

December, 1998

Dear Jonathan, Kathryn, Corrie, Anna, Jamie,
Sarah, and Andrew,

For those of you old enough to remember your Mother's love, and how she cherished your accomplishments, those memories will always be a blessing. They will be a source of encouragement and strength as you maintain and enhance your Christian heritage. For you that are younger you will all have, and will feel that love through the care, encouragement and love she installed in the older three - those who have nurtured you in love and wonderful care.

Few can possibly understand the devastation her death has brought to you. She was a presence irreplaceable, a void, yet she encouraged in you a character - strong, directed, loving of life, one another, and other people - a family bond and Closeness that few people or families can ever know. So - rejoice in the blessings that are yours today; rejoice in the family you have been given.

I knew your Mother as a very passionate, loving and lively person. She loved her husband and family deeply. Few husbands ever enjoyed the love, confidence, and admiration that Kerry had for your Dad.

She loved life and helped everyone who sought her acquaintance, to be lifted up and enjoy a brighter day.

Kerry and I loved one another in our family roles, yet there seemed to exist an adversarial in some of our family relationships. It probably started at a time when Kerry and Mark were dating. Mark was home during the summer vacation. We went to Table Rock Lake to visit friends, and Kerry was

(over)

invited to join us, if she could. As I understood, her father disapproved of her driving alone from Little Rock to the Branson area. She fussed and her father gave in. She thought her Dad was the "bad guy," and I thought he was the "good guy." Had she been my daughter, I would not have wanted her to go either. She and Mark wanted to get married while Sophomores or Juniors at Harding. We wanted them to wait till they had graduated. It was generally a clash of two different generations of opinionated people. Your Mother was a very focused person. That was one of her charms, but it did create conflict from time to time.

Your Mother had a generous heart, always willing to share her home or what she had, to help others. Her home was open to most everyone, and always for her extended family. We enjoyed her openness and desire to include us in many of your family activities.

Kerry was a special person. We share your loss, as we miss her very much, and are privileged that she came into our family. We are better because of her presence.

Sincerely,
Grandad

To The Trotter Kids:

As with many other women, Kerry & I had children together. Kara is a couple of month older than the twins & Thomas is only week older than Audrey, so of course I was able to spend quality time with Kerry in the nursing mothers room at Church.

She was so refreshing to talk to about child rearing issues because she had all ready gotten pass buying the best, listening to everyone else advise on what you had to do & just feeling guilty about ~~to~~ not being able to do it all.

Kara would cry & cling to me when I would leave her at Bible Class & then would frustrate me so. Kerry said; "Lyndi this 24yo old, is he suppose to not want to leave his mom, that means you're doing something right at home."

I agonized over moving Kara out of her crib at 2 to make room for Thomas. She said, "Don't rush Kara to something that may cause her insecurity, put Thomas in a basket next to you. He won't know the difference."

Kerry was always ready to listen & not overbear her advice, but give it in a sharing way. I too desire someday to be a mentor for other mothers & remember that it's not the time to brag on myself, but to share hard lessons.

Every family has to look to God for their family values & goals, but Kerry taught me (Especially at Flockridge) as a Christian we have one thing in common. We love our children & our goal is to the best we can & give them back to God.

Mark & Cynde Tranz

1-20-98

Dear Jonathon & Kathryn:

What a nice thing to do.
I am sorry I have not
responded to this sooner.
I am sorry to say that
I did not know your
Mother very well. It
always was good to see
her & the love shine that
she had for her family.
I know she was very
proud of all of you
& thankful for being
so blessed. She loved
God with all of her being
& passed that along to
her children. Always be
grateful to God for your
Father & Mother. You

have been blessed to be their
children.

Love You.
Pat Dalton

121 Pebble Brook Drive
West Columbia, SC 29170
November 17, 1998

Dear Jonathan and Kathryn,

Your request brought me to tears as I contemplated the sweet spirit and indomitable courage with which you are facing the great loss of your mother. Your perfect acceptance of your circumstances is an inspiration to those of us of whom God has asked much less.

