



Heartland Verses - memoirs of a Rosie-the-Riveter
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About the Author

Heartland Verses is a collection of World War II memoirs, short stories, and poems from the heart of Clara Treat, one of America's Rosie the Riveters. Clara is a wife, mother, and grandmother. She is a well-known antique dealer, inventor, and WWII Rosie-the-Riveter. Her writing has been inspired by love of family, freedom, and country.

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Memoirs of a Rosie-the-Riveter

Memoirs of a Rosie the Riveter

Chapter One

North Tonawanda, New York

December 4, 1941

A few days before the Pearl Harbor attack

The days before Pearl Harbor were some of the happiest in my life. The gang met at my house two or three evenings a week to play cards, listen to the player piano, talk, and eat a wonderful snack that my mother provided. The house had been built around the turn of the century and had a long room in the front with a lovely front porch. A gas log fireplace provided a cozy and warm place for us to meet.

Three tables were set up for pinochle and the front parlor served as a dance floor. There were fourteen young men and four young women in our group. Some families wouldn't allow their daughters to participate because they thought we were too wild, but it wasn't true. We were as innocent and pure as the driven snow. After a while, we would roll up the rugs and dance to the player piano or a lively tune on the radio.

Most of the guys were like brothers to us, except for a few. I was regarded as Chester's girl and my sister Julie, who was younger, was unattached. She did however take the time to flirt with each and every one of them.

We were coming out of the depression, which had held us down for so long. Some of our friends joined the army and navy to get a job and joined us on furlough. To survive tough times my widowed mother ran a boarding house, providing two meals a day, a packed lunch, and a place to sleep for seven men. My sister and I helped out; keeping busy with laundry, ironing, and housework and my brother Jim kept the lawn and maintained the house.

On top of that, Julie and I worked as usherettes at the Riviera Theatre several evenings a week. It was a busy life, but we enjoyed ourselves. There was no time to get into trouble.

Then, everything changed...

Chapter Two- a Day of Infamy

North Tonawanda, New York

December 7, 1941

"We have witnessed this morning the attack of Pearl Harbor and a severe bombing of Pearl Harbor by army planes, undoubtedly Japanese. The city of Honolulu has also been attacked and considerable damage done. This battle has been going on for nearly three hours... It's no joke. It's a real war."

- - News bulletin from Honolulu, heard over WCAE, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

I shall never forget that day. My sister and I were on our way to work as usherettes at the Riviera Theatre in North Tonawanda, New York. We noticed people gathering on street corners, alerting us to the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor.

The attack had come in the morning hours on the Hawaiian Islands. With wire delays and the speed of relay, the news did not reach us until well into mid-afternoon. My first feeling was disbelief, which turned quickly to horror at the thought that anyone would attack the United States like that. It occurred to my sister, Juliette, and I that this day would forever change our country and us. We would have to pitch in and help our country to defend itself in any way we could.

After work, the gang gathered at my house to discuss the attack and make plans to assist our country. We wondered what happened to two of our friends, who were stationed on the Arizona. One was a flyer and the other was a sailor. We would wait patiently for news of their fate.

The boys reacted in different ways. Some were angry, while others were committed to defending this country. They discussed the branches of the military and decided on the ones to join.

Julie and I had a sinking feeling. We knew that things were changing forever and that some of these boys would never come back. We swore that we would do everything in our power to assist the war effort and write to each and every one of them. The night ended on a somber note. Due to the war, our gang was breaking up forever.

Over the next few weeks, most able-bodied young men joined the service and left for their destinations. Because of this, the factories were left short-staffed and many of them were being converted to manufacture war goods and supplies to support the troops. The radio and newspapers were calling for workers for these factories and asking the women to participate. Shortages were expected, so Julie and I joined drives to collect paper, glass, tin, iron, and other materials. It wasn't enough. We decided to leave our jobs as usherettes and work in the factories.

We were very close, so we always worked at the same place. The first place that we went to work for was the Van Rault Mills on Sweeney Street in North Tonawanda. The factory that had once made nylon lingerie and undergarments for women had transformed-virtually overnight-to making nylon for parachutes. Julie was assigned to the rollers. She had to wrap the giant rolls of nylon, package them and put them on a hand truck destined for the shipping department. I was assigned to the spinner department, where cones of nylon thread were being spun into rolls. I couldn't let the cones run out, or the rolls would be faulty.

After three months, we'd had enough and sought employment at Remington Rand, Co. in Tonawanda. This company had been involved in manufacturing office equipment, but had now geared-up to make parts for the airplanes being built by Buffalo-based Curtis-Wright. At Remington Rand I learned how to drill and handle tools, something that I never thought I would be doing. Julie was a driller as well, something that was out of character for her. We were working on parts that were used to put airplane wings together. Once, I got my drill caught in Julie's hair, an act that led to a rule about hairnets.

After eighteen months, my sister and I passed security checks and accepted positions at Curtis-Wright to work directly on transport planes as riveters, drillers, and buckers.

Julie got lucky and became a bond-girl, selling war bonds at the factory as her regular job. I was assigned to riveting and bucking on the C47 Transport Plane. The noise in the plane was deafening and many of us lost some of our hearing. The riveter and the bucker communicated by taps. The riveter was outside tapping on the place where they wanted to rivet, while the bucker was inside tapping with a bucking bar. When the two met, the riveting began. The bucker's job was uncomfortable and a bit dangerous. Crouching in spaces where you couldn't stand, you didn't

dare sit down for fear of getting a drill in your behind. Each night, my ears rang for hours after I left the plant.

In addition to this, I received training and volunteered as a nurse's aide at Degraff Memorial Hospital. Julie and I volunteered at the local U.S.O., spending many nights dancing with young navy men and fly-boys who would soon be shipped overseas.

My family, my friends, and I continued to contribute in other ways by collecting glass, paper, and anything that could be recycled for the war effort, in addition to planting "Victory gardens." Everyone was subject to rationing, so anything that we could grow was appreciated.

