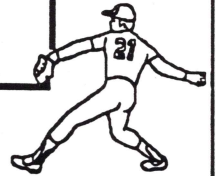




# The Riel Family Newsletter

Catch the News

July, 1998



## TWINS CELEBRATE 40TH WITH FAMILY/FRIENDS

### BIG PARTY AT GILLINGHAM HOME FOR LISTY & BIRDY

Although June 3rd was the official date on which Listy and Birdy became 40 years old, the celebration was delayed until June 13th. On that date a large group of family and friends descended on the Gillingham home to wish the twins many happy returns. Everyone enjoyed a lavish spread of food and drinks, and afterwards the group gathered on the patio for well wishes and gift opening.

First of all Francie read a poem she had composed for the occasion, after which she invited well wishers to recall some amusing incidents from the past life of the twins. Grandma obliged with a story of the time the pre-school twins had some friends over, and they decided to sample the contents of a wine bottle. The results were as one can imagine, and Grandma was obliged to make peace with the mothers of the guests. Grandpa followed with an accounting of the day the gate at the parking lot at St Vincent's fell over on Birdy. When asked how she felt, Birdy said that she could not move. Grandma assumed that she was paralyzed. When asked why she could not move Birdy replied "because they told me to lay still". Grandpa then commented that since both twins were teachers and also parents each had the responsibility to both hand out and also review and comment on school report cards it might be interesting to review some of their old report cards. He had retrieved from the RFNL master file the 1-5 grade report cards as well as some H.S. ones. Some of the more interesting contents were revealed, some good and some not so good. The overall conclusion was that although both were somewhat slow starters, by the time of H.S. graduation both had excellent marks. Both Jeff and Robert Riel had some additional stories to tell, after which there was a gift opening session, followed by the traditional birthday cake and some ice cream. Some party pictures are reproduced on page 2, and Francie's poem is recorded below and on Page 3.



BUT NOT HAPPY WITH ALL OF THOSE HUNGRY MONSTERS IN NEED,  
THEY HAD TO BRING HOME, TWO MORE MOUTHS TO FEED.  
WITH THE TWO OLDEST GIRLS, AGE 6 AND AGE 8,  
THAT'S A BABY FOR EACH ONE, WOW DIDN'T WE RATE.  
SO MARGARET GOT ELIZABETH, AND ROBERTA WAS MINE,  
TO FEED AND TO TEND TO, TILL IT WAS BEDTIME.  
HOW MANY KIDS GOT THERE OWN LITTLE DOLLS  
THAT MADE SO MUCH NOISE AND SPIT UP AND ALL,  
THEY GREW RATHER QUICKLY AND SOON THEY WERE WALKING,  
AND NOT LONG AFTER THAT THEY WERE DEFINITELY TALKING.  
AND SOON THEY DECIDED THEIR NAMES DIDN'T FIT,  
SO THEY CHOSE THEMSELVES NEW ONES, THAT FOREVER WOULD STICK  
ELIZABETH WAS TOO FORMAL AND TOO HARD TO GET OUT.  
SO E-LISTY WAS BETTER AND EASIER TO SHOUT.  
ROBERTA BIRD, MY DAD USED TO CALL HER,  
THEN SOON JUST PLAIN BIRD, AS SHE STARTED GETTING TALLER.

HERE IS A STORY I HAVE TO UNFOLD,  
ABOUT TWO LITTLE TWINS WHO ARE NOW QUITE OLD.  
IT STARTED IN A HOUSE SO GRAND AND SO BIG,  
THAT ALREADY HELD SIX WILD CRAZY KIDS.