I am happy to share my memories of your mom, as I have reviewed them often in my own mind in these past months as I've often thought of her and prayed for all of you.

I have two connections with your family. The first is that your mom and dad and my husband and I all were students at Harding College at the same time. I even met your dad at Harding the first semester I was there, sitting behind him in what I believe was Dr. Muncy's American History class. Your dad and my future husband were both in *TM7*, and they were better acquainted. Even though your mom and I never met directly, everybody at Harding knew a little something about most everyone else there, so I knew who your mom was. But we never had the opportunity to be friends.

The next contact we had with your parents was several years later. We were living in Ft. Scott, Kansas. One evening we got a call from your dad. He was practicing dentistry in Coffeyville, Kansas, and wanted to know if they could stop through on their way to Kansas City to see family. They stayed for about an hour. Jonathan was probably about two years old. We spent most of the time showing your folks the 13 room Victorian house we had naively purchased. It was the first time your mom and I ever talked one on one. But we felt like old friends, having known who each other was at Harding, sharing the common history of college life and *TM7*, and being sisters in Christ.

Years went by. Then, at our second *AT7* Conference in 1992 in Knoxville, Tennessee, on the last day and after the last session of the conference, we saw your parents! We couldn't believe that, out of the 13,000 people there, we actually ran into someone we

knew! They told us about other Harding friends they knew who were in ATI. It was very encouraging for us, as we knew almost no one. We wanted to go out to lunch and talk more, but your mom was a few months pregnant with someone (who turned out to be Anna), and she was anxious to start the long drive back and see you older children.

The next year, we accidentally found your parents the first night of the 1993 ATI Conference. We went out to dinner together the second evening. That is when I felt I really began to know your mom. We discovered we two couples had a lot in common. We both desired a close, Spirit-filled walk with God. We struggled with reconciling our spiritual beliefs with some of the ATI curriculum. We discovered we had the same pattern of spiritual gifts. Both men were mercies, and both women were prophets. That especially made me feel a bond with your mom! We could really relate to each other from that oft-times lonely position! I saw the fire of your mom's spirit as she talked of things that frustrated her. I saw her passion for truth and justice.. I saw her commitment to the vision God had given us both for our families.

It was a very affirming and encouraging discussion for me, and I appreciated how well your parents respected the balance they gave each other. We talked so much, we were late getting back to our session. But that was good, because Jeff and Vickie Schlender, also from Harding, recognized Alan when we walked in, and we were able to re-establish that friendship that year. One evening during the conference the three families were able to go out to eat together.. The bond was sweet and we savored it, marveling at how similarly the Lord was leading us when we were in such different circumstances and locations.

I remember your dad and mom talking about Anna that evening. She was about eight months old at the time. They said she was so amiable and easy going that there were people at church who didn't even know she belonged to them, because someone else always had her. Your dad felt it refreshing not to worry about pushing her to achieve, but just enjoying her as she was. Anna fell asleep in his arms as we talked.

The next year we didn't see your parents at the conference -- the twins had just been born. What exciting news! I talked to your mom on the phone when we were passing through Kansas City in July of that year visiting family. Your parents had just gotten in from buying new baby beds. Your mom was breathless, because after several months in bed, her stamina was not up to normal yet. She told me about the deliveries, and I savored the opportunity to connect. I really admired the task she had undertaken--trying to home school you older ones while caring for twins!

Over the next few years, we occasionally exchanged Christmas cards, or called to see if we'd meet at the conference. The Schlenders or MacReynolds always gave us an update while we were in Knoxville -- about the latest pregnancy or new baby. I marveled at your mom's stamina and unswerving faith in God to provide each day's needs. Jonathan and your dad came to the conference once or twice, and we enjoyed seeing them, always being struck by what a mature, godly young man Jonathan was.

Then came the year when we heard about your mom's cancer. We understood it was detected early and was being well monitored, so we expected a full recovery. Months later we talked to the Schlenders shortly after the delivery of your little brother. It was exciting for your parents to have another boy! We prayed for the treatments she would now undergo.