It was a time of uncertainty. We did not know if, when, or how we would be attacked again.

Chapter Three - a Patriotic Engagement

North Tonawanda, New York

It was the summer of 1943. Two young sailors, temporarily stationed in our area, rented an apartment from my mother. The Richardson Boat Company that manufactured Chris-Craft pleasure boats had been refitted to make landing craft for the US Navy. Ray Nobes and Jimmy Cavey had been tasked with shepherding the finished boats down the Erie Canal to Albany and points beyond, where they were loaded onto large ships.

Ray Nobes was a tall, slim, dark-haired young man from the state of Maine. Reserved and soft spoken, he was a sweet man with a beautiful smile.

Jimmy Cavey, a New Englander as well, was tall and muscular and handsome in his uniform. Outspoken and quick-witted, he enjoyed dancing the jitterbug and the waltz.

They rented a car and asked us to show them around. Ray and Jimmy took Julie and me to Niagara Falls, the local Canteen, and on rides through the countryside.

One day, they came to us with sad news. Their time in our area was almost up and they'd received orders to leave the next day for a European tour of duty. The boys had a request. If they could tell their officers that

they were getting engaged to two sisters, they would be granted an extra day with us. Would we be willing to say that we were engaged to them?

Julie and I saw no harm in it. We liked these men and wanted to help them. We agreed to meet them later on the bridge that crossed the Erie Canal to have one last evening together.

After dinner, we walked with the boys to the canal. We were sad that they were leaving but flattered that they wanted to pretend to be engaged to us, even for a few hours. We didn't know if we'd ever see them again, yet we promised that we'd write faithfully.

On the bridge, we got a big surprise. Both men presented us with diamond engagement rings and asked us to wait for them. Julie was flattered and remarked that the rings were absolutely beautiful. With tears streaming down her face, she promised Jimmy that she would think about it seriously. I was shocked and had not considered marriage at that point. How could I say no? Ray was heading off to war and he might never return. Reluctantly, I accepted the ring and agreed to think about it.

They left early the next day. We had really enjoyed their company and life seemed empty without them. Unwilling to tell our mother about this, we stashed the rings in a drawer.

Months later, I told Ray in a letter that I wasn't ready for marriage. I'm not sure what Julie did about Jimmy.

We busied ourselves working for the war effort and helping our mother with her boarding house.

Chapter Four – Civil Defense

Summer became Fall, and we turned our thoughts towards other things. Encouraged by letters from our boys on the front, we participated in scrap drives and sent overseas packages.

One afternoon as I went to the store for my mother, I saw a poster in the window asking for volunteers. "Your country needs you! Join the Civil Defense Core and help protect your homeland!" A picture of Japanese planes attacking our ships drove the point home. I noted the City Hall location where the signup would be held.

Days later I found myself in a class of almost thirty people, mostly older men and young women, filling out applications. They didn't accept everyone. The government was running background checks on people and they emphasized that you had to be brave, sometimes walking city blocks in total darkness while looking for planes. A few people dropped out.

I was accepted and issued a study booklet, a civil defense armband, a badge, a whistle, and a muted flashlight. For weeks, I studied the configurations of Japanese planes as they would have appeared overhead, and learned to keep mum about this information because "The world has ears."

At last I was ready to take my place as a block captain. Four city blocks were my assigned territory and I was expected to patrol them when the sirens sounded an alarm. I learned the configurations of Japanese warplanes and could recognize them by sight. Day or night, we had less than an hour to make sure that lights were off, windows were covered with black cloth, and non-essential personnel were off the street. We expected a night attack, so many of these drills took place in total darkness.

It was not a job for the faint-hearted. Indeed, we were allowed to carry a knife and defend ourselves as need-be. Dogs were nuisance and sometimes a threat, but we continued on. It could be lonely.

Once a week, the block captains met with other defense teams and were updated with the latest news.

I was proud to serve my country.

Chapter 5 - Letters from the Front

There was regular postal mail and then there was Victory Mail (V-Mail). During the latter years of World War II, V-Mail became a popular way to correspond with a loved one serving overseas. V-Mail letters were written on forms that could be purchased at five and dime stores or the post office. These special forms were photographed, put on film, flown across the world and then reproduced at the mail center closest to the recipient's position. They were tiny, only 20% larger than a pack of cigarettes.

Julie and I wrote to all the boys in our hometown group and to other servicemen as well. We once learned that we were the pin-up girls for an entire platoon! Some of the men wrote sporadically, while others wrote faithfully every week. One of the most prolific writers was our dear friend Stanley Smolinski. His letters allowed us to follow him through training camps in the United States, to a post in England, and to the front in France. Here are some excerpts from a few of his letters.

October 27, 1942

Dear Clara,

I received your letters and was very pleased to hear from you and to know that you all are in a good state of health. I'm fine and I wish all of you keep that way for always.

You know I miss you and Julie and them good old pinochle games and most of all the good old porch. I'll bet it's cold up there in N.T., but I guess it's not any warmer than it is up here. By all means have Julie write to me as I thought she would if I sent a letter to your home.

I think everyone in N.T. of our gang will come to say goodbye to you for they want to keep you for a friend. I know, I'm in the Army, that to find another girl like you to be as friendly and sociable, one would have to comb the earth. I really mean it all joking aside.

About my pictures, I can't send you any for I didn't have any taken. I hope your women's intuition isn't wrong about us coming back.

Now to give you my general opinion of the Army... When I left N.T., I knew I faced an entirely different life than what I was used to, and decided to make the best of it. I got to the Fort and there I started my waiting monotonous Army life. For a while I did a lot of waiting and that was for exams, eats, bunks, and trains.

The time always seemed to drag but now here in Camp Mills it begins to move faster day by day. I had K.P. and guard duty several times. Right as I'm writing this letter is the rest period for the guards of the second relief. We guard the entrances in and out of camp with rifles on our shoulders. This may prove boring to you, but I'll go on a little more, pardon me.