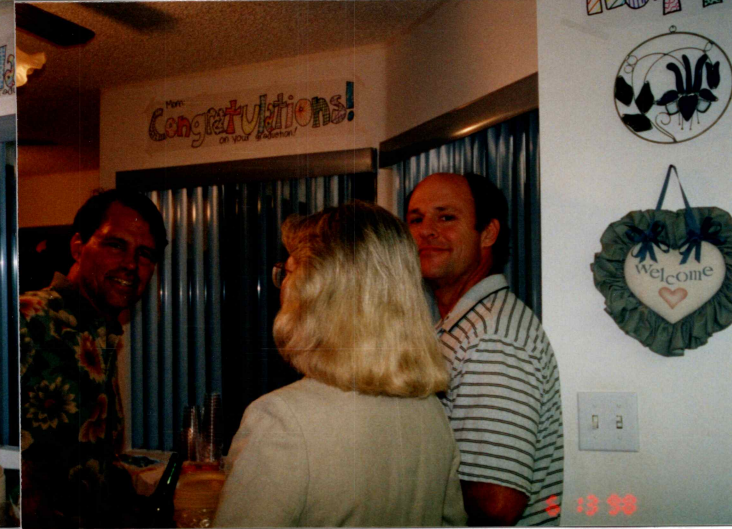
# The Riel Family Newsletter

Catch the News



July, 1998

## FAMILY AND FRIENDS HELP TWINS CELEBRATE BIRTHDAY





# The Riel Family Newsletter

Catch the News



July, 1998

SOON SCHOOL TIME COMMENCED, AND AT ROLL CALL YOU'D HEAR,  
THAT BIRDY AND LISTY WERE NOW ENROLLED HERE.  
TIME MARCHES ON AND THE TWINS WOULD GET OLDER  
STILL LEANING HEAVILY ON BOTH OF OUR SHOULDERS.  
WE HAD THEM AROUND US AND ALWAYS IN TOW,  
IT SEEMED THEY WERE WITH US WHEREVER WE'D GO.  
BUT THEY DID FINALLY GROW UP, AND GO OUT ON THEIR OWN  
THOUGH AT LEAST ONCE A DAY, THEY'RE IN CONTACT BY PHONE.  
AFTER ST. VINCENT'S THEY MOVED ON TO UNI.  
NOT HAVING GROWN TALL, THEY WERE STILL QUITE PUNY.  
BUT TOGETHER THEY PACKED QUITE A ONE TWO PUNCH,  
RULING OVER THE SCHOOL YARD, ESPECIALLY AT LUNCH.  
IT WAS HERE BIRD MET BRUCE, ALTHOUGH A CLASS BEHIND,  
BUT EVEN AFTER GRADUATION, HE WAS STILL ON HER MIND.  
AND IT WASN'T MUCH LATER IN JULIAN AT CAMP,  
WHERE THE TWINS WORKED THEIR SUMMERS,  
(THOSE COLD MORNINGS WERE DAMP).  
LISTY MET BOB AND SOON THEY WERE TWO  
WITH THE BIRD AND THE BRUCE THERE WAS ALWAYS STUFF TO DO.  
SO AS TWINS OFTEN SHARE, ALL THE BEST OF THEIR LIVES  
THEY BOTH SAID YES, THE SAME YEAR, AND BECAME WIVES.  
SO BRUCE AND BOB LEARNED THAT THEY'D ALWAYS BE CLOSE  
CAUSE WHEN YOU MARRY TWINS, YOU TAKE ON THE WHOLE BOAT  
SOON THERE'D BE KIDS STARTING WITH CRAIG AND MICHELLE,  
SO LISTY HAD KRISTY TO I'M HAPPY TO TELL.  
SOON THERE WERE CURTIS, SCOTT AND DAVID TOO,  
WITH SWEET LITTLE ANNIE THE LAST ONE TO BREAK THROUGH.  
ABOUT THIS TIME THE TWINS DECIDED TO DO  
A SHOPPING RETREAT EACH SATURDAY TOO.  
SO THE DAD'S GOT THE KIDS, "WHY THEY'LL LOOK AFTER EACH OTHER."  
"BESIDES WE MUST GO AND TAKE CARE OF OUR MOTHER."  
"WE HELP HER TO SHOP IT'S OUR JOB, WE CAN'T SQUANDER,  
THE TIME THAT WE NEED IN PARKWAY PLAZA TO WANDER."  
SO AS TIME GOES ON AND THOSE TWO KIDS GET OLDER,  
I'VE WATCHED THEM EVOLVE INTO PEOPLE, MUCH BOLDER.  
LISTY, WHO STARTED OUT TEACHING SOME MATH  
HAS BEGUN AGAIN, TAKING ON A NEW PATH.  
I'M SURE THAT THE STUDENTS SHE TOUCHES WILL START  
TO LEARN SOME OF HER TRICKS TO TEACH MATH FROM THE HEART.  
FOR LISTY HER GIFT, IS TO MAKE LEARNING MORE FUN  
SO THAT HER STUDENTS LEARN LOTS BY THE TIME SHE IS DONE.  
SHE IS WISE, SHE IS KIND, SHE IS FIRM, SHE IS TOUGH

BUT HER STUDENTS CAN'T SEEM TO BE WITH HER ENOUGH.  
"PLEASE DON'T LEAVE SCRIPPS, YOU'D HEAR THEM ALL SAY"  
AND THEIR PARENTS EVEN MISSED YOU WHEN YOU WENT AWAY.  
BUT I'M SURE YOUR NEW JOB IS A BOON TO THOSE WHO  
WISH TO TAKE UP WHERE YOU LEFT, AND TO DO WHAT YOU DO.  
SO NEVER FORGET ALL THE LIVES YOU HAVE TOUCHED,  
THEY ARE ALWAYS TELLING ME THAT THEY LEARNED SO MUCH...  
AND BIRDY HAS GIFTS, ALMOST TOO MANY TO MENTION!  
PLAYING WITH SNAILS IN THE CLASS BEFORE LUNCHEON.  
KINDERGARTEN TEACHERS HAVE MORE PATIENCE THAN MOST  
OF THIS I CAN ATTEST TO ABOUT BIRDY I BOAST.  
I HEAR FROM THOSE PARENTS WHO WISH THEY COULD SASS  
HEADMASTER BOB TO PUT THEIR KIDS IN HER CLASS.  
SHE IS THE MASTER, THE HEART OF THE SCHOOL  
YOU CAN TELL THAT I LOVE HER 'CAUSE SHE'S REALLY COOL.  
SHE'S ALWAYS THE ONE TO PUT OTHERS AHEAD  
SHE GIVES OF HERSELF BUT BY 8, SHE'S IN BED.  
YOU CAN TELL THAT THESE KIDS ARE SPECIAL TO ME  
I SEE WHAT THEY DO, WHO THEY ARE, WHAT THEY BE.  
I WATCHED THEM GROW OLDER I'VE SEEN THEM BECOME  
MUCH STRONGER TOGETHER THAN THEY WERE AS ONE.  
TO HAVE SOMEONE SO CLOSE IS A GIFT THAT THEY SHARE  
AND YOU CAN TELL THAT FOR EACH OTHER, THEY WILL ALWAYS BE THERE.  
I ADMIRE THEIR HUSBANDS THE BRUSTER AND BOB,  
WHO TOOK ON THE TWINSHIP AS PART OF THE JOB.  
THE WAY THAT THEY TAKE ON ALL THE KIDS AS A PART  
OF THE OATH THAT THEY TOOK SOMEWHERE IN THE START,  
SO MY HAT'S OFF TO ALL NOT JUST THE TWINS ON THIS DAY,  
FOR ALL YOU'VE ACCOMPLISHED, FOR THE PARTS YOU ALL PLAY.  
TIME PASSING MEANS NOTHING IF THE EVENTS THAT TRANSPIRE  
LEAVE LITTLE TO KINDLE AND NOTHING TO FIRE.  
WHEN SEEING THE PLACE IN YOUR LIFE WHERE YOU ARE  
YOU MUST LOOK AT THE SPACE, NOT THE YEARS THAT GO FAR.  
IT'S NOT THAT YOU'RE OLDER THAN SOMEBODIES MOTHER,  
IT'S THAT YOU'VE BEEN ABLE TO TOUCH THE LIFE OF ANOTHER.  
AND IF IN THAT TIME, YOU'VE TOUCHED MORE LIVES THAN MOST,  
YOU HAVE MUCH MORE THAN MANY, WHO YOU OFTEN HEAR BOAST.  
SO FOR ALL OF THE TIMES YOU'VE REACHED OUT TO THOSE,  
WHO NEEDED YOU THEN, AND ARE GRATEFUL I KNOW,  
FOR ALL OF THE CHILDREN WHOSE LIVES ARE MORE FULL,  
BECAUSE OF THE TEACHER WHO TAUGHT THEM THE RULES,  
FOR ALL OF YOUR FRIENDS THAT ARE HERE TO ROAST YOU,



# The Riel Family Newsletter

Catch the News



July, 1998

IN THEIR BEHALF, I'D LIKE TO TOAST YOU,  
MORE LIFE, MORE LOVE, MORE FULLNESS, MORE HEALTH,  
MORE SUNSHINE, MORE JOY AND AT LEAST SOME MORE WEALTH,  
MAY YOU CONTINUE TO GROW AS YOU HAVE IN THE PAST  
MAY THIS BIRTHDAY PARTY BE ONE HECK OF A BLAST  
AND AS YOU TURN FORTY MY ADVICE IS MOST CLEAR,  
NEVER, NO NEVER ADMIT TO MORE YEARS.

