

1988

Dear Descendants,

The purpose of this letter has nothing to do with genealogy. But since I wish I'd paid more attention to the things my parents told me about their lives, that's why I'm writing this, in my 70th year, before my mind becomes feeble or my memory cloudy. Perhaps one of you children or grandchildren will want to add to this somewhere down the line. It should be fun.

I was born Dorine Sarah Louise Diehl. The Dorine was inspired by the book "Doreen" by Edna Lyall, and my mother changed the Irish spelling to be more compatible with the very German surname. When I read the book years, later I thought the heroine was sweet enough to cause diabetes, but I didn't object to her name. The Sarah and Louise were the names of my two grandmothers, and my mother wanted to honor both. Because of this large mouthful of name plus the married name later, my daughters got short first names and no middle one. Still on the subject of names, I discovered my birth certificate had been made out "Dorina" and promptly had that changed.

My parents were Jennie Deichman and Christian Herman Diehl. She was born and reared in Shumway, he in Montrose, two tiny little towns near a not much larger one, Effingham, Illinois. At the turn of the century Effingham boasted a small school, Austen College, where my parents met.

My mother's parents were much older than she, and although there were many children born, she only knew two brothers. Some had been stillborn, some died in infancy, some had "gone

west" before she was born so she only knew Charles, almost 20 years older, and Peter, 10 years older. I vaguely remember where my grandparents lived after retirement. Judging only from the house, I would say there was not much wealth. However, it could have been just the austere thrift that was typical of the times. At any rate there were music lessons, a love of reading, and a thirst for education in the three members I know about. Peter was a very successful judge in Oklahoma, Charles a business man in Oregon, and I'll talk more about Grandma as I go on. Which church denomination dictated their standards of behavior I'm not sure, but there was no card playing, no dancing, and the Sabbath was kept very holy! There was a family summit conference before my first Sunday afternoon movie.

My father's family were also farmers, 5 children -- Elizabeth, John, Chris, Lena and George. The children were made to work very hard, and I remember my father's stories about slipping out with his fiddle after evening chores, playing for barn dances until very late, and then having to be up and out in the fields early in the morning. Chris, my father, was the only one who got higher education. Years later it was the Diehl family who had big get-togethers with card games and beer drinking and joke telling and fun. Uncle Peter Deichman took my mother to the movies one time and when an actress lit a cigarette he shouted, "Can't they have any decent people in this show?" Very different backgrounds in some respects.



Somewhere between attending Austen College and receiving his M.D. from College of Physicians and Surgeons (merged later with Washington University of St. Louis), Chris worked as a ward attendant at Anna (Illinois) State Hospital for the Insane. He also spent one summer "practicing" medicine on the Indians in Oklahoma Territory before it became a state and medical certification requirements were established.

My parents were married in 1907, about a year before he finished medical school. She worked in the office at Barnes Hospital during that year. He graduated as class valedictorian; she wrote the class poem. He opened his first office in St. Louis and with the first sniff of prosperity bought a car. A very big deal for that time!!!!

The fact that my mother attended Austen College in Effingham was uncommon because college education for women wasn't the usual thing. Shortly after my father opened his first office, she studied law "for fun" and was admitted to the legal Bar of the State of Missouri. Very much out of sequence I'll mention here that when she died at age 87 she was in the midst of studying Ancient Religions for a paper she was to give to her church group.

A baby boy was stillborn, but the subject was so painful I don't know any details. During these years between graduation and my birth there occurred what she called tuberculosis of the bone, and my mother's arms were terribly scarred and had little strength. I also heard stories about the fact that it's common to have women fall in love with their doctors, and my good

looking father was no exception. My mother looked amused as she told me this so I gather there was no reciprocity.

Private practice was left behind and they moved back to Anna, Illinois, to be on the medical staff where he had once been an attendant. It was here that he developed an abiding interest in psychiatry and here that they conceived me although I was born in the neighboring town of Carbondale where there was a larger hospital for my caesarian delivery.

The chronology is hazy, but while I was still an infant they were transferred to Dunning State Hospital and Elgin State Hospital. These are places very near Chicago. At some point Dad left the State Department of Welfare (mental institutions) and went with Public Health which involved traveling all over the state to trace the origin of epidemics, assist in diagnoses, speak to groups on preventative medicine, etc. Whether the decision was incidental to or because of my mother's having to return to Effingham to help care for her aging parents I'm not sure. At any rate, my first clear memories are of living in a small house in Effingham occupied by my mother, grandmother, me, and my father when he wasn't traveling. I have no recollection of the grandfather who, so I heard, adored me.

