

Thank you

Dear Granny,

8/4/98

I wanted to express my many thanks for attending my graduation and your generous and thoughtful gifts. It was wonderful to share that special event with you. I'm so glad that you could make the trip.

I'm well into the George Mercer Dawson <sup>book</sup> and am eager to talk about it with you when I finish. I used the money you gave me to buy another book and on my trip to California.

I just got back and had a wonderful drive down to Los Angeles. Highlights,

included the Redwood Forest, the Monterey Aquarium, Independence Day in San Francisco, and visiting lots of friends from Wesleyan <sup>UNIV.</sup>

Now I am figuring out what's next. I am heading to Boston this week to look for work. I'll keep you updated on my progress.

I hope this letter finds you enjoying your summer. Thanks again for your encouragement and generosity.

Much love,

Michael

GRANNY

Letter from Michael Van Nim  
after his graduation 1998.



PARIS

*Giuseppe Sestini*

Dear Granny - We flew into London & then took an all night bus to Edinburgh. The castle was amazing - but it was cold! We got a ride up to St. Andrews and visited a friend. It was so beautiful there! It made me want to study abroad there. We then went back to London to see Nicole's (my old roommate's) parents. We saw everything possible in only two days! It was a jam packed week end! That Monday we took the Eurostar to Paris thru the Chunnel. It's amazing how fast the train goes! Paris was practically perfect. We saw so much in only five days! The joys of being a energetic college student!

Photo by Andrea Pistolesi

when I get back to school! Notre Dame was just amazing, even at night! We hiked up the Eiffel - what a view! I hope everything is going well! I love you & I miss you! d, Kathryn



Mrs. Anne Byers



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100 vedute di  
*Venezia*



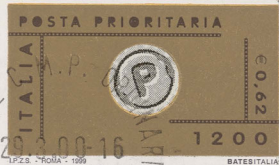
P.S. I can't wait to see you  
Venezia in June!

Dear granny - Venice was so beautiful! I really enjoyed my time there, but it was so easy to get lost! I did take a gondola ride with my friends. Every turn was a picture, it was so much fun! I really loved St. Mark's Basilica, it is such an amazing church! The mosaics are so impressive. I hope that you are doing well!

Love, Kathryn

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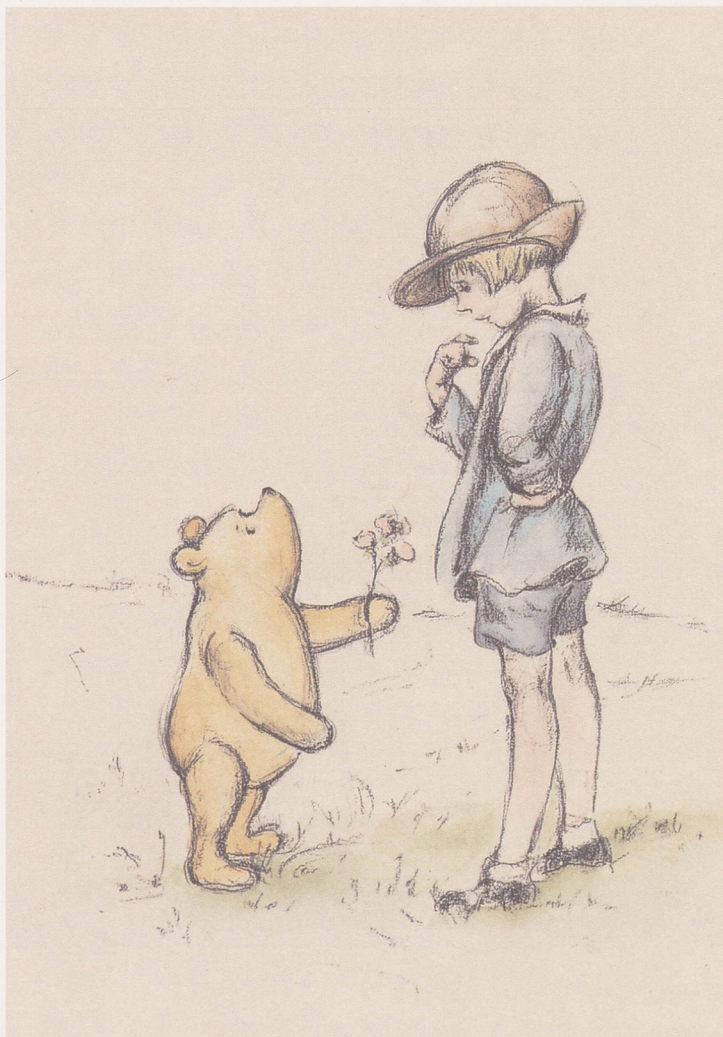
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**PAR AVION**