When I left Fort Niagara, I rode on the train for 8 hours. Those 8 hours were quite long, but they made me feel very proud when people of civilian life everywhere we went waved to us. Well I got here to Camp Mills and Mitchel Field and I was thrilled when I saw many bombers and

pursuit planes in the sky all around me. I got used to this camp and it's really nice except we got to wake up at 6 AM. Well, I guess I bored you silly with them opinions but I hope you're still reading this letter. That's all for now for I can't think of another thing to say.

Tell me what's going on back home, have Julie write me, and keep in the best of health God bless you all.

Your friend, Stanley

March 2, 1943

Dear Clara,

Received your letter and was mighty glad to hear from you again. You are in good fortune getting into nurse's aide classes and I'm sure you can cope with the studies and all. Good luck on that and everything you do.

Too bad that so many young boys are going into the Army. It seems like they are taking children and it really is a shame but it's got to be done.

I am flying about an hour a day and have 6 hours of dual instruction and doing better every day. Teach you all how to fly in my plane someday I hope.

The food here in the Army is really swell and good. Beans come every day but it's a choice whether you want beans, string beans, lima beans, or just more beans. Just a little side kidding but really there's chicken, turkey, beef, steak, or any other things you can think of. I've gained 17 pounds since I've been in.

Congratulations to you Clara for your good fortune. Here's hoping the best luck to all.

As always your friend, Stanley

May 16, 1943

Dear Clara,

Glad to have your letter catch up to me for I did change camps since I last wrote to you. You must be having quite a time at home with your work and schooling. How are you getting on in the Nurse's classes now? Still like it? Well Clara, I know you will keep "on the beam" for you always were. Thanks for the planes you are helping to build, now I can feel safe in any of them as long as you and Julie are on the assembly line, for even a little part is important on a plane.

There's not much to say about me, for as usual I'm taking it easy in the Army. Attending classes and going places in St. Louis for it's really a nice town towards soldiers and sailors. I have changed some but not too much. You can probably see by the pictures.

Speaking of pictures, I was still wondering when you are going to send me some of yourself and Julie. (in your green hats, eh?) I would like so much to see you all again even in pictures. (Rush them, please.)

Too bad about Easter because I spent it in Texas and it was a nice sunny day down there. So long and God bless you all.

Always, Stanley

England, April 16, 1944

Dear Clara,

Received both your letters and was very glad to hear from you. It seems funny to me to be reading your small photographed V-Mail, but does my heart plenty of good!

By the way, what was it that the censor cut out after the word old? I'm only twenty-three bald headed but not an old _____ goat!

Gal, I'll bet you and Julie looked swell in your Easter outfits. If any pictures were taken I would certainly like to see them.

I sure wish you could hug me a little, so that I would wake out of this dream and be home sweet home! Sending you a hug at the end of this letter. Must be spring here also and it does things to me.

Clara, I've been to London and saw some mighty nice scenes. Yes, and others not so good if you know what I mean. It's a nice town and there are plenty of people as in N.Y.C. The highest building was the one which held 'Big Ben' up there. The rest were quite small, 5 stories & down.

By the way, remember when we sat on the porch during one of our blackouts? Well over here it's nuts, black as pitch even blacker sometimes. You stumble around as if you were blind. Even with flashlights it's terrible. Boy with a blackout and you it would be nice, don't get me wrong. You could be the angel who would be my guide home, lit up like a Christmas tree. Ha! Not with English bitters either.

Well woman, time to close now so I'll shut up before trouble comes. So long, and write again. Best wishes. God Bless all!

Ever, Stanley

P.s. The Hug (Ummmmm)

England, May 14, 1944

Hello Clara,

Just a very few lines to let you know that I'm still kicking and miss all of you these last few days more than ever. Waiting to see the old porch again filled up with the gang. Even those two sailors who we got seasick on the wine! Seeing that the poultry, namely chickens are still laying around... Oh for only a few old fashioned eggs, the ones you have to crack open. We got the kind of the powdered variety, chickens must eat sawdust for that's what they taste like. No kidding the eggs are all right for the English but not for me for I am a happy Yank whenever I get the fresh kind.

Glad to hear that you are well for I am very much so with the exception of one of these Limey colds which in England is eternal.

All for now, will wait for the pictures! Remind me to Uncle Dave. God bless all!

Ever, Stanley

Still England, June 13, 1944

Dearest Clara,

Speaking of good friends in our tent, so I've thought of you. I'm writing to one of the best I have. Right? Well Clara, do you have any relations on this side that I can look up for you? Would like to see them and tell them that I know you well... .

Nothing else new here except that we are training our pet dog "Picadilly" to bring in firewood for our stove. Saves some work for our boys. She is too smart and knows what she's worth, so one of the boys feeds her candy every Ration Day. Well, that's all for now, Sugar. Take care of yourself.

Ever, Stanley

Author's note:

You might wonder why D-Day (June 6, 1944) isn't mentioned. There was a censored section and a general blackout of information. All we know is that he was transferred to France shortly after this letter.

Somewhere in France, July 15, 1944

Dear Clara,

Day after "Bastille Day" which I'm sure you are familiar with; and it has been nice. Sun shone awhile for a change. Yesterday the people were dressed in their Sunday best, with what they do have they certainly did look smart. They really have a fine taste when it comes to blending colors in with flowers and their complexions. It was the most beautiful sight I've ever seen. Happy isn't the word for it, heaven a lump started to come up in my throat. Am much glad that the US doesn't put up with what these people have gone through. Shouldn't talk like that but will tell you more when I see you again. Remind me. Enough for now and "Bon Nuit" which means good night as the lights are getting low.

Ever and Always, Stanley

Author's note:

Stanley returned after the war and married a girl from the South. Some of our other friends and acquaintances were not so lucky. Two of our young men were lost on the Arizona during the attack on Pearl Harbor. One was killed on the beaches of Normandy, and another contracted malaria in a Japanese prison camp.