LOVE AND KISSES,  
YOUR OLDER AND WISER SISTER,  
FRANCIE

## ANOTHER BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION

There was another birthday celebration during the past month. Michelle Hartman celebrated her 16th recently, and was treated by Grandpa and Grandma to lunch at La Pinata, in Old Town. We then took in the movie "The Horse Whisperer", which turned out to be one of the better movies we have seen. It was another fun day, and we wish many more of the same for Michelle!



## BIRTHDAY CALENDAR FOR JULY

Bryce Sorem	July 8	12
David Gillingham	July 20	13
Frances Sorem	July 21	46
Timothy Riel	July 26	16

## NEWS FROM SOUTH CAROLINA

We have received several notes from Aunt Eloise. She reports that all is well in Sumter. Scott Nix (who visited us last June) will be graduating from college next May, and his older brother Andy will be entering Divinity School in the fall.



AUNT ELOISE, SCOTT NIX, UNCLE JIMMIE



ANDY NIX AND UNCLE JIMMIE AT THE CITADEL  
FOR ANDY'S GRADUATION



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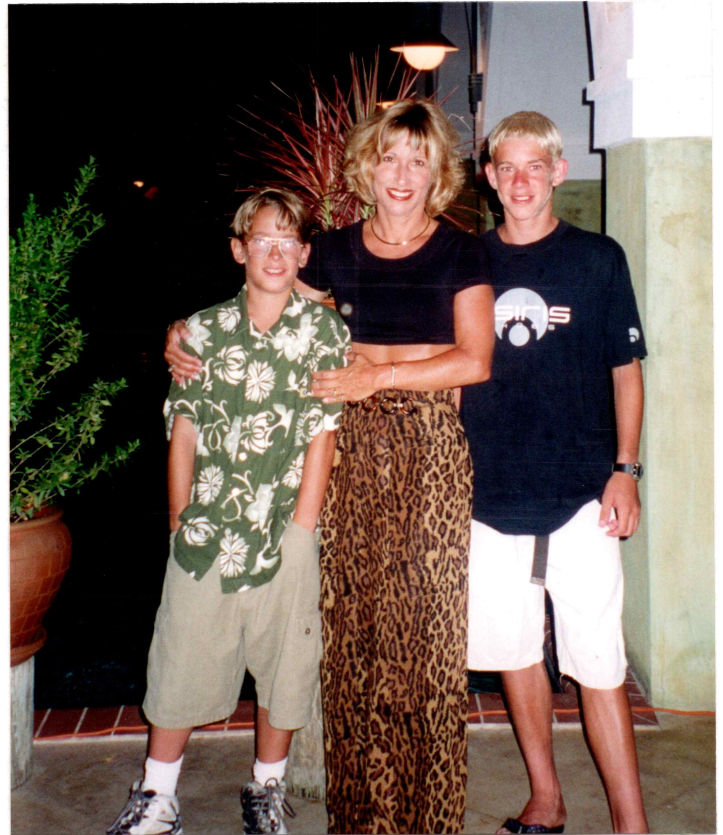
July, 1998

We also were very pleased to receive from Eloise a copy of a book "A Rising Star of Promise", edited by Samuel Thomas and Jason Silverman. Jason is a history professor at Winthrop University, Rock Hill, South Carolina, and is the husband of Susan, the older daughter of Jim and Eloise. The book records a series of letters and newspaper articles written by David Jackson Logan, an officer serving with the 17th South Carolina Volunteers during the Civil War. The book is autographed by both editors and we hereby thank them and Eloise for sending it to us. We will be happy to loan it to any family members who are interested.

## TRAVEL NEWS

As reported in the last issue of RFNL Margaret attended an education conference in Abu Dhabi, UAE, and reported that it was a very interesting experience. She has prepared a detailed account of her visit, and a one day tour which included a Bedouin Village Barbecue under the stars as well as a tour of the desert area around the city. She also recorded her observations on the conference, and some of the people she met, including both colleagues and local government officials. Some of her interesting observations are as follows;

- 1) Both traditional and modern dress was seen at the conference.
- 2) Women are assuming an important role in the economy. Today 90% of female children are in school, and 70% of university students are female. 40% of civil service jobs are held by women.
- 3) Women are kept separate from men, in the business area. There are women doctors, women bankers, women teachers, even women bodyguards. Education is segregated, and most health care is attended to by women.
- 4) Men are less interested in education, since they never need to work. The oil income provides a lifetime subsidy.
- 5) The climate is very hot and dry, but they are trying to change it by planting large numbers of trees. Fresh water is produced by desalination.



Another traveler, to a more benign area, was Francie and family. She reports that their vacation in Jamaica was "the best we ever had". There were special programs for the kids, some chances to hike out into the countryside, and lots of sun and sand at the beach. The only unpleasant incident occurred when Bryce encountered a jellyfish while swimming. He experienced a painful series of stings, but fortunately local knowledge provided a treatment which cured the pain.



Another travel item is the long awaited tour of Europe by Bob and Listy. they took off for London on the 2nd of July, and a 4th of July call to Birdy confirmed that they were on schedule. They left London on the 5th for Zurich, where they will spend a week seeing the sights. We look forward to a full report when they return.

## CLASSIC TRUCK PROGRESS REPORT

In the May issue of RFNL we reported on Craig's plans with respect to the CLASSIC Chevy truck he and dad Hartman are rebuilding. We have an interim progress report in the form of a picture of the vehicle in its' present state, as shown on the following page. We will follow progress from time to time, with additional photos.



# The Riel Family Newsletter

Catch the News



Craig reports that he is having a great time working on the truck, is learning a lot from dad, and hopes to finish the job within a year.



Finally, we learned that Kristy Gillingham was ranked 5th in the state and 8th in the nation for her progress in Spanish.

We congratulate all three on these great achievements.



## LITTLE HOUSE ON THE PRAIRIE PICTURES

In the last issue of RFNL we promised a picture as a follow up on the story about Jessica and Dustin in the above musical. Here it is.



## ACADEMIC AWARDS

We have three important achievements to report. First of all, as reported in the last issue, Listy won her masters degree in Educational Administration from USIU. She also won an "Outstanding Master of Arts" award, and we were present at the impressive graduation ceremony.

Megan Riel-Mehan received two important awards recently. One, as shown below, was from the Presidents Education Awards Program. The other, not shown, was from the Society of Women Engineers, a Certificate of Merit for Highest Honor in Science and Mathematics.