The next news was a call from Vickie Schlender about the coma. We were shocked. We hadn't known the treatment was unsuccessful. We prayed fervently. Our church prayed. We heard about your mom waking up from the coma when we were at Harding for the TNT Reunion. Everyone there rejoiced with you, and we continued to pray and pray and pray. Then we heard what we didn't want to accept. We had to let her go. She was gone. We prayed for all of you, and we cried -- frequently and much. And we prayed some more.

We've heard of the grace with which you have borne it all, and we thank God. We still cry and pray and wonder about how you're doing. That is part of why it was so great to get your letter and see the beauty of your spirits, and how you are channeling your grief to do a very positive thing. You are your mother's greatest tribute. Her godliness has produced fruit in you that is evident to us all, and her death has made all of you and your situation more widely known, resulting in great praise and glory to God. We are so proud of you, and so proud of your mom and dad. You are her epistles, and your mom's unswerving commitment to giving you the best spiritual training possible has born great fruit. It is not easy to thwart our culture and its promotion of small families, public education, and the selfish pursuit of pleasure. I'm sure I would have benefitted greatly by talking to your mom about it all. Once Vickie Schlender quoted your mom, in those busy years with four in diapers, as saying, "I tell my older ones that changing diapers is their ministry for now." What a great perspective!

I hope these thoughts will add a piece to the picture of your mom that you are trying to build for your siblings. I pray God will bless you all with an undying memory of your mom's love, commitment, devotion, and vision for each one of you. She planted. God will

send others to water, and I'm sure He will give the increase!

You are an encouragement to us. I have your family picture out of the Christian Chronicle on our refrigerator to prompt us to continue praying for you. We love you and would like to get to know each one of you!

Sincerely, in Christ,

P.S. Mark, I know Jonathon and Kathryn have many demands on them. If you ever feel they need a break, we would be honored to host a visit from one or both of them, so that we could minister to them for a time.

(Valerie Harris)

December, 1998

Dear Jonathan, Kathryn, Corrie, Anna,
Sarah, Jamie, Audrey, and Andrew,

You asked us to write our memories of
your mother for your Memory Book.

Where shall I begin? She was a
very spiritual person, a wonderful daughter-
in-law to me, and a mother who loved her
family dearly.

Kerry was interested in other people -
their joys, their sorrows, their lives. When we'd
come out to your house, she was full of questions
about our lives, what we'd been doing, how we
were faring.

One Sunday afternoon your family came to visit
us, and "Granny Great" happened to be there also; we
had taken care of her that afternoon. Your mother said,
"Betty, you know you will always have a place at our
house if anything happens to Jim." That made me feel
very good - to know that.

As you know, Kerry loved to make blueberry
muffins, and she would have them, with
coffee, for us when we'd come to visit. The thing
of it was, however, she loved the blueberries, so she
always added frozen berries to the ones that came
in the package - and that made them so good.

When visiting our house, Kerry almost always
took out one or more albums of pictures we
stored in an end table. She loved to look at
the early pictures of Mark and his brothers as they

were growing up, pictures of our vacations, pictures we had used on our Christmas letter through the years.

Many of her questions to us, early in their marriage, was how I had managed four little boys who were so close together. Later on she had almost the same situation with Anna, Sarah, Jamie, and Audrey, and of course, later, Andrew. You - Jonathan, Kathryn, and Cowrie, were such a help to her.

Your mother loved picnics with family and friends out in your yard. Many times friends would bring their children - with swimsuits - and they would spend a great deal of time in the wading pool - or the "water tank," which was lots of fun. She also loved that Sunrise Service in the fall - where friends would gather around the fire - sing songs, read Scriptures, have prayers - and eat doughnuts. That was really a special time for all of us.

Kerry was a very special person, and I hope that through these letters of memories, you will always have a sense of how special she was to many many people, and especially to me.

May God bless all of you!