The most heartbreaking of all was a young man who participated in the liberation of Auschwitz, the infamous German concentration camp. When he returned from the war, I held him in my arms as he cried over the terrible things that he'd witnessed.

As a wife, mother, and grandmother of eight, I hope that we never face a world war again.

Short Story - Sink or Swim

Sink or Swim – a Blast from the Past

“A vacation in your own back yard! Avoid the crowded beaches and beat the high cost of entertainment for the family all summer long!”

For days we had poured over brochures and advertisements such as these. The yard was measured and the spot was finally picked. All that remained was choosing the pool that best fit our family (7 kids, a father, mother, two dogs and a cat). We piled the clan into the station wagon and off we went! Excitement amongst the younger set ran high, and I must admit, Herb and I caught the fever.

Have you ever visited a pool dealer's fairyland? Invariably, they have from six to twelve or more displays completely set up, each one meant to entice and confuse you. As we entered the grounds, we were approached by a smiling, sun-tanned salesman, eager to help us make our choice. As he led us from pool to pool, he dropped phrases such as “In-wall skimmer... diatomaceous earth filter... rigid V construction... and etc.”

Not wishing to appear as utter fools, we nodded wisely but secretly were awed by the veritable stream of information he spewed.

After much deliberation (the kids vs. us), we settled on a 24 ft. x 4 f t. round model. Not quite as fancy as a redwood but still respectable looking for our means. Next came the business of choosing a filter. We had almost decided upon the sand type with an over-the-side lily pad skimmer, when we detected a pained expression on the salesman's face. Of course, this was alright with him, he said, but with so many children, our lily pad would take a beating. Now he explained the advantages of an in-wall skimmer and applauded us when we changed our minds to a diatomaceous earth type filter. Secretly I was pleased, as this was a much shinier and better looking model.

Then he gently asked us if we had a fenced-in yard. We did, but only on three sides. This would never do, he explained, as our ordinances

demanded a fence all around. Since the cost of continuing the chain link fencing was prohibitive, we were delighted when he informed us that we could purchase a fence which could be installed directly on the pool.

Now came the time to elect a means of entrance into our pool: i.e. slides (straight or curved), ladder (plain or fancy), sundeck, trampoline, everything but a drop from a helicopter. Here we kept our cool over vociferous cries from the kids and settled on a plain, sturdy looking ladder which would fold up and away. The deck we would build (and that's another story).

Finally came the moment to sign the easy payment loan papers. We found, that with interest, we had overstepped our original limit by a few dollars. Well, this did not excite us too much since we reasoned that for small monthly payments (over 5 years), years of fun and healthy frolic were ahead for us. Also, we were saving the installation cost by doing it ourselves.

Now we were asked on which day we would like the pool delivered and were advised to level the land first, then apply a two inch layer of sand. This combined with a lovely blue plastic sheet would protect our liner, we were told. By this time we looked upon the salesman as our bosom buddy and took his advice:

"Better buy chlorine by the twenty-five pound tin. Should last all summer. You'll need a vacuum to clean the bottom. This easy to use test kit and instruction book will tell you when to add P.H. plus and P.H. minus, and don't forget the algaecide!"

Heaven forbid! We didn't want algae growing in our piece of Eden!

Then he and the kids joined forces and we wound up with a floating game of ring toss, pool toys, and an elaborate foam and aluminum chaise lounge. This, I was told, was for me to relax on while watching the swimmers.

It was nearly dinnertime and again we piled the crew into the wagon, happy but tired and a little dazed. Promptly after dinner, Herb, the kids and I went outside to prepare the ground for our pool. The first part was easy. With a stake, a string and a nail we scribed a circle twenty-five feet in diameter. Then we started to dig. After three hours and aching backs we were getting no place. We decided that since we were saving the cost of installation, we would treat ourselves to having the circle dug out. Herb called the nursery and arranged for two men to come out the next morning. We thought that three or four hours of digging would do the job.

When Herb picked me up from work at 3:30 the next day, he complained, "They're... still digging!" It seems our nice level looking yard was fourteen inches off on one side. Well, one good thing came of it; I have enough topsoil to garden for the next ten years. (If my energy holds out...).

The pool arrived packed in various large and small boxes and filled half the garage. The sand arrived and much to our surprise it took a full two yards to cover the circle. Oh, and along with the pool came a large manila envelope of instructions which my spouse and I promptly sat down to digest. I swear they read like the blueprints for one of Dr. Frankenstein's creations! Well, we weren't licked yet. Enlisting the aid of my brother-in-law and father, we planned the big event for the next day.

Bright and early the next morning, we marched out of the house, ready for action. We never did find out what time the children awoke, but they greeted us with whoops at 7:00 A.M., dressed and ready to go. An orderly plan of action was decided upon for unpacking the parts but this soon fell by the wayside, what with so many willing, helping hands.

Somehow, the bottom channel was assembled and we felt a definite sense of accomplishment. The next step was to fit the steel wall into the groove, which ran through the middle of the channel. The wall was packed into a neat, tight roll and when the tapes were cut, sprang out like a giant Jack-In-The-Box. The illustrations in the instruction book showed two men inserting this waving, squirming ribbon of steel into the groove. With people stationed every three feet apart (We had, by this

time, pressed our neighbors and their children into the cause.) we still lost control. A slight breeze had sprung up and down it went, like a stacked deck of cards! Refusing to be discouraged, we tried again and this time succeeded. With every upright that was bolted into place, the pool finally took shape and our spirits lightened. The liner was inserted and we managed to install the top rail and fence with a minimum of trouble. Only one trip back to the dealer was required to locate missing bolts and nuts. Our shiny filter was unpacked and placed on a concrete slab next to the pool and then my father pointed out the fact that there was no outside outlet to plug it in to. He advised us to have a grounded outlet installed for safety's sake. In the meantime we discovered the children had hooked up the hose, started the water flowing into the pool, and had all changed into swimsuits.