## President's Education Awards Program



presented to  
*Megan Riel-Mehan*

in recognition of  
*Outstanding Academic Achievement*

*Bill Riley*

*U.S. Secretary of Education*

*Don Rizzo*

*Principal*

1998

*Bill Clinton*

*President of the United States*

*Oak Crest Junior High*

*School*

## SPORTS NEWS

The second Annual Fathers' Day Golf Tournament took place on June 14th, at Sun Valley course, in La Mesa. There were seven teams, and there was a three way tie for first, at even par. The winners were teams Ed Riel, Alan Sorem and Bob Gillingham. After the game we all enjoyed a picnic at Lake Murray Park. Francie and Lyle did a great job organizing the event, and the personalized tee prize sport shirts were much appreciated. We have run out of space for pictures, which we will print in the next issue.

Brett Sorem won some big prizes in a skate board contest. We will have details in the next issue.



*President's Education Awards Program*



*presented to*  
***Megan Riel-Mehan***

*in recognition of*  
***Outstanding Academic Achievement***

***Paul Riley***      1998 ***Jim Clinton***

*U.S. Secretary of Education*  
***Dan Rizzi***  
*Principal*

*President of the United States*  
Oak Crest Junior High  
*School*



## Reflections of my (Margaret Riel) visit to Abu Dhabi, UAE, May 24-27 1998

These are a collection of observations about Abu Dhabi. The first part is mostly Travel log, beginning with the arrival at the airport and describing my attempts to be a tourist for a day.

The second part is a reflecting on the conference setting and the visit to the palace. I have copies of the abstracts of the papers will all be in print so I am not describing them. Let me know if you are interested in seeing these.

The last part is bits and pieces of what I was able to learn about UAE, from the conference and from my conversations with others. Some of the information is verified, I tried to be careful of marking what I got from informal information sources.

### My Arrival and Day of being a Tourist

#### Saturday Morning:

#### Arrival at the airport 1:20am

Meet by men in white. Long white robes, black braided bands holding on the hoods that hide hair and necks. Faces, tan, young, bearded and intense. Signs list our names "Dr. Margaret". Passports collected, and off they went to settle with official people. The airport has a central spindle decorated in tile that spread out in a mushroom top all covered in blue and white mosaic. All new, all modern with traces of the past. Off in cars to the hotel with a driver who could speak some, but not fluent, English.

#### Hotel Intercontinental 2:00am

The hotel continental is lavish and large. In part like any hotel in any city, many floors, large open spaces and with modern use of glass and tile, chandeliers that caught the light. Rooms were tasteful, large and comfortable but not unusual. Large rooms have sofas that surrounding the room with bolster pillows to make individual seats.

Dr. Ali was there waiting for me. He gave me the conference materials and a bag full of books on the gulf region--mostly on oil and security. He waited up to meet me, so that he could greet me. I wondered how long (at 2am) one should talk to make this meeting not simply hi and goodnite.

The hotel room was large and pleasant with nothing to mark it as different than the electricity. Not the round plugs but English plugs with one American plug that did not work. Sleep came easily.

I was up with the sun taking breakfast by the pool. The window glass was hot to the touch, the sun was bright and strong. At 8:30 checking for city tours, I found I had missed the only one by 5 minutes. (I did phone, and they told me to come down and see what was there...)

I asked for other options and the desk clerk suggested I hire a taxi by the hour (60Dhrs or \$20 and go to the places the tour lists. Also he told me he could schedule me for a Bedouin Village Barbecue on Persian carpets under the stars. We would explore the desert, ride of



sand dunes and go for camel rides. 220Dr /\$65 from 3:30 to evening. Sounded great, so I signed up.

I called the first person on the list of speakers-- Jeremy Rifkin—President of the Foundation for Economic Trends. I asked if he was interested in a taxi tour of the city and suggested the Desert Safari. We decided to go off at 10:30. I explored outside. From one side of the hotel, there are trees-- a forest -- stretching out to the water but way to far to walk. And way too hot. Other direction was a marina with a fleet of pleasure boats and a place to swim in the near distance. Too hot for walking any distance-- 107F

At 10:30 I met Jeremy for the taxi adventure. We tried a taxi that was waiting but he spoke no English and wasn't sure about where any of the locations were. So we got out, walked back up the hill and went back to the desk and asked if they could request a taxi driver that spoke English. We waited and when our taxi arrived, he did not understand what we wanted. He wanted to know where we wanted to go. We gave him the list and he was confused. He went into the hotel, talked with the desk people and we were off on our silent tour.

The roads were wide and there was little traffic. Buildings were one and two story, stone and tile, new, middle class and better. We drove by military housing, everything is new and attractive. Plants and trees everywhere with sprinklers spreading water over desert sand. We learned that this current King was spending large sums of money to change the climate by planting groves and groves of trees.

Abu Dhabi is a long island. We turned off on a dirt road and away from wealth. There were some shacks and fish building docks. Boats were made of long wooden planks and men were hammering the wood. Others were sealing the wood. The boats looked as if they were both hand made and original designs. We drove slowly as they stared at us we stared at them. But we sat in an air conditioned car, they stood in the sweltering sun under the belly of these boats. The area was about the size of a football field. We drove around and then back out on the road.

After some more driving, we turned into a walled complex. It looks like it might have been a fort of sorts but it was now just a sandy area with some run down buildings. Our taxi driver keeps trying to find something of someone. We don't know if we have arrived somewhere or if he is asking for directions to somewhere else. Finally motions us to get our and we go up to a square sandy building where some men appear to be just getting up. One puts on a head scarf and tells us to follow him. He speaks single word English. We go off walking in what is clearly nothing to look at in dusty sand in high heat. At the edge of the fort are a few sickly looking camels, and a goat or two. We keep walking till we arrive at the destination, a canvas tent which we guessed was a Bedouin tent. He showed us where cooking was done, where people sleep, where rugs and clothes were kept. They used lanterns hung from the top and there was a swinging box that would be an infant's bed. Basic camping supplies were scattered around. Then we walked to a well and he took a dirty glass, poured some water in it and cleaned it out with a dirty rag and then filled it from some water from a water bladder that comes from a sheep and is used to store water. We declined the offer. We looked down at the well and wondered if anyone could live on that water. We paid our tour guides and returned to the taxis. Then we were dropped at the bazaar for Persian carpets. There were about 35 shops all of which had two people trying to get tourists to enter the shops. The real problem was that we were the only tourists. So once we had walked past one shop, and said no to polite efforts to get us to inside, why should we then go into the next? Once we did they wanted to deal and it was almost cruel to even talk about rugs without some many people who wanted to see rugs. We had a taxi meter clicking and we needed to get back for our desert safari. I almost



bought a rug but I was not ready to buy at the first place and the task was daunting. So we left and I tried to return but did not succeed.