Loads of love,

your Grandmom

CH

Received from Annette
Dalton 2/01

On Losing Your Mom

We're different,
those of us whose
mothers have
gone and left us to
fend for ourselves

BY ANNA QUINDLEN

I needed my mother again the other day. This time it was a fairly serious matter, a question from a doctor about some symptoms she'd had when she was sick. Most of the time what I want is more trivial: the name of the family that lived next door to us on Kenwood Road; the fate of that black wool party dress with the killer neckline; curiosity about whether her tears, which kept all five of us in line, were real or calculated. "When Mom cried, man," my brother Bob said not long ago. "That's what I really couldn't handle."

I've needed my mother many, many times over the last 25 years, but she has never been there, except in my mind, where she tells me to buy quality, keep my hair off my face, and give my father the benefit of the doubt. When Bob's wife was dying of cancer several years ago, we made her make videos and audiotapes for her children because our little sister, who was 8 when our mother died, cannot remember what Prudence Marguerite Pantano Quindlen looked or sounded like. I remember. I remember everything. I was 19; I was older. I am older now by five years than my mother was when she died. Her death was the making of me.

We're different, those of us whose mothers have gone and left us to fend for



ourselves. For that is what we wind up doing, no matter how loving our fathers, family, or friends: On some deep emotional level, we fend for ourselves. The simplest way to say it is also the most true—we are the world's grown-ups. "No girl becomes a woman until her mother dies" goes an old proverb. No matter what others may see, or what she herself thinks, we believe down to our bones that our mother's greatest calling was us; with that fulcrum to our lives gone, we become adults overnight.

This makes some of us hard, sometimes, and driven too. We perform for a theater of empty seats: Look at me, Ma, I did okay, I'm okay, I'll get by. It was no surprise to me to discover that Madonna's mother died when she was a child. Rosie O'Donnell used to watch the old talk

shows, Mike Douglas, Merv Griffin, with her mom, before her mom died when she was 10. I don't know Rosie O'Donnell, but I bet I know whom she thinks of each time she steps through those curtains and hears that applause. She hears the sound of two hands clapping, the two that are not there, the only ones that count.

The funny thing is that the loss also makes us good and happy people in some ways, in love with life because we know how fleeting, and how precious, it can be. We have our priorities straight. When I quit a great job as a columnist because I wanted to take up another great job as a novelist, lots of people couldn't understand why I would give up a public forum for a quieter, more private one. The answer was simple. I wanted to. But I knew to do what I wanted, when I

wanted, because I know that today is the only certainty I possess. I'm pretty sure I'll be a woman who will die without regrets. My mother left me that, along with her engagement ring. Someone stole it when they burglarized my apartment when I was 25. At the time I was enraged, bereft, inconsolable. Of course, none of that had to do with the ring.

There's just a hole in my heart, and nothing to plug it. The truth is that there is no one, ever, in your life like your mother. And that's true even if she's a bad mother, punitive, critical. Your mother is the mirror, the point from which you always begin. It is who you are. When the English princes, those poor boys, were walking through the quiet streets of London last summer, behind their mother's coffin, the commentators talked about how she had brought emotion and warmth into their lives in a way their father had not, could not. But that was not the nature of just Diana; it is the nature of many of our families. What a father brings, in most cases, is more like a relationship, less like an atmosphere. A mother is the bedrock of existence, the foundation of the house. Certainly it is true that my father was nearly as lost without his wife as we were without our mother. The difference is that for the widower there is an antidote called marriage. The motherless are motherless for life.

Sometimes, missing my mother, I lose track of whether I am missing a human being or a way of life. Our mothers only slowly become people to us, as we grow older and they do too. But for years and years they are both more and less than that. First they are warmth and food and an inchoate sense of security, then cheerleader and overseer, then finally listener, perhaps even friend. Our family was a wheel; she was the hub. Without her we fell apart, a collection of sticks. We've knit back together, some of us, as adults, but it has never really been the same.