The electrician was called who advised us that he would be out in two days to do the job. I cannot describe the woebegone looks and the moans and groans that went up when the kids learned of the delay. (At this time, I counted 22 kids, all in swimsuits).

Somehow, we lived through the next two days and no one was ever more warmly greeted than the electrician. Along with the plug, we had him install a floodlight for night swims.

Following the instruction book closely, we connected the hoses from the filter to the pool wall, plugged it in, and waited for the pressure gauge to reach 10. This, we read, was the ideal reading. The gauge would not budge and once again we resorted to the instruction book. According to them the thing was air-locked someplace and darned if we could fix it. Again, we visited our friendly salesman who was gracious enough to demonstrate on a similar model and point out our mistakes. We came away feeling like idiots because our boo-boo was such a simple one. We had neglected to open the air valve.

Meanwhile, back at the house, the kids were fast losing confidence in our mechanical ability and greeted us rather stoically on our return. We fooled them—in a short while we had the filter working and had fed it the diatomaceous earth necessary to keep the water clean.

Rousing cheers went up and they headed for the ladder. From out of nowhere it seemed that they were joined by upwards of 15 friends and the free-for-all started! We could see at once that rigid rules of conduct would have to be set if everyone was to survive.

The first task was to sort out the swimmers from the non-swimmers. The only way to accomplish this was to make each child swim across the pool. We rescued quite a few who mired in the middle after claiming they could swim. Next it was decided that someone must be lifeguard at all times the pool was in use. Authority was needed!

No diving on top of each other... No pinching or punching... No walking the edge of the pool ... Anyone not obeying the rules was to be banned from swimming for the rest of the day. By the end of the first week we had added a few more such as: Bring your own towel... No more than twelve in at one time ... Don't drip through the house on the way to the bathroom.

Up to this point Herb and I had managed one midnight swim and our two teenage elder daughters had headed for the beach to avoid crowded conditions at home. Now we discovered our food bills were soaring. Kids who swim from five to six hours a day suddenly develop appetites like lumberjacks. Also we had another mouth to feed. At least that's how we felt when we poured in chlorine, P.H. +, P.H.-, and algaecide by what seemed like the gallons into our swimming hole.

About the middle of summer, we learned that our pool was in league with the sun and had a regular feast on our chemicals unless it was fed before sunrise. We learned too, that it must be tested before sun-up to obtain true readings. All the pool toys had gone the way of the garbage collector and we found that old inner tubes were the nearest thing to kid proof and much more fun. I never did get to relax on the chaise lounge, which went the way of the toys after one week. Not that I missed it, I was too busy playing lifeguard.

By the end of summer, Herb and I were beginning to look a little ragged, but we found consolation in the fact that the children had enjoyed themselves beyond measure, had become excellent swimmers, and looked the picture of health in their bronze tans.

The electric bill had increased wildly and my washer and dryer were squealing in indignation over the heavy loads of towels, robes and blankets. We began to look forward to school days with eagerness, knowing this would herald the end of the swim season. Then we could winterize and shut down the pool, we thought!

When we went to purchase the winterizing chemicals; we were informed that no one in his right mind would do this before the middle of October. The combination of sunshine and half-warm days would dissipate the chemicals and algae would take over. Also, a cover and flotation pillow were recommended to keep out leaves and foreign objects. Too tired to do battle, we gave in and came home, resigned to the fact we were in water too deep to quit.

After close examination of the family budget, we found we had used the recreation and miscellaneous allowance for the entire year and faced a winter of popcorn, monopoly and late TV movies. Not the kind to cry over spilled milk, we felt this might promote togetherness and give us time to spend some cozy evenings planning improvements for our backyard Coney Island.

In conclusion, may we offer you the advice a health teacher once gave our teenagers. "If you want to have a baby, have a baby! But remember, you have to take care of it, feed it, wash it, and change its dirty diapers."

Translation... "If you want to have a pool, buy a pool! But remember, you have to take care of it, feed it, wash it and change its dirty filters!"

GOOD LUCK!!!

Short Story - Confrontation

Confrontation

It suddenly struck her, almost as if her mind had opened and let in a blinding shaft of light. How little her family understood her... How much they thought they understood... How fragile and flimsy the web of love and living really was. Oh truly, she was loved, that she was sure of. But she knew that it wasn't enough and the tears welled and spilled like so many beads in a broken chain of beads.

Now, she realized that all the hard work, all the years of making do, was to further someone else's dreams and ambitions. She felt empty, drained and desperate to justify it all. Oh, she was proud of her family; the way they treated their fellow man, fulfilled their careers, and their obligations. She was sure that they could face the world, survive, and be happy.

My God! Why the empty, lonely feeling now? It was as if all the music and life had been sucked into a vacuum. She felt like running to the nearest train and boarding it to nowhere. In one dark moment, she saw her imperfections as wife and mother and then realized that she was no different than the others.

Perhaps being the strong, ever-present shoulder was taking its toll. The burden seemed too heavy to bear. She needed something frivolous, something totally unrelated to cling to at that moment. She felt as if she were drowning and casting about for reasons to justify her life.

Suddenly, she knew the answer. She had stopped being herself and was drifting to the edges of extinction. She faced herself as a complete stranger, and felt as one must feel awakening from a coma. She fought to keep control as waves of uncertainty, misgivings, and guilt threatened her resolve. She knew what to do to salvage the joy of living. It would as easy as taking the time to be herself.

The tears stopped flowing.

Author's note: This was the only dark day in my life. Thank goodness!

Short Story - Bringing Mom Home

Bringing Mom Home

"Damn!" I thought, as I braked to a stop in front of the church hall to pick up the boys from Sunday school. Just not enough hours in a day and weekends were especially precious.

Jamie and John, my eight-year-old twins, piled into the car and immediately reactivated the argument they had started at breakfast. What a breakfast that was! It had all started calmly enough, with everyone seated, the pancakes a golden brown and the bacon almost ready to take off the griddle when all hell broke loose. John managed to spill pancake syrup on Jamie and in trying to play mediator, I let the bacon burn to a crisp. If I didn't know better I'd swear those twins were adopted from opposite sides of feuding families!

