

To my sister, Carol from Walt

September 7, 2002

What to say to you? Where to start? "You were born into a special family in a special place in a special time". Let me recall it for you.

Starting with the first day of the year 1932, we were; Mother and Dad, big brother Baxter, the twins Helen and I (then Clara Louise and Junior) and young Bobbie.

We lived in a wooden frame house on a sandy hill facing away from the ocean in the little town of Hermosa Beach. Lots of friends and places to run and explore and play. The beach and surf were only a few blocks away.

It wasn't all play. There were chores for each of us and there was school. Baxter, 15, a freshman in high school; We twins, 11, in the 7<sup>th</sup> grade; Bobbie, almost 9, in the 4<sup>th</sup> grade. School was very important. We all did very well in school but Dad expected us to do even better. He would often drill us at home in spelling or arithmetic to make sure.

In the evenings after dishes (there were always dishes), we would gather around our upright piano and sing at the top of our voices as Mother played and sang. We knew the words to all of the songs.

Dad had no regular job so he worked at whatever he could find. Sometimes his commercial art, his carpentry, even a stint on the city trash truck. A friend owned a single-engine airplane and was outfitting it for use in Alaska. He hired Dad to assist him. This led to each of us getting a short ride in his plane; Mother with 2 of us on 1 trip, then Dad with the other 2. Wow!

Mother and Dad were no strangers at our schools. Mother was involved in all the local PTA activities and took over as president when the original president stepped aside. As president, Mother became the delegate to the State PTA Conference in San Francisco. Her travel was by steamship from San Pedro. We all went to San Pedro to wave and yell "bon voyage".

Upon her return, it was time to organize the annual PTA fund-raising event. This year it would be a "Minstrel Show" with a cast of parents and teachers made up in black face doing humorous routines. It was a popular form of stage show in those days, but now? No way! Dad was an "end man" swapping canned jokes with other end men at the other side of the stage. Mother was one of about six other of what Dad called "good-sized women" dressed as domestics doing a song and dance routine. Uncle Tom drove down from Los Angeles to take part. In his clear tenor voice, he sang the soulful "Chlo-e". We children did our part with advance ticket sales and cheering at the two performances. It was a big success.

Soon school was over and it was time to prepare for the Fourth of July. Fireworks had been very important to Dad when he was a boy and he had lost none of it. The louder the better! We all loved it.

Next came the 1932 Olympics. We participated by touring specially-built Olympic Village where the athletes lived and by talking to some of them.

Mother had completed her term as president of the PTA without anyone there knowing that she was expecting. She kept it a secret from us as long as she could. Baxter and Helen probably knew much sooner than I did.

You were born at home. (where else?) On the morning of your birth, we had been sent to play at friends' homes. Finally, Dad came by to tell us that we had a new baby sister named Carol Ann. We ran home! You were so small and so red! Mother was happy. We were happy. Dad strutted. I recall telling everyone I saw that "we have a new baby at our house".

Hermosa was a small town. News traveled fast. The ladies of the PTA were shocked! Many years later Mother told us that the lady who had been the PTA president had stepped aside because of her own pregnancy. What a twist We were now a family of seven. You were our new toy, our new joy!

Fast forward to 2002:

Now you can see that for those mostly-secret out-of-sight months back in 1932 you were being programmed for an appreciation of school, music, travel, sports and family. You had heard those songs. You had gone to those schools. You had taken that airplane ride. You had been on that steamship. You had been in that minstrel show. You had heard the fireworks. You had gone to the Olympics. You were being prepared to become you. It is no wonder that you turned out so well!

Things have changed. The home where you were born is gone. Those schools are gone. That airplane is gone. That steamship is gone. Those Olympics are gone. Minstrel shows, too. No one sings "Chlo-e" anymore.

Of the original six at the start of 1932, only Helen and I remain. What the two of us have left from that year is a lot of fond memories and a lovely lady who was then our brand-new baby sister. We are delighted to honor you and share you with the world on this memorable 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of your birth.

Congratulations! Let's sing some happy songs. Where are those fireworks?

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Walt', with a long horizontal flourish underneath.