Dear granny,

Thank you so much for the nice card you sent me. I was overjoyed to get two pieces of mail from my granny! It made my day. Thank you also for the touching things you said about Grandma. It was not an easy passing, however I was blessed to be home with every one and I was able to say good bye.

My honors thesis is due this week and I am pretty stressed out with all the pressure. I planned very well, so that I am basically done almost a week before the due date! I'm not quite sure how I managed it all so well, but I am glad that I did.

I am giving the graduate school my decision next week. I thought that I could make a better decision with my brain less occupied with my thesis. I am leaning towards accepting, but I want to just make sure. It's such a big decision and a

real honor to be asked. I visited the university with Michael last week and I had a good time. The people were really nice and the campus was beautiful. However, it is in the middle of nowhere in Pennsylvania! I'll have to get used to the farms if I end up going. 😊 They have their own creamery on the campus and the ice cream was really good! I'll let you know my final decision when I tell them.

In a couple of weeks I am going to a psychology conference in Minneapolis to present some of our results in my lab with two good friends of mine. It's my next big project after my thesis and I am getting excited about it.

I hope that you are doing well! I am looking forward to seeing you in May. I love you granny!

Thinking of you,  
Kathryn



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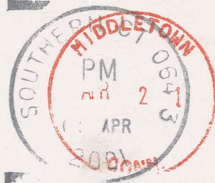
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**V**

Kathryn Van Nimwegen  
Box 5278  
222 Church Street  
Middletown CT 06459



MRS. A. V. BYERS  
1510 RIVERSIDE DR. #1202  
OTTAWA, ONTARIO K1G 4X5  
CANADA

Granddaughter of  
Anne Winslow-Spragge Byers  
from Wesleyan University Ct. U.S.A.

00101/2201



Dear Granny,

01/25/01  
New York

Thank you so much for your most generous Christmas gift. I haven't decided how to spend it, but I like your suggestion of tickets to a performance (and Nikki would certainly like that as well since she would probably accompany me!).

It was wonderful to see everyone in Seattle for Christmas. As you know, a lot has been going on for both better and worse, so it was particularly important to be together this year. The death of my Grandma was tough for us all. I was lucky enough to get to spend some good time with her while I was home (I returned to New York several days before she died). Being far from home & family, I was a little unsure of what to do so I went to the church where she and my grandfather were married in New York City over 70 years ago. If you can believe it, they had an original certificate from the occasion with everybody's information and signatures!

My plans to go to Boston for New Year's Eve were interrupted by a winter storm that dropped about a foot of snow in ↪

- 2 -

Manhattan. We got another few inches of snow this past weekend. With all of the snow, I've been wishing that I brought my cross-country skis back from Seattle with me.

As you probably know, my parents are now in Pakistan on another one of their trips. My dad told me that for this trip they were bringing close to 50 boxes of supplies. Surely a lot of careful planning is involved.

I've been keeping a pretty demanding schedule in the New Year. Though nothing too exciting, mainly logging many hours at the office. Don't worry, I still manage to see Nikki and friends. In fact, this weekend's Superbowl Football game here in the States should prove to be a tension for some of my closest Wesleyan friends.

That's it from my end for now. I will continue to keep in touch over the computer and look forward to seeing you again soon (perhaps at Kathryn's graduation, if not before).