My grandmother was totally deaf and carried an ear trumpet -- a black metal affair shaped something like a short saxophone. My high childish voice was either unpleasant or painful, so our communication was limited to her shouting "Don't" about many things I wanted to do.



One "memory" may be only that I heard it so often. My mother and I were in a store where children's furniture was on display. I picked up a little red chair and refused to put it down. She didn't have the strength (or probably the inclination) to spank me so I carried it -- paid for -- all the way home. A few years later this sort of thing became, "Do I have to tell your father when he comes home?" Frequently I was torn between anticipating the always forthcoming present and dreading the forthcoming spanking with the razor strap.

Another "memory" which may be mine is about the Christmas when I requested a doll and a bell. The doll was there Christmas morning but -- no bell. This simple oversight was the reason I never believed in Santa Claus. I couldn't understand why he left my gift in the bedroom closet, and my mother was too 101% honest to give an explanation that would have satisfied me at age 3 or 4. Oddly enough, for years we went to Uncle George's farm where the "Easter Bunny" came to hide eggs out on the lawn while all the children were in a darkened bedroom waiting to be called. The honesty factor must be that I asked about Santa Claus but did not ask specifically about the Easter Bunny. Hence no lie was involved.

One memory that I know is mine has to do with packing for a trip to the Ozarks. One container was a heavy wooden foot locker affair which closed by being nailed down and later pried open. At the time of this memory it had been placed on a table, lid open, with the big nails pointing through ready to be hammered down. As my mother was placing something inside, the lid fell down on her shoulders and she was unable to move.

She screamed, my father rushed in and lifted the lid with the impaling nail, and took her in his arms and kissed her. This overt show of affection was new and strange and never forgotten. Adults kissed! From my experience, I thought it was only done to children.

During my fourth year we moved to a big house on the other side of Effingham, and I suddenly became a Lutheran instead of a Methodist -- the closer church. I can still remember the first Christmas program where there were songs and "speeches" by each child followed by bags of candy taken from under the tree.

My speech:

You think I cannot say much  
Because I am so small.  
But in my way  
I can say  
Merry Christmas to you all!

It was probably the fact that I was built like a cube and declaiming "because I am so small" that brought on the wide smiles of the congregation -- not my delivery.

Since my father traveled a lot and the hired girl -- what maids were called in 1922 -- did the house work, my mother was able to devote a great deal of time to me. She dressed me, played a game of "feeding the birdie" which means she spoon fed me, and we read books together almost constantly.

Unfortunately I was not learning to socialize. Once when I came home saying the kids wouldn't play with me, my mother took me by the hand back to the group and sweetly asked if I



couldn't be included. The coup de grace was "Goodbye, darling." That did not turn into a lovely afternoon of fun and frolic!

The September of my fifth year my mother worked on the principal and the superintendant of schools and got me admitted to the first grade. Thanks to her training I was miles ahead of the others in reading, so in a few weeks I was a 5 year old second grader. The reading skill held up well, the arithmetic was a challenge, and cutting the paper tulips etc. for art left me frustrated with my lack of manual dexterity. During recess the sophisticated 7-year-olds frequently whispered things that I was too young to hear. This insecurity probably brought on the smiling, trying to please everybody, rarely expressing an opposing opinion type person I fear I turned out to be. Of course, the other extreme of being too sure of oneself is not attractive either.

Somewhere in this period I started attending the Presbyterian Sunday School. I also went to the local Convent 3 times a week for piano lessons, theory, and rhythm band. The piano lessons didn't get off the ground too well because Sister always played the new piece which gave me the tune and the tempo, and my ear took it from there without bothering to look at the music. From a very early age I had been able to pick out "Twinkle, twinkle --", "Farmer in the Dell" and all the tunes with simple melodies. Scales and exercises I found boring. The theory class was a workbook deal where we drew treble and bass clefs, placed "C" on the staff etc. etc. etc. But those uninteresting 2 sessions were made worth while by the



third session where I pounded my little heart out on the triangle and tambourine, manipulated castanets, and took my turn on all the available "instruments" while Sister played the piano for our time keeping. That was fun!!! In future years I had brief exposure to the violin and saxophone with the same results -- simple tunes by ear and NO practice. How I wish I'd been pushed harder. But mother's darling got her way!