There is something primitive about this love, and this loss. What does it mean to sleep beneath the heart of another person, safe and warm, for almost a year? No scientist can truly say. But it must have some visceral power that we cannot really understand, only intuit. She was the only person who ever loved me unconditionally. That was her great gift too. It has been the bulwark of my life that has

made everything else possible. When I can see myself refracted through the rosy lens of my mother's love, it melts the self-doubt and brings to life the tiny sanctuary lamp of confidence.

Since my mother, by almost any objective measure I possess today, was a good mother, I try every day to wake up and be like her for the sake of my children. This is her third, perhaps most important gift to me. And the gift our children give us, of course, is the feeling that we are no longer a dead end, that while our line is truncated in one direction, it now extends in another. That is why some of the ice inside us melts and breaks when we who have lost our mothers become mothers ourselves. My daughter looks so much like my mother; that is a great joy to me.

"Oh, Mommy, I feel so sorry for you, that your mommy is dead," she said to me one night, leaning into me, her head against my heart. For a moment I thought to say, It was a long time ago, or I don't mind so much anymore, or I get along just fine, one of those things we say when we pretend that what we feel doesn't matter. Finally I just said, "Thank you."

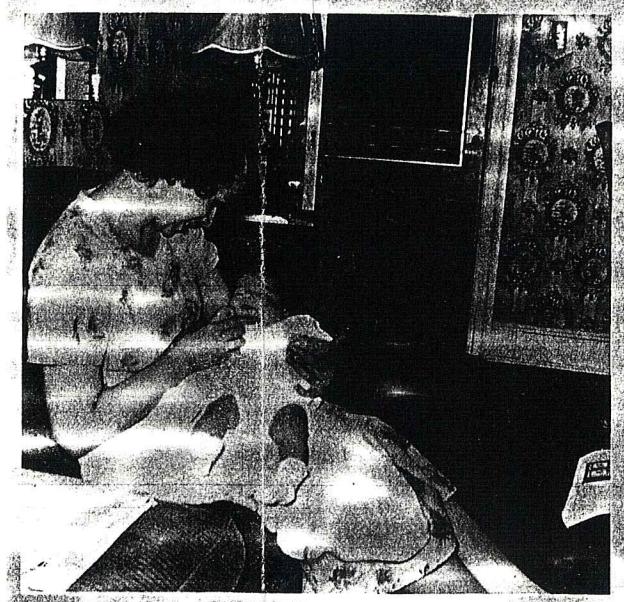
My children may not really understand what it feels like, what happened to me. And I hope they never will. Oh, I know someday they will lose their mother, as I did mine, but I hope it is when they are safely cushioned by years of love, by spouses and children and the knowledge that they have learned everything I have to teach. None of us had that, when our mother died. We were too young to really

know her and too young to learn to live without her. One of the hardest things for my brother, when his wife was dying, was knowing firsthand what her loss would mean to their daughters, one a toddler, the other a teenager. But Bob knew, knew from experience.

I suspect my children know instinctively that losing me would be, in some fashion, like losing their own lives. It would be like coming home to find a hole in the ground where the house once stood, to look into the hole and ask, Where in the world do I go now? When I watched the Princess of Wales's sons walking with their heads down along her funeral route, I wanted to reach through the screen and touch their shoulders, to say, "It will be all right." But I know that is a lie. I know even when things are finally all right for them, they will never really be all right again.

It's been 25 years, and I can even joke about it now, in a macabre way. I refuse to go and see what I call "dead mother movies"; I can watch *Terms of Endearment* when it comes on television until Debra Winger goes to the hospital, and then I'm out of there. I go to my mother's grave only when I attend family funerals. I don't see the point; she's not in there. She's in me, the way I was once in her, only not as tangible. Inspirational books would have us believe that is sufficient, such utter nonsense that my lip curls just writing the words. Because here is the final thing about having your mother die: You never, ever, get used to it. You want her back. Or at least I do.