Love, Michael

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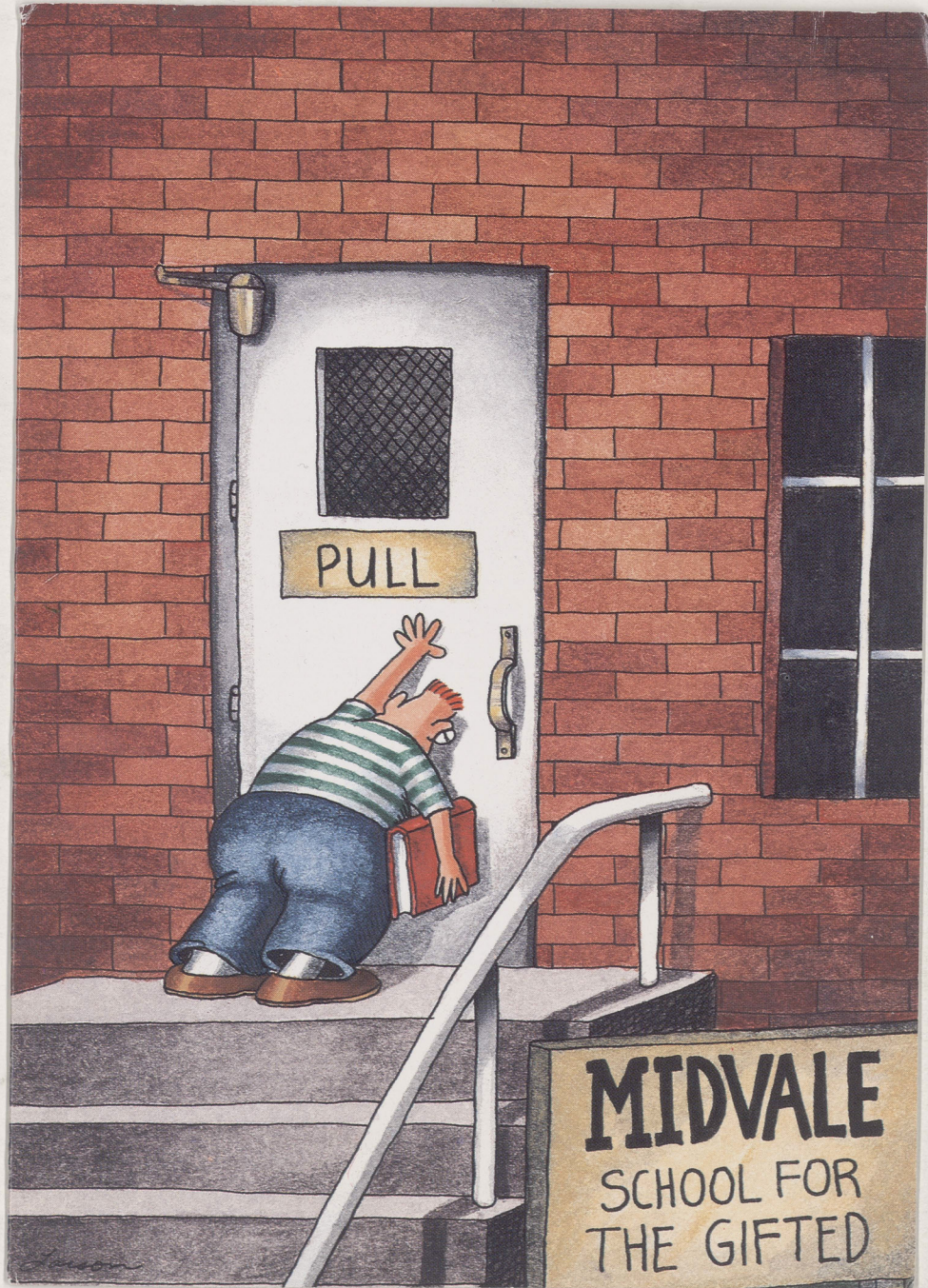
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SEATTLE

Dear Granny + Grandad

Thank you for thinking of me on my birthday. I really appreciated the card and the check. I had a great quiet birthday with my dad on a bicycle trip and my sister at music camp.

This summer I have done a lot of water skiing. The combination of our trip in the spring, in which I waterstied everyday, and us getting a new boat got me hooked on water skiing. We started water skiing with our boat in March, wearing wetsuits. Then in June I saw an ad in the newspaper for the Emerald City Show Ski Team, which I am now an active member of. With the team I practice three times a week,

wednesday evenings for about 3 hours,  
and Saturday and Sunday mornings  
from about 6:30 or 8:00 until  
about 1 o'clock. On the team I  
have tried many new things,  
I have been at the bottom of  
pyramids of 3 and 5 people, I have  
gone off the 5½ foot jump,  
skied with someone on my shoulders,  
kneeboarded, and I am learning to  
barefoot behind the boat. We  
practice at Lake Sammamish  
which is about 15 miles east  
of Seattle and put on shows  
about once or twice a  
month all over the State of  
Washington. So next time I ~~come~~  
go back east to visit you I will  
show you a few things.