### **The Bedouin Safari**

We were picked up in a jeep at the hotel--wished I had brought shorts for this adventure. There were 6 of us. A retired couple that has taken up organic farming in New Zealand and two young midwives from UK, Jeremy, a consultant on future trends and technology and me in education. The driver was not a national and barely spoke to us. We set out to find the desert. We drove about 45 minutes north and compared stories of what we had learned from our different perspectives on our host country. The driver didn't add or contradict anything. I don't know if he was listening and laughing or just not doing the work to process another language. He could answer questions if addressed to him but he was not fluent.

The roads were wide and traffic sparse and the driving was comfortable. There was an alternate truck route that we could see at some distance which paralleled our road so there was no large transport vehicles, just modern cars. After we left the city, on one side of the road was newly planted trees and desert on the other side. We heard that the present king is planting thousands and thousands of trees to change the climate from desert to a more temperate climate. Green plants and the accompanying sprinklers were everywhere. Water is supplied through desalination from the Gulf and some used water is recycled water is used for planting.

The desert was so beautiful, the rolling hills rising up like the surf of an ocean, simmering in the hot sun. Suddenly he turns the jeep and heads straight into the dunes. We are now rollercoasting over the edges and plunging off the curls to the valleys. The jeep lunges one ways and then the other. finally we climb a hill and there is a clearing with 6 tents and a lean-to surrounding a square.

This was the Bedouin camp, but the people were gone. The "village" was only the remains of a way of life and one very old man who never spoke to anyone but our driver. The tents were of white canvas and looked like what you might find with a circus. Our driver took out 6 plastic chairs off a stack, arranged them under the shade of the lean-to and invited us to sit facing the ring of tents. He took out a large cooler with ice and drinks and sat it down. After we sat there for about 5 minutes in absolute and complete silence, someone asked the driver what "the plan" was. He said we needed to wait there until it was a bit cooler.

So here we are 6 tourists at a desert bus stop waiting for another world experience that we had each paid \$60 for. After about 10 minutes we were giddy with laughter from doing nothing. Then we started to talk to each other, hearing one another's life stories spanning most continents. The heat is about 105, the sand is shining and this piece of the world is absolutely peaceful.

The tour picked up again when the tour guide finished letting the air out of the tires and we were off to the dunes for Mr. Toads Wild Ride. We charged through the desert going up and down back and forth. I tried to take pictures but the jeep lunged so quickly and suddenly that it was not possible, and I was in the middle of the back seat not able to reach the windows.

We stopped for the jeep to cool and then we continued ending up back at the camp. Back at the water cooler, we were looking for liquid. Our tour guide was bringing out costumes to



make us look the part of the life. We put on the robes and those with cameras took pictures.

When the women had finished playing dress up-- the men declined, we returned to our chairs lined up as spectators of the desert twilight performance.

Our driver's friend had disappeared and now reappeared from one of the hidden humps of sand with two very scrawny one-humped old camels. These animals looked like "poster pets" for "stop cruelty to animals" campaigns. They were as old and tired as the desert. They were pulled to the ground, with a great deal of effort and each pair of us mounted the beasts and were lead around a quarter mile circle of desert like 5 year children on ponies. When the ride was over the camels had to again be pulled to the ground folding up there bony legs so that we could easily hop off.

There, now all that was left to complete the promised desert safari was the barbecue. There was this rusty old grill in the corner and looking at it, most of us lost our appetite. But then out came foil and a shelf that looked for reasonable and soon everything was shining in layer after layer of foil. What, we wondered would be the feast?

The food was surprisingly good. From another large ice chest came many different bowls of prepared salads all covered with more foil and kebobs of lamb, chicken, beef and fish. With about an hour of work, the feast was laid out, toubleh (sp?), rice, cucumbers and tomatoes, sautéed vegetables in dressing, Arabic bread and enough meat to feed both sides of a soccer match. Our tour guide had carefully unfolded two Persian carpets and spread out pillows and there we were out in the desert having our exotic Bedouin barbecue.

This was not the trip we had each imagined but in the end, it turned out that the party was extremely enjoyable and all of us enjoyed the multi-national talk.

## **Conference Description**

### **The Conference Sunday through Tuesday**

The conference began at 9:00 and continues until 6 each of the days. The setting was very formal but the spirit had a nice sense of informality. The men were in traditional robes and the women nationals were veiled but the clothes were more choice than imposition. They were markers of pride in their status as nationals. The treatment of women was very comfortable--this is both a reflection of how I felt and the report from other women. Half the women were in traditional dress and the other half were in western clothes but most were dressed with a sense of respect for modest dress. The women I talked to all said that they were respected in their work and were treated well. In reflecting on my own interactions, they were more pleasant and warm without being sensual. The young breaded men were working very hard to make sure that everything was done right, that we had what we needed to participate. They listened and responded with respect for what was said by either male or female speaker or participant.

### **The Trip to the Palace**

I was invited, along with a women from Singapore and from Australia, to visit the palace and meet the wife of the brother of the president. She wants to create a palace school for the sons and daughters of the royal family. The issue was to discuss the role of technology in this new model school and to share our opinions about what is the best way to educate children. This was a very interesting conversation as I was forced to look at American



Culture from the eyes of others. The discussion started with the problem of the private school is that their children are picking up values that are not consistent with those of the royal family.

In America, she said, you don't care about family. You want your kids to grow up and grow apart from their family. You want them to leave. Independence is more important than family. Here we want a close family. We see taking care of parents as a privilege not a burden.

The women from Singapore gave a talk about "successful model of education" where kids are "streamed" at 4<sup>th</sup> grade with very little opportunity for a second chance. After that there are streams of homogeneous groups with 1 to 40 class size, drill and practice as the mode of instruction. Success was defined in terms of students with discipline, high scores and strong family ties. They have a meritocracy where the best students are separated and well educated. The students (brightest students) who go overseas have no trouble competing in high ed with students from America.

The women from Victoria, Australia could describe what I would consider excellent education but within a cultural setting that was a bit more socialistic in terms of the civic values.

I had a harder time talking about empowering kids with the current news covering the story of American kids killing. I was happy to have the support of Australia on educational issues. But what is normal teenage behavior was a topic of discussion with different cultural lens.

## **What I Learned of Abu Dhabi and the UAE**

### **Men, Women Clothing**

Men (nationals) wore long white unbelted robes. Headdresses had net caps over scarves with black braided circles around the top of the head. Those from Saudi Arabia had red checkered scarves folded in a different way. They wore open sandals. Most men were bearded with dark hair and dark skin. It was easy to confuse them. Within a few days, I came to see the long robes as much better suited to desert life than suits, however many of the people were also in suits. I know that for one of the talks, my discussant said someone had sent a robe up to the person who was presiding as they thought it looked better if both people are wearing the same thing. So there is some degree of choice. Most of the people I talked to about dress said they wear the robes because they want to, they are cool and comfortable. I also think that it marks them as "nationals," --those who share in the wealth of the oil. (Nationals make up about 25% of the population and are distinguished from "residents" "workers" or "expatriates" who can neither own land or stay in the country after they reach the age of 65).