It never would have occurred to me, sitting in her living room 25 years ago, trying to decide what to do with her clothes, that all these years later I would learn what I've learned from her death, about being a good person and a good mother. It never would have occurred to me that it would make me so strong that I would go far and fast and not crash beneath the weight of some of the pressures that came with that. And it never in a million years would have occurred to me that 25 years later I would be sitting here writing about all this, the dishwasher and the dryer running, my three wonderful children at school, with tears running down onto my sweater as I realize that I would trade all I've learned for what I lost so long ago. ★



Above, the author with her mother in 1952, at home in Philadelphia; opposite page, mother and daughter in 1959, on the day of the author's First Communion.

Response to article

Dear Anna, (3-01)

My name is Corrie Trotter and I am 12 years old. I have 7 brothers and sisters who ages range from 20-3 years old. I recently read your article, On Losing Your Mother. I lost my mother 2 years ago. I was ten years old. I do agree with you on the fact that my mother lives in me and that there is no other person that can replace her. But I didn't agree with you on the fact that it will never me OK or it will never be all right. For me it will be. I will go on and find joy in other things. There is for me some one that can fill the hole that you said no one could fill. His name is Jesus Christ. He may not be a touchable, huggable, worldly person but he can give you the joy and the love that no one else can.

I can also find joy in the fact that I will see my mother again in heaven. I don't know if you are a Christian and I don't know if you believe in God, but I urge you to find the joy that I have found. It has only been 2 years since my mom died but I know I am going to be Ok because of the love that my God gives me. Yes I will always miss my mother and yes my heart will always ache for her but I don't have to live my life in despair because of it. Well I just thought I would share some things that have really helped me over the past two years. I hope you find your comfort.

Sincerely
Corrie Trotter

August 23, 1999

Dear Jonathan and Kathryn,

I must begin this letter with an apology for writing it at such a late date. I never felt worthy to relate anything about your mother. While I looked to her for guidance with Sam, and greatly appreciated the gift of the book, To Train Up A Child, I never felt as though I could add anything of significance until now.

I heard this analogy while watching a program about a young boy (a twin) who was discovered to have cancer and had only a couple of weeks to live unless treatment was successful. He asked his mother what ~~the~~ heaven would be like. She replied that no one knew, but

told him that when he and his brother were in her tummy, they were very comfortable and were very reluctant to leave; they were two weeks late being born. Finally, the doctor gave her something so they would be born and be part of the family. She asked her son if he wanted to go back into her tummy now. Of course his answer was an emphatic, "No." She asked him why, and he replied that he liked it where he was, things were comfortable and familiar (such as when in the womb).

His mother then explained that this is how (leaving the familiar) heaven is. We are reluctant to go there, but once there, we would never wish to leave and come back here. Soon she and his brothers and father, etc. would be

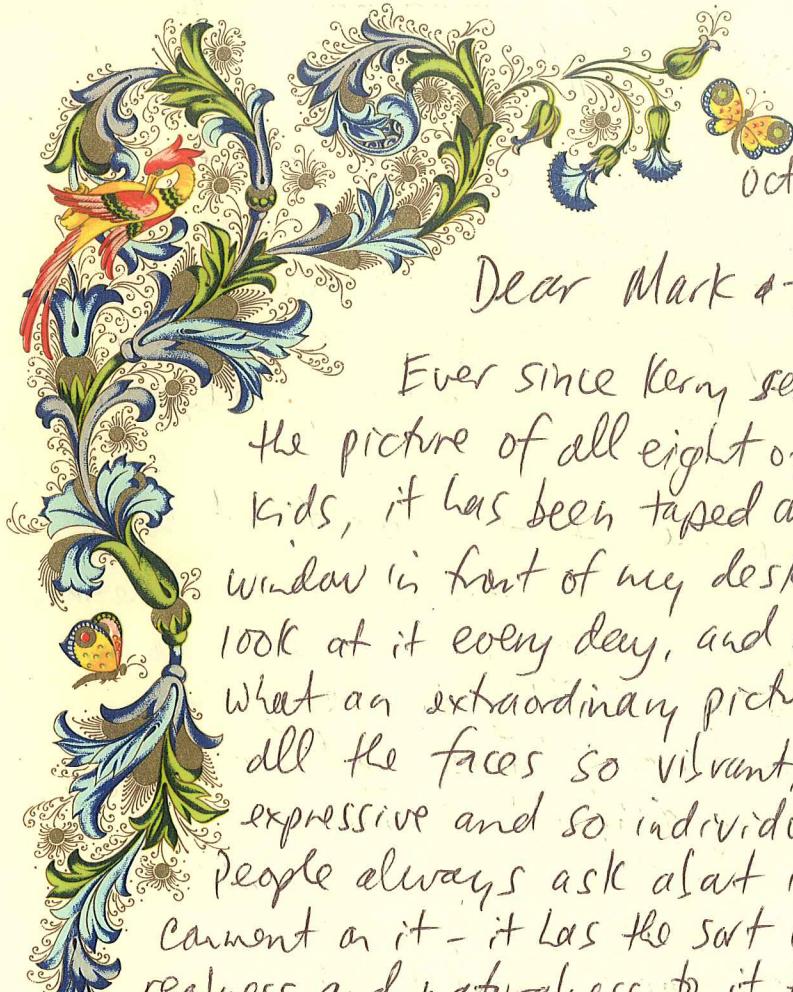
with him and none of them would want to return to their previous "state."