I am also working for the  
Seattle Mariners baseball team. I  
work about 5 times a month.  
At the games I usually pass

out free promotional items such  
as baseball bats, hats, and  
cards. I don't get paid well  
but I have fun.

Thank you again and hopefully  
I will see you or hear from  
you soon.

Love,

**The**  
**Far** Michael  
**Side** (VAN NIMWEGEN)  
**By Gary Larson**



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It was while Barbara Byers husband, an American citizen, was doing military service in U.S. Army in Viet Nam that Barbara moved back home to Montreal to stay with her parents, Anne & Donald Byers.

Barbara & Don Van Nimwegen's first baby was born just <sup>days</sup> after his departure from Central Station Montreal. One of the letters describes the night of his departure when the family dined at the Caf Congy to see the floor show etc

23 February 69

Dear Grandmother & Grandfather,

From your letters you sound as proud of your new grandson as I am. And rightly so - he is certainly a great kid. Anyone who can cry as loudly as he can must be all right.

I must say that the hospital picture of the baby is not what I had expected, but other pictures will be better.

You are now in the midst of diapers, crying noises, two am feedings and I hope you are surviving the onslaught. There is no need to complain about too much quiet in the house at any rate.

Thank you for taking Barbara through the labour and delivery. She has said several times how wonderful you were and how much more difficult it would have been without you. We may call on you for the next one.

Your letter, written on the night of the delivery, was the first one I received post delivery. It's strange over here with the instant communication by phone available, and then the five day delay for letters to catch up. I was very happy to receive confirmation of

The grand event.

It's a lazy Sunday afternoon here and I am sitting on the patio in front of the barracks taking in the sun. We had a busy night last night and I was up until 6am. Then I had an excellent sleep until noon and am fully recovered. Apparently there was some sort of coordinated attack across S. Vietnam last night - I haven't been able to get much of an idea of what's going on from here - you know more of it by now than I do. We heard some activity here - an ammo dump went off some ten miles away - awfully loud noise.

Otherwise there is not much new to report. I sit here trying to feel like a father but am having trouble at this distance. Barbara is a prime candidate for a post-partum depression - please encourage her to write to me even though she writes depressing things. It will help her to get it off her chest and will help me to know what's going on.



-3-

Time to get out of the sun - and perhaps get  
some more sleep. I'm so happy and relieved  
that everything is going so well.

Love,  
Tom

CPT Donald Van Nieuweger  
05251058

87th Evac Hospital  
APO SF 98238

WRITTEN FROM VIETNAM -  
to his wife in Montreal

Mr + Mrs. Donald N. Byers  
604 Clarke Ave.  
Montreal 217, Quebec  
Canada

POSTAGE PAID  
PORT PAYE





Dear Auntie Anne this is my "airplane stream of thought". I'm not so sad now, and hope you are your wonderful self.  
I love you, Brook

KISSING GRANNIMUMS GOODBYE

On The Plane- Ottawa to L.A. March 19th, 1978 Brook Simons

It all seems to come down to living and dying. Sitting with Grannimums, holding her soft hand, feeling so many things she had to tell me. How very simple all my commotion seemed as I stroked her forehead and looked out the hospital window at the grey Ontario sky, an ambulance and one house.

Saying goodbye to Mom at the Ottawa Airport, walking in my sandals through the snow on the airfield out to the plane, the sadness reminds me of my own strength, permeating my being until it breaks into leaves cut from the order of life that float through me to find the nature of my being, a green meadow covering earth as soft as her cheek, ready to take my tears as seed.

Traveling three thousand miles to stroke her forehead, and pat her hands, coming into her hospital room, the first thing I saw behind the curtains was her hand, open on a pink, silk pillow. I had put rose-colored polish on my nails, and hers was the same color. I put my hand on hers. The tips of my fingers matched hers so I couldn't tell for a second which belonged to the woman I was compelled to kiss goodbye and which were the fingers that I demand to mold a life as full and good as hers. I put my finger in her hand, wanting to feel that she was holding on to mine the way a child does. I put my face close to her ear, told her I liked her nail polish, and told her I loved her.