With the exception of the women from Singapore, women were modestly dressed in professional clothing. The women from Singapore wore short, sleeveless dresses with slits in the skirt. The clothing of some of the visitors had a costume quality to them as colors and styles were not always matching. The nationals and the members of the royal family wore the long black robes and the scarves that covered the hair and face.

### **Gender Impressions**

The men were soft-spoken, intense, and appeared more interested more in talk and ideas than in gender displays. I think that they were as eager to have our respect as they were to



show respect to us. I felt that judgments were made on the basis of ideas and presentation and not on surface appearances. Many of the men told me how talented the women of the UAE are. Both in private and during the conference, men stated that women are taking advantage of the education and graduating in higher numbers than the men. They were very smart and they seem to be accepted for their talent. I talked to a number of different women and all of them said that they have a sense of being accepted and respected in their occupation. The educational opportunities for women are good as the women seem to value learning more than the men do and are eager to work.

I found the women articulate, self-confident and ready and willing to engage in discussions about educational issues. What I read, mostly from the "first lady", one of the presidents wives who has taken a real leadership role is that women have always contributed to the earlier fishing and farming economy of the emirates. Today 90% of female children are in school and 70% of university students are female. Both the President and his wife support the right of women to work as long as children are attended and they are given the proper respect in their work. The President's wife has set up the Women's Federation which helps ensure a strong self-concept for women and encourages educational opportunities and development.

The constitution reads "Equality and social justice, ensuring safety and security and equality of opportunity for all citizens share be the pillars of the Society" This is read to include women equally with men. They also have a law which ensures equal pay for equal work. Women can take a month and half of paid maternity leave. They are also entitled to paid leave of 4 months if their spouse dies. Both men and women can take up to 2 months of paid leave to take a sick child or parent overseas for treatment.

In 1980, women made up 5.3% of the workforce  
In 1990 women made up 16% of the workforce  
40% of the civil service jobs are held by women

Because women are kept separate from men, they need women doctors, women bankers, women teachers, even women bodyguards. Women do not always work after marriage and many women are reluctant to pursue jobs where they will have to be intact with men. There are women banks, education is segregated and most health care is attended to by women.

## **Education**

I get the sense that education is very important in the Emirates and they are working hard to create a good system of schools. The first school was opened in 1952. They spend about 17% of their budget on education—more than any other Gulf state. Teacher student ratio is about 1 to 16 with less students per teacher as the student get older. (1 to 13 in secondary). They have free and compulsory gender-separate school for all citizens from k to university. There are about 600 government schools and 350 private schools.

### **Government Schools**

Kindergarten-- 2 years from 4-5 yrs

#### **General Education**

Primary 6 yrs from 6-11

Intermediate 3 yrs 12-14

Secondary 3 years from 15-17



Students learn in Arabic and are homogeneously grouped with tracks for gifted and special education. About 70% of kids are in school. The kids of the Expatriates (those from other countries) go to the private schools. The government oversees these schools and assures that some instruction is given in Islamic Education and Arabic.

Now there is a big difference in the society between citizens (about 25%) and expatriates (workers from other countries). I am not sure when I hear figures if they refer only to the citizens children or the expatriates as well.

They have an education problem at the higher levels of education. They are graduating many more women than men. The men (citizens) have little incentive to learn as they will inherit oil money and will never NEED to work. The women seem to be enjoying the freedom and option to learn and are very dedicated students. The adult men I talked to raved about the intellectual skills of girls and moaned about the detachment and problems of trying to educate the boys.

In 1968 there was 80% illiteracy, now there is only 16%.

### **Education and Employment**

The oil wealth has made it unnecessary for men to work. This is causing a problem as the boys are not interested in education as they will inherit what they need. The president and the adults are trying to find ways to encourage the work ethic without much success. There are many expatriates that are willing to work hard for low wages. This ready workforce discourages the nationals from working.

Women who are taking advantage of education are not interested in men who are not. So there was a dropping rate of marriage among women. To change this trend, the government gives young couples 20,000 when they marry and there are places that can be used without cost for marriage ceremonies.

UAE is one of the richest countries in the world. I was told by one person that the oil money is divided in thirds, one-third goes to fund the royal families (about 60 groups of immediate family), one-third goes for government services and one-third goes directly to nationals. Boys get money when they get married, when they finish college, get married, have children.. (If men finish college, someone said that they are given a million dollars and a car.) But even without college, there seems to be enough income that makes it unnecessary for them to work. I don't know what women get, but I did learn that they have a serious education problem in that girls are learning and boys are not taking school seriously. The problem seems to be that they feel if they are not going to work, they did not need to be educated. This is causing societal wide problems as girls do not want to marry men who are not as educated as they are and so nationals not finding marriage partners. I have not found out how national status is determined and what happens when nationals marry outsiders. I do know that they saw this as a very serious problem

### **Government**

The country of UAE was formed in 1971 with the discovery of oil. At that time there were only about 200,000 people and the emirates had been under the loose control of Britain. This ended and they became a country with a government structure that is a blend of new and old traditions. They have an "elected" president and vice president with 5 year terms. However they are reelected every time and when the vice president died, he was replaced



by his son. The president is referred to as "his highness" and his family is the royal family. In 1996 they celebrated the "30 year anniversary of the accession of HH Sheikh Zayed Bin Sultan Al Nahyan as ruler of Abu Dhabi." There is also a Supreme Council of rulers, a parliamentary Cabinet or Council of Ministers, and a judiciary system with a Supreme Court.

The president selects a "Prime Minister, currently the vice president. The Prime Minister picks the ministers from the Emirates based on population, 8 ministers from larger regions and 4 from the smallest.

Each Emirate also has a local government. Abu Dhabi is headed by a Crown Prince which I think is the son or brother of the president. ( I was not sure as the names are very long and I am sure where in the string to look for the family name.) I do know that the tribal leaders (the sheikhs) of the Emirates were make the leaders and they have, as I understand it, given up their power in some areas to be a part of the federation. In the people had direct access to their Sheikh and this is seen as participatory democracy without any need for "western forms of voting." With increasing size, the direct access is to now to the federal ministries. But even now, the crown prince or ruler (or members of his family) hold the traditional "majlis" where people come and express their concerns or problems to their leaders. This traditional forms have a strong commitment to consensus, discussion and direct democracy.