All this drove my mate, Ben, to retreat to the living room where he promptly buried himself in the Sunday papers. To compound matters, my fifteen year old, Alice, picked the aftermath to sound me out on a camping trip her friends had scheduled for the next weekend. Boy! Does that kid have the timing? Just about then I'd have said no to anything.

I remember grumbling that they ought to appoint more women to the United Nations. With all the disagreements we were expected to settle at home, world affairs should be a snap.

I'd planned to visit Mom in the afternoon, but that would have to wait. The last time I had taken the children with me, they had fidgeted so that it put a strain on the whole hour we were there. She probably wouldn't miss me too much as my brother, Al, had said he would be there sometime that day.

Lately, Mom didn't have too much to say and when she did, she had a tendency to reach further and further into the past. Well, the doctor had told us to expect a certain amount of confusion that came along with hardening of the arteries.

After Dad had passed away, she certainly couldn't be left alone and Al and I had decided that a good nursing home nearby would be the best answer for everyone.

I had thought of taking her home with us, but decided against it. The ruckus that three healthy children make would simply be too much for her and besides, I didn't quite know how Ben would take to the idea. Al's home certainly wasn't the answer, as he had five children and another on the way.

Mom seemed to accept the transition well, although there were a few disturbing days when it came to breaking up the home she and Dad had shared for over thirty years.

The nursing home was a bright airy one and Mom had adjusted quite well to the routine although it bothered me a little to see those hands that were always so busy lie idle in her lap. I supposed she had earned the rest.

Dinnertime was a real joy, the kids behaved beautifully and Ben and I looked forward to a quiet relaxed evening at home.

Alice called me to the phone, a little sulky I thought, probably expecting a call from her latest admirer. It was Al, calling to ask how Mom was. He hadn't made it to the home as his wife Ann wasn't feeling well and he cancelled the visit.

I began to feel a little guilty and glanced at the kitchen clock. It was only a little after eight. If I hurried, I could make it before visiting hours were over. I ran a brush through my hair, asked Ben to shepherd the kids to bed, and started out. I reached the low rambling building just as they were turning out the porch lights, the signal that visiting hours were over. I decided to go in anyway.

Mom had been taken to her room and was sitting on the edge of the bed. She didn't see me right away and I detected a slight trembling of her

shoulders. Guilt rushed over me in waves as I crossed the room and knelt before her. She had been crying, and when I reached for her hands I could feel the wet tears. She reached out a trembling hand and softly stroked my hair.

Suddenly I was a child again, coming to her with my troubles. I remember thinking then how much she had given of herself to us. The days and nights she nursed us when we were sick, the pride she took in our slightest achievements, the trying days she had as I had had today. She was always there when we needed her. Funny how we take so much for granted.

I went home that night and had a long, quiet talk with Ben. Surprisingly, I found depths of understanding I didn't know existed between us. The next day I brought her home. I won't pretend it was all sweetness and light, we had a lot of adjusting to do but oh the benefits we reaped! We learned to tap the wells of understanding and love to their depths, and I believe the children will never forget these moments all their lives.

Mom is gone now, from our home but not our hearts. She passed away quietly surrounded by those who loved her and left us a storehouse of love we will draw on endlessly.

Poem - A Kind Word

A Kind Word

Would that the spirit of Christmas
Could linger throughout the year
And folks could find time to be friendly
With a smile or a word of good cheer

Surely the babe in the manger
Who inspires us all at this time
Must be sad in the knowledge it's ended
When the bells of the New Year chimes

Think of the many among us
Who are lonely the whole year through
And how very much they would treasure
A smile or a kind word from you

Author's note: I wrote this while working as a nursing home aide.
Many residents had no visitors during the Christmas holidays.

Poem - A Mother's Garden

A Mother's Garden

I have a lovely garden
I tend so carefully,
And every precious bloom
Means the world to me.

Each tender little blossom
Receives my loving care,
Another spot quite like it
You'll not find anywhere.

For my garden is my dear ones,
My loving family,
And I'm the happiest gardener
When they're gathered round my knee.

My bouquets are made of kisses
And shining little eyes,
T'would be hard to match their beauty
This side of Paradise.

True, my vases are quite empty,
But I don't seem to care,
For more precious than mere flowers
Is the love that I find there.

Author's note: This poem was published in "The Best Poems and Poets of 2004". I wrote this poem many years ago when my children were

young. My family has always been the most important part of my life. Through the years, my garden has grown with many grandchildren and I have seen through them my legacy of love shining brightly. I hope that this poem will inspire generations to follow. To my family I say, "My love will be with you always and forever."

Poem - A Mother's Thanks

A Mother's Thanks

This mother wishes to express her thanks
For a job that's been well done
A thankless one, at times, perhaps
But my daughter's heart you've won

You've created and inspired in one little mind
A wondrous number of things
You've been gentle but firm and really kind
I shall not forget these things

For just one teacher such as you
Can become a child's ideal
I'm glad it was you and I want you to know
The way I feel

We as mothers become so engrossed
Trying to do what is right
We sometimes forget a child must have
A constant shining light

Someone to admire
Someone set apart
Always ready to praise
This you've been from the start

Authors's note: This was written for an outstanding elementary school teacher who went out of her way to help my daughter. Her name, coincidentally, was Mrs. Goodsole.

Poem - Bless This Country

Bless This Country

Bless this country, this America,
this land we hold so dear,
Founded upon Freedom
from oppression and from fear.

From the hearts of men who envisioned
that this land someday would be,
a fortress and a shrine
for the covenants of the free.

Through the ages, stand we guardians
of America's bright flame,
ever steadfast we will honor
the glory of her name.

Her shores must ever beckon
with Liberty's sweet light,
to the hearts of all our brothers,
a bright beacon in the night.