I feel as though as much as your mother wants to be with you, she does not want to leave where she is and is waiting for her family to join her, which in "God's time" will be very soon.

I pray that I have added something worthy to your lives and have not done anything to cause any further further pain, yet joy in the knowledge that we are all looking to the day when we shall ~~#~~ see the Lord at that great reunion.

With deep respect and love,

Kathy Petering



Oct. 10, 1999

Dear Mark & Trotter Family,

Ever since Kerri sent me the picture of all eight of her kids, it has been taped on the window in front of my desk, so I look at it every day, and marvel at what an extraordinary picture it is - all the faces so vibrant, so expressive and so individualized. People always ask about it and comment on it - it has the sort of realness and naturalness to it that studio photographs almost never do... I can't explain exactly why it has taken me so long to write you and tell you how much Kerri meant to me - I've thought about it dozens of times, but somehow couldn't quite bring myself to do it. There are a very few people in life that can touch you deeply, and even affect the way you think about the world and your place in it, even though you may only have a few personal interactions.

with her over the years, and are not in regular contact. Keray's incredible openness to life, and her commitment to letting her faith in God guide her life choices, big and small, were so rare and precious that I have continued to marvel at her life, and speculate about the relevance of her example to my own life struggles, periodically ever since I came out to visit during college, and especially in the last 18 months, since we spoke on the phone. I will never forget those several conversations we had, and the single-minded, single-hearted way Keray parsed her soul into her life and family, struggling to live by her convictions on a daily basis, yet never letting her beliefs rigidify into empty dogma.

I know how painful the thought of leaving to leave you all was to her, but I also remember how much she was comforted by the fact that she had lived a life so filled with love, and that she could envision a future in which her family would be able to come to terms with losing her, while maintaining their own sense of wholeness, joy & connectedness in their lives.

You are all in my thoughts often - each time I look at your picture I try to imagine that you are continuing to heal and find strength in each other.

Love, Alison Morantz

The first time I met your
mommy was at a Sunday School
class that our family had been
asked to speak to about "Courtship".
Your mommy gave me a testimony
of your family and how you lived
for Christ. She and I were kindred
spirits in that we are both prophet
motivated and always discern

situations as being right or wrong
black or white.

Your daddy/sister Catherine, and
brother Jonathon took us out to
lunch that day.

Anne Ryan

I think it was November 1994
(1995?) when your mommy and
Laurie Bracken drove over to a Crafts
Fair that our daughters Heather and
Catharine were participating in.
It was just like your mommy to
show support and encouragement.
I remember we sweat

into an empty stairwell and
visited — most of all we
prayed !!

June Ryan

Your mommy was the ultimate encourager. She would call long distance to share stories of giving our sons' book on "Courtship" away. She would call just when I needed a word of encouragement from the

Lord. She was the Lord's
vessel used preciously
by Him.

Grace Ryan