Written by Brook Simons  
after her Grandmother Winifred Spragge's death → 1978

Brook/2

I wanted to be connected to her, to know the essence of her loveliness, which seemed easier with no speech or smiles or stiff upper lips. At first she opened her eyes a few times. Naked, wide brown eyes, scared, sad, bewildered and annoyed. Oh how I wanted to put my arms around the questions in her eyes. Mom covered up her shoulder with a pink shawl, the bones still with a girl's grace, and I thought of her falling in love, a gown she couldn't wait to wear and a handsome man unable to avoid the promises that I saw still, as I watched the pulse in her neck.

My life was full of vital plans and idle junk when she became so ill that she had to be moved from her house to the hospital. I needed to be with her, and everything she ever was and her reasons for life came through her hands to me. Had she been well, it would have been too far and expensive to go for her knowledge, and had we been able to speak, I would have forced a premature birth of my questions that were not yet ready for words.

She could not speak, and as I sat looking at her, my fingers combing her hair, I was on a plane that let the whole realm of my inexperience open to her conclusions. She had so many years, wars, children, art, research, writing, documenting, reading and always the sharp eyes observing the slightest accomplishment or need for love. She lay there alive, her genes in me and in my mother, asleep in the chair beside me. She was the source of my being, and my knowing finally, what on earth I am here for. From her presence, I found the clarity that I expect myself to have, to sift, as she did, frivolity from freedom.

Marraige, children, loyalties, priorities, work, birth, death, all the possibilities for the one course we can make from birth, through all the rebirth that life brings and the ultimate bearing of one's self into death. I knew from a geometry teacher, who I think may be in my mind if I ever drift back over my life as Grannimums I was sure was doing, that there is only one line that can be drawn from point A to point B. For a person, though, those points of birth and death seem to be points that are planes, and our life is the many lines from one to the other, cross-hatched, colored, woven, torn, repaired but unavoidably producing a piece of fabric that will be a valued treasure if the weaver has an eye for beauty.

I wanted to have my Grandmother, the way one keeps a loved person within themselves to look to when the course seems murky. My time is not her time, perhaps our criticism and praise would be triggered by elements unfamiliar to each other, but time is not different from space, it merely is a measurement of it.

So I sat with my chin on the cold rails of her bed, as if I were a new model car with a tank made for fuel refined by her pearls and powder, her hugs that made it all okay, her time turned into the wisdom left for the journey through mine.

I had to come. I was not her child with years of her presence to equip me with the philosophy and practicalities a mother conveys. My mother is especially mine, as Grannimums is hers. There is no other Mother I could possibly have who could grow with me, enough years lived before I came, to find a language for our exchange of her knowledge, my aggravation and love that keeps us young and always preparing both of us to find the way to create our own charts.

My Mother's Mother took imperceptible breaths beside me, then a few short deep ones, her chest still strong enough to demand more air, and I had to feel her there, just be with her especially then when every bit of advise, every gesture that taught by example, every thing she had ever done was coming home to her, as if all of her had to be returned to its source before she would be ready to go.

I am glad I waited until she was lost in the freedom of roaming through her years. My Mother was standing by the bed and looked down on her and said, "I wonder where she is." There were so many places she could have been in that realm where I felt she was, where time slowly unfastens itself like a corset she wore. Time, like a corset I will never wear, finally allowing one of its long-stemmed, tightly-petaled roses to blossom in the perfection of space not marked by the hours of a lifetime.

My Mother said once that in looking back, she saw that life is just a string of splendid moments. These embryos of her words and the example of her existence attach themselves to the womb of my mind. They are not dictates flung at me. They are all the children that would have been conceived if their purpose had been life. I was conceived, I was born. I was meant to be alive because I am. The complexities of embryo's fertilized by a daughter's existence and growing to structure her being are intangible and their discipline more elusive than a baby made with a man. Those children are hung by their heels, slapped, swabbed and laid on their mothers' chests. They have the certainty of life, no matter its length. But a mother is always a woman, and each gift of femininity

her daughter perceives has a possibility for growth and birth just as if it were a child conceived. There is no certainty that circumstance will cultivate weeds, wildflowers or neatly arranged bouquets. There is only the hope and dedication that rambles and briars and buds can be trimmed into a woman. A mother must be the one with shears and muddy knees coming in with sweat pouring down her face for a cool drink before attacking her garden or her daughter with gentle hands and well-planned words. A girl is given many sunny days to grow in if her Grandmother was not afraid of the earth and grew a girl flower into a woman to carry on with her tools and rules and kisses.