Poem - Daddy's Girl

Daddy's Girl

"Why does my daddy leave everyday?"

Our little girl asked
As she stopped her play.

Quickly I hugged her
And tried to erase
Such a serious frown
On that baby face.

One thing, my love,
I think you should know,
How much daddy loves you,
That's why he must go —

To earn all the things
We need everyday
And each little toy
You love while at play.
I know that you miss him,
He misses you too,
Just remember he's going
Because he loves you.

Author's note: My four year old daughter Susan was deeply affected when my mother-in-law died while away at work. For weeks when my husband got ready for work, she would fret and cry, fearing that he wouldn't come back.

Poem - Faith

Faith

How can I doubt the hand of God
When everywhere I see
Some evidence of his great good
In this humanity

The miracle of life itself
In every living thing
Pays tribute to its maker
In the happiness it brings

Yet one may say if he is good
Why then does he allow
The chains of misery to bind
His people even now?

We oft forget in darkest hours
How courage can be born
How man can rise above the depths
Find strength to lead him on

For God made man from lowly sod
But breathed into his soul
The mystery of lasting faith
A wonder to behold

Poem - Fate

Fate

Some suffer loudly
Can't hold it in
Others are stoic
Bear it with a grin
What bothers me
Is which one I'll be
If fate points its finger
Of pain at me

Poem - Fellowship

Fellowship

Plain fare from plain plates
a banquet can be
When enjoyed in the warmth
of good company

And the humblest surroundings
will fade out of view
And seem like a palace
when we are with you

And the wonderful glow that fellowship lends
Never came from the flow
of the world's finest blends

Poem - Five Valentines

Five Valentines

Five Valentines, I call my own
Five little Hearts of Gold
Worth more than any treasure
That I could ever hold.

Dear little arms that hold me,
Sweet smiling little faces,
I wouldn't trade for all the world
Not one of these embraces.

My darling little daughters
You fill this heart of mine,
With so very much more happiness
Than any Valentine.

Love, Mama

Poem - For My Baby Daughter

For My Baby Daughter

There were too many angels in heaven
So they lent one to Daddy and me
A dear little baby cherub
As sweet as she can be

We pray that the dear lord will let us
Keep you the rest of our days
To fill our hearts with the sunshine
Of your sweet and loving ways

Poem - Legacy

Legacy

If just one gift I am blessed to bestow
this one would I give
A heart that is free from prejudice
as long as you may live

The grace to judge your fellowman
by his thought, his word, his deed
Not by the color of his skin
nor the difference in his creed

The courage to stand alone if you must
to be honest in all you do
Dear child, this legacy
with love, I would leave to you

Author's note: I wrote this for my children, during the civil rights movement.

Poem - Leprechaun

Leprechaun

There's a legend that lives in old Ireland
In the heart of each lad and colleen
That's as dear to the heart of the Irish
As the wearin' o' the green

For they say in the green woods of Ireland
Lives a band of small mischievous men
If you catch one 'tis said he must lead you
To the gold at the rainbow's end

Ah but take care if you're thinkin'
Of finding and holding one fast
For he'll charm you with sweet Irish blarney
'Till you're bound to release him at last.

Author's note: Of all the colorful legends and folklore given to us by our forefathers, perhaps the most appealing of all are those the Irish have given us. Bless 'em! Certainly, those mischievous little men the leprechauns are a favorite of the younger generation. Which child could not help but admire these little folk who play such wonderful tricks and so seldom get caught. Then there's always the fond hope of catching one! A trip to our own 'Pine Woods' for that very purpose has always been an adventure for our little ones. We can't help but feel mighty sad as one by one our brood leaves behind that wonderful world of make believe. But then, we realize it must be so, and look forward to the day when we'll be taking our grandchildren a' hunting these little men.

Poem - Master Weaver

Master Weaver

This life becomes a tapestry we weave
Each strand a facet of emotion
Golden threads of love run through
Gleaming with each measure of devotion

Though mundane tasks we must attend
These but become
The darker hues
Of background which our hopes transcend

'Til at last the master calls
To bid us quit the loom
We leave the world a work of art
Or some poor thing forever lost in gloom

Poem - My Mother

My Mother

Though I be poor in expressing
in words what I'd like to say
I know I am rich in the feeling
that comes from my heart today

A fountain of love and comfort
that wells from a heart of gold
The tender love of a mother
can never in words be told

When our skies are clear and cloudless
and there's sunshine instead of rain
Do we often think of Mother?
No we wait till it rains again

But when stormy days are hovering
and our skies are no more blue
Then we long for the touch of a mother
to let the sunshine through

And this from the heart of a daughter
humble though it may be
I hope I have conveyed the meaning
of what Mother is to me

Author's note: Written at age 12 for my own mother.

Poem - No Room for Improvement

No Room for Improvement

When you get to thinking
That you're pretty good
It leaves no room for improvement

But when you admit
All the faults that you have
That's what tickles the soul into movement

Poem - Ode to a Tea Bag

Ode to a Tea Bag

Oh thou succulent square of tannic acid,
Just the thought can make me placid.

Oh thou savory little bag,
How I crave thee when I lag.

Wrung of life, thy tag hangs straggledly,
Remember thy mission
When I am bedraggedly.

Author's note: This poem was written for my "adopted" daughter Marylois, with love.

Poem - One Year with You

One Year With You

One year with you was quite enough!
To make me wish for more

And now that we've been married
for more than a full score

I'm hoping we will make it clear
to our golden wedding day

And then as sure as I am now
I know that I will say

I'm glad I married you!

Author's note: This was written to my husband on our anniversary.

Poem - Pieta

Pieta

How your mother's heart must have bled
On that cold cruel dawn
When they brought your poor son's body to you –
All bruised and bloody and torn.

And how your mother's heart must have ached
When you looked upon his dear face,
Knowing full well, how willingly,
He died to redeem this race.