When I was almost through the fifth grade my father left Public Health and went back to Welfare. We moved to Lincoln, Illinois, where he was Superintendant of the Lincoln State School and Colony for the Feeble Minded. Instead of walking the few blocks to school with neighbor children, I was driven by chauffeur in a 7-passenger Studebaker with a couple of other Institution children. Instead of eating in a large kitchen with my mother, grandmother, and the hired girl, the meals were sent up to our apartment by dumbwaiter from a central kitchen and served by members of our domestic staff. When we ate alone, which was rare because there were state VIP's dropping in frequently, I got to step on the bell under my mother's chair which rang the buzzer in the private kitchen so our courses would be removed. Among the fringe benefits for me was inheriting a spider monkey from the previous Superintendant's son. The monkey's name was Jocko and he lived in the garage where Ralph, the chauffeur, fed him and cleaned his cage. Jocko hated me and only looked at me over his shoulder as he held his little mirror and gave me rear-view glares. A German Police puppy sent me by a VIP visitor was far more satisfactory. Although he lived with Ralph, I brought him to



the apartment when we weren't entertaining and had a wonderful time playing with him.

On Wednesday nights there were patient-dances and on Thursday, employee-dances. Two other staff children and I attended every Wednesday and an hour or so on Thursday and danced every dance. The music was furnished by the music teacher (my very short term violin teacher) who played the piano and patients on the other instruments. The drummer, so I was told, had a very low IQ but was a time keeping pro.

There were many things that the patients did very well. In the Occupational Therapy Dept. there were hooked rugs, painted pictures, embroidered linens etc. etc. that drew much praise. There were patient entertainments directed by staff. The minstrel shows in particular were excellent; the singing, dancing, comedy -- great. These, of course, were the higher IQ's, many approaching 100. On the grounds there were also imbeciles and idiots who bordered on vegetable state. It was a fine training ground for me on the subjects of retardation and of tolerance.

School went well with the exception of seventh grade sewing class. We were to learn to hem a dishtowel, make a patch, a button hole, a nightgown, and an apron for cooking class the next year. It took me months to complete a satisfactory hem, patch, and button hole. There was a "style show" for the nightgowns, and the teacher and I were the judges because I couldn't get in to mine. The apron barely got off the drawing board and was never finished!



When state administrations go from Republican to Democrat, so go the jobs considered political plums. We left Lincoln and went back to Effingham where Dad entered private practice for the first time in memory, and I entered 8th grade. I was vaguely aware of the Stock Market Crash which didn't help matters. School was going well because I was with classmates whom I'd known before, and I was crazy about my teachers.

Then calamity struck -- FIRE!!!! I was awakened in the middle of the night and told to grab my clothes and school books, was handed my mother's purse and my father's "little black bag" and ordered to go across the street to the neighbors' house. Nobody noticed until later that I carried my shoes and walked through the January snow in house slippers. My father got the car out of the attached garage and was outdoors talking to the firemen. My mother and I were watching out the neighbor's window and things seemed to be calming down. Then WHOOSH, and the entire house burned to the ground. My mother and grandmother went to the hospital -- for shock, I suppose -- and I went to a classmate's house, and that's where we stayed for a week or so until Dad rounded up a house and some furniture so we could live as a family again. A few months later I graduated from the 8th grade and even (thanks to my mother) won the Current Events medal.

Since business matters weren't discussed in my presence, I'm not sure why, but that summer we moved to a small town in Illinois just 19 miles from St. Louis, and I had to make new friends again. My father put up a red brick building with a store and office space on the ground floor and an apartment for



us above. Roxana/Wood River (adjoining towns) was an industrial community with a very distinctive odor from the Shell and Standard Oil Refineries. In the vicinity there was also a tannery with the worst smell imaginable!!!

My home was always open to friends and there were lots of pinochle games, rolling up the rug for dancing, and just studying together. My mother could handle any subject in high school and that probably helped my popularity. Freshman year was terrific. But that summer I got sent to a Convent in St. Louis. My mother worked in the office with my father. We had no housekeeper at the time, and a thirteen year old needed more supervision. I hated to leave because I had helped the Presbyterians build a tennis court and had hoped to use it a lot that summer.

The first day at the convent I fell in with the "wild" crowd -- we slipped food into our pockets at the table and hid it beside our beds for a late snack. After lights had been out for a short period, we shook the covers like crazy - on signal - so the noise would cover the sound of our chewing carrot sticks, potato chips, etc. Sister came flying in, turned on the lights, and took 3 of us out of the dorm. Fifty-seven years later I can remember sitting by myself on an uncomfortable chair in a dimly lit hall where the votive candle under a statue created flickering shadows, and I was terrified! It was probably less than an hour, but dreadful.

