It is all a very depressing development -- to me, anyhow.

***RJL on the subject of “likker,” November 11, 1959:*** Incidentally, lying on my desk right now is a return postal card to be sent to the secretary of the 82nd Division Association reporting whether or not I plan to attend the annual meeting in Atlanta. I do not. I have been to but one since WWI and it was such a drunken orgy that I got enough to last a lifetime -- not enough likker, I hasten to add. Even then I was on the water-wagon, where I have remained all my life, as you both well know. No likker bills will ever be found entered on the ledger of accounts for this impecunious member of the family.