A mother raises her children and cherishes the leaves and shells as a child rushes, ruddy-faced to bring her. When a daughter is too old for her to watch her shoulders turning pink or her lips blue, too old to warn not to swim too far out, when a daughter is old enough to turn the pain of childbirth into pleasure, a Grandmother has smiles and praise for her daughter's daughter. A Grandmother has no desire to see weeds, not mine. She sees a little girl, already perfect, and if she is walking in the wrong direction, she will offer a word, but mostly she had love and beauty with no curfews. All my life this pure strong love has been there.

I had to come, as if this were the one demand she ever made of me. Her sweet, smiling mouth, her silent conversation with me, I feel she found me and all of use who love her finally worthy of passing on to us her deepest wisdom, worthy of putting together all her love for us in an always-shining sun. Wrapping one sunshine for each of us in a hug.



Brook/6

I had to come. She had a gift of brightness to give me, always warm, always helping us grow, shining as she shows us how to live, shining as she shows us the light with which to die, and I wonder why anyone was surprised that I traveled three thousand miles to kiss her cheek and say goodbye.

P.S.

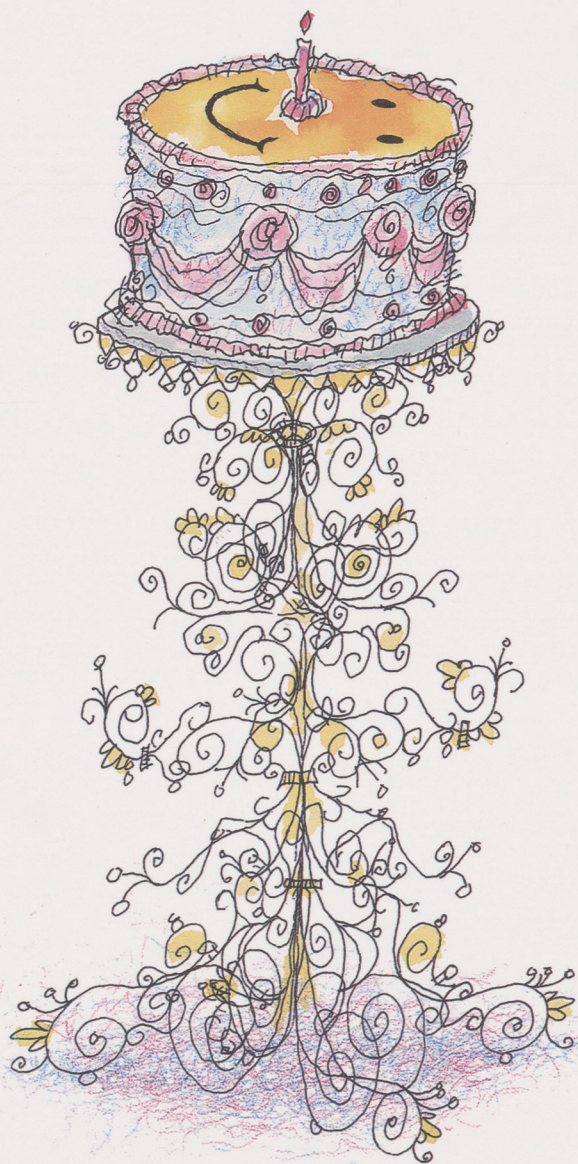
I am so glad I got to "meet"  
Barbara-- we both have  
to come help our wonderful  
mothers. She's great and  
Derrick isn't afraid is giving  
to be very very handsome. What  
a wonderful family. Stay beautiful.  
Much love & kisses  
Barb  
LOLOLO

\* Wesleyan Friends are close by. It's particularly nice to be living in the same city as Nikki. She continues to make me very happy and we love the time that we spend together. So everything is going very well for me right now. I'm eager to hear how you are doing. I also wanted to thank you for the Christmas money which I used to buy a navy wool overcoat. It looks very handsome ~~which~~ <sup>with</sup> Grandad's grey suit which I still proudly wear. I hope that everything is going well for you and that you had a special birthday.