### **Population and Health**

Currently about 2 and half million people. Their life expectancy has increased from 53 to 71 years and birthrate mortality decreased from 145 to 16 per 1000 births. There is complete free health care for all nationals and subsidized care for expatriates

### **City and Climate**

The downtown has the look of a multi-story skyscrapers with lots of reflective glass. The only difference from Austin Texas, for example is that on the non-windowed surfaces there are some repeating patterns of more traditional Arabic Art.

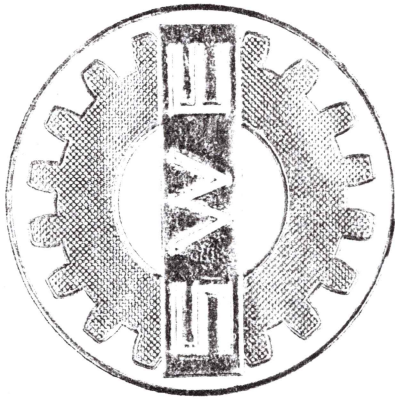
The temperature was HOT, 107F! But they are trying to reclaim the desert and alter the climate by planting lots of and lots of trees. The 82% of the water comes from desalination plants and all of the recycled water is used for landscaping. Sprinklers go for long periods of time each day.

### **MISC**

They have a free local phone service and calls that I made to the UAE never appeared on my phone bill.



# Society of Women Engineers



## CERTIFICATE OF MERIT

for Highest Honor  
in Science and Mathematics

PRESENTED TO

**MEGAN RIEL**

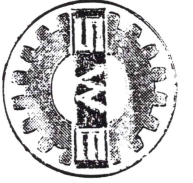
IN RECOGNITION OF THREE YEARS' EXCELLENCE  
IN THESE COURSES

May 24, 1998  
DATE

Kathleen Haynes  
SECTION PRESIDENT



# Society of Women Engineers



## CERTIFICATE OF MERIT

for Highest Honor  
in Science and Mathematics  
PRESENTED TO

**MEGAN RIEL**

IN RECOGNITION OF THREE YEARS' EXCELLENCE  
IN THESE COURSES

DATE May 29, 1998

Kathleen Higgins  
SECTION PRESIDENT

*Not used for  
reference*



Twins 40<sup>th</sup> celeb.

HERE IS A STORY I HAVE TO UNFOLD,  
ABOUT TWO LITTLE TWINS WHO ARE NOW QUITE OLD.  
IT STARTED IN A HOUSE SO GRAND AND SO BIG,  
THAT ALREADY HELD SIX WILD CRAZY KIDS.  
BUT NOT HAPPY WITH ALL OF THOSE HUNGRY MONSTERS IN NEED,  
THEY HAD TO BRING HOME, TWO MORE MOUTHS TO FEED.  
WITH THE TWO OLDEST GIRLS, AGE 6 AND AGE 8,  
THAT'S A BABY FOR EACH ONE, WOW DIDN'T WE RATE.  
SO MARGARET GOT ELIZABETH, AND ROBERTA WAS MINE,  
TO FEED AND TO TEND TO, TILL IT WAS BEDTIME.  
HOW MANY KIDS GOT THERE OWN LITTLE DOLLS  
THAT MADE SO MUCH NOISE AND SPIT UP AND ALL,  
THEY GREW RATHER QUICKLY AND SOON THEY WERE WALKING,  
AND NOT LONG AFTER THAT THEY WERE DEFINITELY TALKING.  
AND SOON THEY DECIDED THEIR NAMES DIDN'T FIT,  
SO THEY CHOSE THEMSELVES NEW ONES, THAT FOREVER WOULD STICK  
ELIZABETH WAS TOO FORMAL AND TOO HARD TO GET OUT.  
SO E-LISTY WAS BETTER AND EASIER TO SHOUT.  
ROBERTA BIRD, MY DAD USED TO CALL HER,  
THEN SOON JUST PLAIN BIRD, AS SHE STARTED GETTING TALLER.  
SOON SCHOOL TIME COMMENCED, AND AT ROLL CALL YOU'D HEAR,  
THAT BIRDY AND LISTY WERE NOW ENROLLED HERE.

.64

- 3.52 →  
4.64

+ 23.84



TIME MARCHES ON AND THE TWINS WOULD GET OLDER  
STILL LEANING HEAVILY ON BOTH OF OUR SHOULDERS.

WE HAD THEM AROUND US AND ALWAYS IN TOW,  
IT SEEMED THEY WERE WITH US WHEREVER WE'D GO.

BUT THEY DID FINALLY GROW UP, AND GO OUT ON THEIR OWN  
THOUGH AT LEAST ONCE A DAY, THEY'RE IN CONTACT BY PHONE.

AFTER ST. VINCENT'S THEY MOVED ON TO UNI.

NOT HAVING GROWN TALL, THEY WERE STILL QUITE PUNY.

BUT TOGETHER THEY PACKED QUITE A ONE TWO PUNCH,  
RULING OVER THE SCHOOL YARD, ESPECIALLY AT LUNCH.

IT WAS HERE BIRD MET BRUCE, ALTHOUGH A CLASS BEHIND,  
BUT EVEN AFTER GRADUATION, HE WAS STILL ON HER MIND.

AND IT WASN'T MUCH LATER IN JULIAN AT CAMP,

WHERE THE TWINS WORKED THEIR SUMMERS,

(THOSE COLD MORNINGS WERE DAMP).

LISY MET BOB AND SOON THEY WERE TWO

WITH THE BIRD AND THE BRUCE THERE WAS ALWAYS STUFF TO DO.

SO AS TWINS OFTEN SHARE, ALL THE BEST OF THEIR LIVES

THEY BOTH SAID YES, THE SAME YEAR , AND BECAME WIVES.

SO BRUCE AND BOB LEARNED THAT THEY'D ALWAYS BE CLOSE  
CAUSE WHEN YOU MARRY TWINS, YOU TAKE ON THE WHOLE BOAT

SOON THERE'D BE KIDS STARTING WITH CRAIG AND MICHELLE,

SO LISY HAD KRISTY TO I'M HAPPY TO TELL.

3.5<sup>v</sup>

4.8



SOON THERE WERE CURTIS, SCOTT AND DAVID TOO,  
WITH SWEET LITTLE ANNIE THE LAST ONE TO BREAK THROUGH.

ABOUT THIS TIME THE TWINS DECIDED TO DO  
A SHOPPING RETREAT EACH SATURDAY TOO.

SO THE DAD'S GOT THE KIDS, "WHY THEY'LL LOOK AFTER EACH OTHER."

"BESIDES WE MUST GO AND TAKE CARE OF OUR MOTHER."