And yet your thoughts must have backwards flown,
To the days when he was but a babe,
When you cradled and comforted each tiny hurt
And treasured each small step he made.

Dear Mother, our hearts must go out to you
On this the darkest of days,
When you thought that all of the joy you knew,
Would be quiet ... and still ...for always.

Poem - Portrait of a Mother

Portrait of a Mother

She is a composite picture of housekeeper, cook, nurse, secretary and seamstress.

For most of these occupations she has had no formal training and depends upon the guidance of love and her strong maternal instincts.

She becomes a Rock of Gibraltar founded upon patience and love and a haven of comfort in times of trouble.

She is a fearsome lioness when her young are threatened and her anger is most generally directed toward bad habits or outside influences which may maim her cubs.

All these things she was and is and we, who are now guiding our children through the shoals of infancy and adolescence, appreciate now what a mother means.

She holds the hope of the world in her hands and the seeds of understanding, faith and love she sows will grow from generation to generation.

Truly the hand that rocks the cradle rules the world!

On this special day dedicated to her image, it is only fitting that along with the presents we offer, we give our time and love else we may find it

...

Too late to hold the hand we brushed away

To still the angry words we had to say

Too late to offer comfort or a smile

To stop and visit for a little while

Too late to ask forgiveness or forgive

Too late, too late, yet we must live
With memories that might have been
If we could live it all again.

Poem - The Heart Rules

The Heart Rules

I thought that I was being smart
When I tried to teach my heart
But darling it's so plain to see
That it's my heart that's teaching me

I tried to tell my heart a thing or two
But now it's telling me I love you
That's what you get when you try to get wise
And get that know it all look in your eyes

I thought that I had it all figured out
Now I don't know what it's all about
My head tells me no and my heart says yes
I don't know what to do so I guess

I'll give it up and let my heart rule instead
When in love you can't use your head

Poem - The Lost Spirit

The Lost Spirit

I searched for the spirit of Christmas
In a silent, white starlit night,
And then on the city sidewalks
With store windows gay and bright.

I visited Toyland and found there
Happiness and real joy,
In the picture of children with Santa
As he promised each one a toy.

Then I took my babes to the manger
To wish the Christ Child well,
And there by the candle-lit crib
I captured the magic spell.

In the eyes of my own little children
The spirit of Christmas shone,
With love for the child who lay there
He was truly one of their own.

Author's note: Our home was the gathering place for our friends and relatives on Christmas Eve. We exchanged gifts and enjoyed a great buffet luncheon. With all the work of decorating and cooking and the kids getting restless, I'd lost my Christmas spirit. I gathered my brood together and headed for the manger in our church. It was there that I captured the lost spirit that inspired me to write this poem.

Poem - The Older Generation

The Older Generation

We the older generation
Are suffering the odd sensation
Of being told were out of step
Yet we're the ones who foot the debt

To educate the younger set
To such a high and fine degree
That they're inclined to disagree
With everything we say

And yet no solutions
Enter in their elocutions

But soon they'll be the older set
The ones that have to foot the debt
Will their offspring point with pride?
Or will they in their turn deride?

Poem - The Spirit of Niagara

The Spirit of Niagara

Straight she stood
Though her heart trembled
By the roaring river's shore

Knowing well that on the morrow
She would see her love no more

Chosen she, an Indian maiden
Lovely brave and pure of heart
On her dwelt her peoples prayers
So she knew that they must part

Brave he must be and courageous
He must bid his love goodbye
Never showing how his heart felt
From his lips escape no sigh

As the dawn breaks she awakens
A thrill of fear she must dispel
And her heart beats ever faster
No return she knows full well

Slowly, slowly her steps take her
To the flower decked canoe
Waiting for her by the river
To her peoples wishes true

As the raging currents speed her
To the great white waters edge

Their eyes meet for one brief moment
In a silent lovers pledge

Ah farewell sweet Indian maiden
Ever still we hear your call
Mingling as a sad sweet echo
With the great white water fall

Author's note: Down through the ages man has sought to honor and implore his creator for his blessings through offerings. They have taken many forms, the burning of incense, the best of the bountiful fields and ultimately, the most precious of all, the gift of life. One of the most touching and sensitive of these is the legend of Lela Walla, daughter of Chief Eagle Eye of the Ongiara Nation. Willingly she offered herself to save her people from affliction and death by an evil spirit. It is only natural to assume that this lovely young maiden must have had an ardent admirer amongst the young braves of the Ongiara and it is with this tender thought in mind that we attempt to put into poetry her feelings as she went to meet her destiny.

Poem - Treasures

Treasures

We do not count our treasures
By the things that we possess
But rather in the measure
Of the love that we profess

Our house becomes a palace
He and I the King and Queen
Our sweet and loving children
Such jewels you've never seen

How could we count in silver
The happiness we've known
Even in days of sadness
How much closer we have grown

To the golden years look forward
With peace and sweet content
In the knowledge that our riches
Have all been heaven sent

Author's note: We struggled financially to raise seven children. Yet, we saw it in a different light. This was my husband's favorite poem.

Poem - What Might Have Been

What Might Have Been

Too late to hold the hand we brushed away
To still the angry words we had to say

Too late to offer comfort or a smile
To stop and visit for a little while

Too late to ask forgiveness or forgive
Too late, too late
And we must live

With thought of things that might have been
If we could live it all again

Poem - When You Complain

When You Complain

When you complain of your aches and pains
And you think your lot is a bad one...

Pity the fellow whose ear that you bend,
In the end, he's really the sad one.

Poem - Never Walk Alone

Never Walk Alone

I've never walked alone my love
Through the depths of pain and fear
For ever your dear arm was there
To comfort and share each tear

Though the road was long at times
No solace loomed in sight
I could not bear to leave you
You lent me courage through the night

The day must come dear heart
When one of us will walk alone
Our love will call throughout the years
Til we embrace again my own

From the Author

I hope that you enjoyed reading these verses as much as I enjoyed writing them!

Thank you!

Clara "Buddy" Treat



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