Lots of Love,  
Michael

my new address:

311 East 50th Street  
Apartment 7H  
New York, NY 10022  
USA  
212-825-9430



Richard,  
2000.

Wishing you nice things  
on your birthday  
and always.

Dear Granny, (my 80<sup>th</sup>)

HAPPY BIRTHDAY! It sounds like  
you had a special day with  
your big surprise party. I'm  
sorry I couldn't be there.  
But now that I'm ~~as~~ settled  
on the east coast it will be  
possible to see you soon and  
more often. I'm very happy  
with the way everything is falling  
together for me in New York.  
Work is going very well. It's  
going to be a tremendous learning

learning experience which will afford me myriad opportunities for growth and development. A great place to start after completing university. I'm guessing you might be curious what exactly my work consists of. My firm, Cross Border Enterprises, is a small investment bank. We specialize in private equity financing. Which means we assist private companies (those not publicly traded on a stock exchange) raise money by selling a portion of their company. We work closely with the company's management to make their business plan presentable to investors and then facilitate the interaction between the company and potential investors. ~~I hope that this gives you~~ Typically our clients are interested in expanding their business access to new countries and we can also help them reach those goals through our connections worldwide. My current projects are with a Danish and Brazilian companies. I hope that gives you an idea of what I do. New York is a wonderful place to be. There is so much to do. Lots of my a



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December 3, 1999

Mrs. A.V. Byers  
1510 Riverside Drive, #1202  
Ottawa, Ontario K1G 4X5  
Canada

Dear Granny,

It was good to catch up with you by phone while I was in Seattle. I'm glad to hear that you are doing well.

I returned from Seattle to find the enclosed letter in my mailbox. I guess that it did not make it to you at the Gananoque address in time. Nikki and I are both truly sorry for the delay in the thanks to you because we had such a magnificent visit with you on the Island. At least now you also get the enclosed photos of our most handsome family!

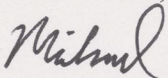
I had a lovely visit with our whole family in Seattle for Thanksgiving. It was really great to have everyone together. I am sorry that our plans for Thanksgiving in New York did not work out, but in light of the circumstance with our very ill close family friend, I am very happy that I made it to Seattle.

After not seeing much of my family in the recent past, I'm going to see quite a bit of them in the coming weeks (hopefully it won't be too much!). Derrick, Shawna, and Sophia are coming to New York tomorrow and will be here for about a week. Kathryn will be coming into town on the Sunday for a visit with all of us. A week from tomorrow, my dad arrives for a medical conference and will be staying for about ten days. Three days after he leaves I return to Seattle for Christmas (I'm already counting down the days!).

Everything else is going very well for me. Work has its ups and downs but is turning out to be a tremendous learning experience. My responsibilities continue to grow and when I decided to move on, I will be in a position to move up. Nikki is doing very well. She is working quite hard these days with both teaching and go to school herself. Fortunately, we are still able to find some time to see each other. And New York is also home to some of my closest friends. In fact, I will be meeting three of my closest friends from Wesleyan for dinner tonight.

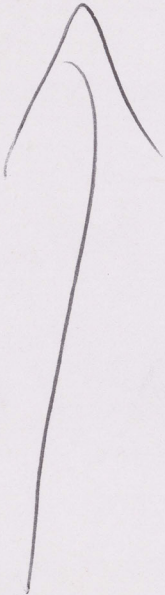
Once again, I'm sorry for the postal delay.

Much Love,



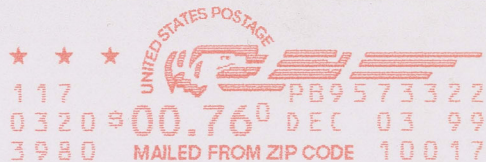
Michael

Van Nimwegen  
311 East 50th  
Apartment 7H  
New York, NY 10022



~~Keep~~

Mrs. A. V. Byers  
1510 Riverside Drive  
# 1202  
Ottawa, Ontario K1G 4X5  
CANADA





3 - 65 Whitemarl Drive  
Ottawa, Ontario K1L 8J9

Friday, November 6, 1987.