"WE HELP HER TO SHOP IT'S OUR JOB, WE CAN'T SQUANDER,  
THE TIME THAT WE NEED IN PARKWAY PLAZA TO WANDER."

SO AS TIME GOES ON AND THOSE TWO KIDS GET OLDER,  
I'VE WATCHED THEM EVOLVE INTO PEOPLE, MUCH BOLDER.

LISTY, WHO STARTED OUT TEACHING SOME MATH  
HAS BEGUN AGAIN, TAKING ON A NEW PATH.

I'M SURE THAT THE STUDENTS SHE TOUCHES WILL START  
TO LEARN SOME OF HER TRICKS TO TEACH MATH FROM THE HEART.

FOR LISTY HER GIFT, IS TO MAKE LEARNING MORE FUN  
SO THAT HER STUDENTS LEARN LOTS BY THE TIME SHE IS DONE.

SHE IS WISE, SHE IS KIND, SHE IS FIRM, SHE IS TOUGH

BUT HER STUDENTS CAN'T SEEM TO BE WITH HER ENOUGH.

"PLEASE DON'T LEAVE SCRIPPS, YOU'D HEAR THEM ALL SAY"  
AND THEIR PARENTS EVEN MISSED YOU WHEN YOU WENT AWAY.

BUT I'M SURE YOUR NEW JOB IS A BOON TO THOSE WHO  
WISH TO TAKE UP WHERE YOU LEFT, AND TO DO WHAT YOU DO.

SO NEVER FORGET ALL THE LIVES YOU HAVE TOUCHED,

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4.8

THEY ARE ALWAYS TELLING ME THAT THEY LEARNED SO MUCH...  
AND BIRDY HAS GIFTS, ALMOST TOO MANY TO MENTION!  
PLAYING WITH SNAILS IN THE CLASS BEFORE LUNCHEON.  
KINDERGARTEN TEACHERS HAVE MORE PATIENCE THAN MOST  
OF THIS I CAN ATTEST TO ABOUT BIRDY I BOAST.  
I HEAR FROM THOSE PARENTS WHO WISH THEY COULD SASS  
HEADMASTER BOB TO PUT THEIR KIDS IN HER CLASS.  
SHE IS THE MASTER, THE HEART OF THE SCHOOL  
YOU CAN TELL THAT I LOVE HER 'CAUSE SHE'S REALLY COOL.  
SHE'S ALWAYS THE ONE TO PUT OTHERS AHEAD  
SHE GIVES OF HERSELF BUT BY 8, SHE'S IN BED.  
YOU CAN TELL THAT THESE KIDS ARE SPECIAL TO ME  
I SEE WHAT THEY DO , WHO THEY ARE, WHAT THEY BE.  
I WATCHED THEM GROW OLDER I'VE SEEN THEM BECOME  
MUCH STRONGER TOGETHER THAN THEY WERE AS ONE.  
TO HAVE SOMEONE SO CLOSE IS A GIFT THAT THEY SHARE  
AND YOU CAN TELL THAT FOR EACH OTHER, THEY WILL ALWAYS BE THERE.  
I ADMIRE THEIR HUSBANDS THE BRUSTER AND BOB,  
WHO TOOK ON THE TWINSHIP AS PART OF THE JOB.  
THE WAY THAT THEY TAKE ON ALL THE KIDS AS A PART  
OF THE OATH THAT THEY TOOK SOMEWHERE IN THE START,  
SO MY HAT'S OFF TO ALL NOT JUST THE TWINS ON THIS DAY,  
FOR ALL YOU'VE ACCOMPLISHED, FOR THE PARTS YOU ALL PLAY.



TIME PASSING MEANS NOTHING IF THE EVENTS THAT TRANSPIRE

LEAVE LITTLE TO KINDLE AND NOTHING TO FIRE.

WHEN SEEING THE PLACE IN YOUR LIFE WHERE YOU ARE  
YOU MUST LOOK AT THE SPACE, NOT THE YEARS THAT GO FAR.

IT'S NOT THAT YOU'RE OLDER THAN SOMEBODIES MOTHER,  
IT'S THAT YOU'VE BEEN ABLE TO TOUCH THE LIFE OF ANOTHER.  
AND IF IN THAT TIME, YOU'VE TOUCHED MORE LIVES THAN MOST,  
YOU HAVE MUCH MORE THAN MANY, WHO YOU OFTEN HEAR BOAST.

SO FOR ALL OF THE TIMES YOU'VE REACHED OUT TO THOSE,

WHO NEEDED YOU THEN, AND ARE GRATEFUL I KNOW,

FOR ALL OF THE CHILDREN WHOSE LIVES ARE MORE FULL,

BECAUSE OF THE TEACHER WHO TAUGHT THEM THE RULES,

FOR ALL OF YOUR FRIENDS THAT ARE HERE TO ROAST YOU,

IN THEIR BEHALF, I'D LIKE TO TOAST YOU,

MORE LIFE, MORE LOVE, MORE FULLNESS, MORE HEALTH,

MORE SUNSHINE, MORE JOY AND AT LEAST SOME MORE WEALTH,

MAY YOU CONTINUE TO GROW AS YOU HAVE IN THE PAST

MAY THIS BIRTHDAY PARTY BE ONE HECK OF A BLAST

AND AS YOU TURN FORTY MY ADVICE IS MOST CLEAR,

NEVER, NO NEVER ADMIT TO MORE YEARS.

LOVE AND KISSES,

YOUR OLDER AND WISER SISTER,

FRANCIE

5-25-98

Dear Grandma and  
Grandpa,

Thank you for coming to  
my 1<sup>st</sup> Communion. I  
liked seeing you at the  
reception. Was the food  
good? Thank you for the  
\$25<sup>00</sup> check. I will put  
it in the bank. I had a  
really good day, and I  
hope you did too. It  
was nice to see you  
at Grandparents' Day.

Love,  
Frank ToTo Riel



May 26, 1998

Dear Edith and Frank,

Last month I addressed this envelope to you - and that's as far as I got. I make it a point to stay busy, and sometimes I think I overdo the busy schedule!

You are very kind to put me on your mailing list for the RFNL. It's a great way for me to keep up with all your family.

It's been a great pleasure for me to have your Anne as a penpal. She's an adorable person, a most interesting writer. She also has a serious side. It's always a red letter day when I hear from Anne.

May has been a very hot month here - in the 90's, low to high. Can you imagine what July and August will be like if this trend continues!

Everything is fine here. School will be over soon. Susan's Alex graduates from Kindergarten, Debbie's Andy enters Divinity School in the fall and Scott will graduate next May. Love to all,  
Eloise