In those days it was necessary to cover the head for attending Mass, and we girls had lace veil affairs that we tied on. Although a non-Catholic, I went to Mass every morning and

was very impressed with the trappings of the religion -- particularly the veil wearing.

A lot of attention was paid to our sitting correctly, table manners, etc., but there was no attention paid to not being boy crazy. I became a sort of heroine with my stories -- mostly true, some embellished -- of boys coming to my house for cards, dancing, and studying. Many of the full time girls were single parented and, with rare weekend exceptions, there all the time. Their behavior to, from and in the city library -- our only unescorted excursion off grounds -- gave new meaning to "anything in pants." I wonder how those flirts made out when they left for college!

I went home for school in the fall, but after a couple of weeks my mother became ill and I went to another convent in Alton, Illinois, not too far from home. Again I was going to Mass every morning at 6:00 A.M. The first class each day was Religion, and each class was begun with a prayer -- some in Latin. I really became interested in Catholicism -- not just the trappings -- and developed a heroine worship for Sister Patricia, the English teacher.

One of my chores was to accompany another girl to Father Smith's house for her harp lesson twice a week. I got to plunk around a bit, but Father had no interest in a rank beginner as an ongoing thing so -- no lessons. Instead we all had to choose a craft of some sort, and I chose embroidery -- dismal failure!

The convent was on a fair sized acreage with a huge garden and prolific chickens. My enthusiasm for Catholicism dampened



during Lent because rules about meat eating were very strict in 1932. I hoped never to see another egg by the time Lent was over.

One singular accomplishment was popping out with chicken pox on a day my father was unable to come and get me. I slept in Sister Aurelia's room in the Cloistered part of the convent. (She slept in the dorm with us.) It was absolutely nothing but a sparsely furnished room, but NOBODY else had ever been down that hall.

Back to public school, familiar faces (thank goodness) and a great happy senior year. Keeping me busy were National Forensic Society competitor for Oration, school paper staff, school play, and I ended up being valedictorian. There were only 88 in the class so these things didn't mean much except to create a fantastic year.

Although the Depression kept many kids from college, my best friend, Georgia Hodges, and I were signed up for the University of Illinois. My father had taught me to drive our Hupmobile by yelling directions and sitting with hands poised over the emergency brake between the driver and passenger seats. The summer before college he offered me the use of the car during afternoon office hours and his imposing list of bad debts -- \$2000 worth. This was a small fortune, and I could have all I collected for clothes for school. Wow!! What an opportunity, and guess who was going to be "best dressed" at the U. of I.! Unfortunately I didn't collect a cent, and if I'd had any money I'd probably have donated it to the hard luck story tellers. That summer of 1934 the really poor were on

"relief" which meant the doctor was paid something; the poor but honest brought us apples and chickens and did our laundry and maintenance work; the dead beats were the ones on my "college clothes" list and my father was too kind to send a real collector after them. When my mother was sick I used to get pressed into office duty, and I remember the rates: \$2.00 office call, \$3.00 house call, \$35 for prenatal, delivery, and postnatal care -- and Dad dispensed his own drugs as well as being personal escort and chauffeur to Barnes Hospital in St. Louis when specialist care was indicated.

It was one of those poor but honest patients who drove Georgia and me to Urbana -- 16 years old and on our own at last. Not only were we young, we were both naive and provincial and felt the need to show how "mature" and "sophisticated" we had suddenly become. Anything alcoholic was totally foreign to me because there had been legal Prohibition for most of my growing up years. Furthermore, my father thought that a doctor who got a reputation for drinking might as well take in his shingle. I had one friend whose mother smoked cigarettes occasionally -- my only contact. So to show my "maturity" I started drinking beer (legal now) and smoking almost as soon as I got unpacked. At least I was honest and admitted to both on my first visit home. Dad gave me a speech about the danger to my heart and a stern warning not to inhale if I insisted on being "one of the crowd." My mother couldn't understand why a nice girl would choose to do something definitely associated with being a bad girl, so I rarely smoked in her presence for years to come.



When I was a little kid, going to the Ozarks property was neither a big deal nor a bore. I just went where my parents went without question. Now that my father was in private practice and could choose his own schedule, he really indulged his love for the Ozarks as well as his comfort there. He had built a house over the mouth of a cave and spring, and a generator pumped pure cave air into the house. For a hay fever sufferer this was pure heaven. For a college girl it was quite the opposite. So for three summers while the folks avoided ragweed pollen, I went to summer school.