Dear Derrick

When we were in Seattle  
in September your Mum and Dad  
told us about your Eagle Court  
Award.

We know this represents  
hours of hard work over a long  
period of time and we both  
want to congratulate you on  
your success.

Granddad tells me that  
he won (he thinks) 12 badges  
and became a King Scout when  
he was a boy scout in Canada  
many years ago. It is nice to  
think that you and he both

seem to have the same  
'get up and go' and a will  
and determination to achieve.

We hope you are enjoying  
your first year at University.  
What wonderful experiences and  
opportunities you are having.

We wish we could be with  
you on the day you receive  
your Eagle Award. Since we  
cannot we send all the best  
of good luck for the future  
and many congratulations on  
your wonderful achievement.

With great affection,

Granny - Grandfather

P.S. As a memento of the  
occasion and as a Christmas  
present we are adding to the pot  
towards a computer which we know  
will help you with your studies. A.B.

Message sent to Derrick Van Nimwegen to his home in  
Seattle, from his grandfather Donald N. Byers.

3 - 65 Whitmarl Drive  
Ottawa, Ontario K1L 8J9

To

Derrick Van Nimwegen,  
Eagle scout, of Seattle,

from his grandfather, Donald Byers,  
former King scout, of Ottawa, Canada.

Emerson once wrote that "nothing great was ever achieved without enthusiasm." Your enthusiasm, backed up by your perseverance and your hard work, has carried you to the top of the scouting movement. We are very proud of your successful rise to the Eagle Scout award, and we are sure that this will fully qualify you to "be prepared" for whatever may be the next milestone in your career. Congratulations, good luck, and God bless!

November, 1987.



14/22/98

Dear Granny,

I've been meaning to write for some time now and am glad I am finally buckling down and telling what's new with me. Graduation is fast approaching but ~~I am~~ miraculously calm amidst the stress surrounding a big change. I've been having a great semester, enjoying quality time with my friends. My current plan for life after university is to spend this coming summer doing something fun with my friends. Probably spend some time driving around the US and seeing new places. And then begin work in the fall in either New York City or Boston. I would love to head north to visit you all so hopefully that will work out. I enclosed two pictures from my trip to London almost a year ago. They were taken across the street from Buckingham Palace, and the memorial commemorates Canadian soldiers who served in the World Wars. It was erected in 1994 so I am guessing that you haven't see it. I hope you like the picture on the front of this card as well. It reminded me of Can. sunsets. I hope that you are doing very well. I miss you lots.

Love, Michael



The Wilderness Society is a nonprofit membership organization dedicated to protecting and preserving 104 million acres of wild lands throughout the U.S. For information, or to join The Wilderness Society, please write to us at 900 17th Street, NW, Washington, DC 20006, or call us at (202) 833-2300

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PHOTOS



THIS MONUMENT COMMEMORATES  
THE NEARLY 1,000,000 CANADIANS,  
ALMOST ALL VOLUNTEERS,  
WHO SERVED IN BRITAIN  
IN THE TWO WORLD WARS,  
AND ESPECIALLY THE 110,000 CANADIANS  
WHO GAVE THEIR LIVES  
IN THOSE WARS  
FOR THEIR COUNTRY  
AND FOR THE CAUSE  
OF FREEDOM  
THROUGHOUT THE WORLD.

IT WAS UNVEILED BY HER MAJESTY  
QUEEN ELIZABETH II  
IN THE PRESENCE OF HER MAJESTY  
QUEEN ELIZABETH THE QUEEN MOTHER,  
AND ALSO THEIR ROYAL HIGHNESSES  
THE DUKES OF EDINBURGH, YORK AND KENT,  
THE PRINCESS OF WALES,  
THE PRINCESSES MARGARET AND ALEXANDRA,  
AND ALSO THE PRIME MINISTERS OF CANADA  
AND THE UNITED KINGDOM  
AND THOUSANDS OF VETERANS.

LA RE  
ET AU  
LES DUCS  
DE  
DES PRINC  
ET AU  
DU C  
ET DE MIL