My original plan was to study medicine because I thought it would please my father. It didn't take long to figure out that this involved more science than I could handle and more years than I wanted of study. My friend Georgia, who discovered boys while I was discovering cigarettes and beer, had a wonderful idea. In the School of Commerce the classes were almost all men and the "neatest" boys on Campus. So in my sophomore year I was up to my eyebrows in accounting, economics, business and finance, transportation, management -- and scared to death I would flunk out. Georgia did flunk out.

In summer school I had taken a sociology course and found it an easy A. I found out that all Soc. courses were bull-slinger courses as opposed to facts and figures, so farewell to Commerce School. I fear that concern for my fellow man was only second to my love of bull-slinger courses and easy A's, but there were many interesting courses in both Sociology and Psychology, my minor.



I pledged a sorority, Zeta Tau Alpha. In my junior year I took the fraternity pin of an S.A.E., which was one of the top fraternities, and the young man wore a letter sweater for football besides. Ben Cantwell was a physical education major, and I suddenly found myself playing tennis, golf, archery golf, walking miles and doing all the active things that cost very little money. He operated on a very low budget.

The fall semester after Ben graduated was the greatest semester of all. I was "being true" and running around with a good friend who was also "being true." He was extremely active on campus so we didn't miss a single college affair. There was no pressure of saying the right thing and hoping his friends would like me and all the silliness of most dating. We just had a ball -- particularly in the foyer of the sorority house where the dates did their goodnight smooching while we did a parody including unpleasant noises and slobbering sounds. And then, with all those summer school hours, I finished in January, 1938, and went to Chicago to seek my fortune.

In school we had so much confidence instilled in us we sort of expected and wouldn't have doubted our ability to handle the equivalent of being President of General Motors. I became suspicious when I saw the salutatorian of the U. of I. class of '37 working as boat caller for ten cent rides in Lincoln Park.

I shared an apartment with a sorority sister. We had a pullman kitchen, living room with a pull-down bed, and bath for \$42.00 a month. Every Sunday night we each put \$2.00 in a bowl which was for food, soap, etc. for a week. If one of us had a



dinner date, she brought home a doggy bag for the other. Each night I bought a Chicago Tribune and we studied the Want Ads, circled the possibilities, and Buddy told me how to get there. Regardless of how early I arrived, there was always a long line ahead of me -- still Depression time.

The first "success" was because I was a refined young lady and spoke well. I was chosen to get people to let "our company" enlarge and color some favorite snapshot; we only asked that it be displayed prominently and that friends would be told where this wonderful color work was done. I reported on Monday for training.

The procedure was to go to an apartment building, ring buzzers until somebody answered, mumble our name through the speaker and be admitted. Inside, the trainer gave the pitch and we picked up quite a few pictures before lunch. After lunch we got as far as the beginning of the spiel when the lady said, "Leave this minute or I call the police." It turned out "our company" had taken the only snapshot of her child taken before her death some years back. "When I couldn't buy your \$20.00 picture frame, I didn't even get my picture back." Needless to say, I almost fainted, finished my day with the trainer, and never saw them again.

The next "success" was saleslady in a bakery a couple of blocks from the apartment. I job hunted mornings and sold bakery goods from 2:00 til 10:00 in the evening.

A friend of my Dad had given me a letter of introduction to the head of the Chicago Health Department. As job hunting wasn't going as well as I had hoped, my resolve for being

totally independent melted and I decided to try my letter for a foot in the door to a job. When I arrived at Dr. Bundeson's office I was told he was at the Mayor's office at City Hall. With no qualms whatsoever, I went to Mayor Kelly's office, said I was there to see Dr. Bundeson, and the girl buzzed me in -- past all the flags, armed policemen, secretaries, and people who were waiting to see the Mayor. The two men couldn't have been more courteous in spite of what must have been complete amazement. Dr. Bundeson told me he might be able to arrange for some volunteer work until appropriations were set up for the following year. Since this didn't sound like the way to make a fortune, I declined and left the two Chicago V.I.P.'s pushing their teeth back in no doubt.

Dad also suggested I list Chicago people as personal references, but I would have to get permission. A friend of my father from early childhood was Dr. Bert Caldwell, Executive Secretary of the American Hospital Association. I called at his office to ask about the use of his name and walked away sometime later with a job starting April 1, 1938, for \$85 a month, and the understanding that I would go to night school immediately to take typing and shorthand.

So far I had been able to live off the savings from my monthly school allowance supplemented by my bakery earnings. The thought of \$85 a month coming into my life started me dreaming big dreams. My roommate, Buddy, was making \$16 a week as a salesgirl/decorator and she was sailing to Europe that summer with her mother. So with careful management, who knew what I could accomplish!