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My Dear Sisters and Cousins,

Last month I returned from Red Lodge, Montana, along with Vincent and our son Travis who was on summer break from law school. We went to Red Lodge to visit our Aunt Anna Lou. Our final destination was an international soils symposium in Canada where Vincent presented two papers. We drove up so that we could stop in Red Lodge, and be with Aunt Anna Lou more than a few hours. I believe it was a very good visit for everyone, and I have sent Alice some pictures of Aunt Anna Lou for her site. Our aunt is in better health than she has been in for years. Her appetite is great, and she has gained weight. "Getting fat as a pig," she says. I don't think so, at 120 pounds. She has a clear mind, and her memory is very good. She will make it to 100 easy. I am not a betting woman, but I bet you she will live to 105.

I did not know what to expect as far as Aunt Anna Lou knowing or remembering that Uncle Harry was dead. When I would call her, I always avoided talking to her about his death since I was told she had forgotten about him dying. I found out that she is perfectly aware that he died and waiting for her in heaven. She misses him very much because they were inseparable for 32 years, and now she is all alone.

The home she lives in is only a few years old. In fact, the staff told me that she and Harry were the first residents there. There are two young women who take care of the eleven residents at Tender Nest. They are Casey and Mikie. One of these two women will answer the phone when you call, and take the cordless to Aunt Anna Lou. These women know a lot about our aunt, and watch over her, as they do all of the little group in the Tender Nest Home. They prepare special home cooked meals for them, the same as they would do for their own families at home. There are other people who come in and help the residents with their showers, etc. There are three women whom Aunt Anna Lou is the closest to--their names are Ada, Nancy, and Myrtle. Both Casey and Mikie told me that Aunt Anna Lou is the favorite of the home. "Everyone likes her, she is such a dear to everyone." We all know exactly what they are talking about.

We visited her on our return trip from Canada, arriving in Red Lodge in the early afternoon. We spent that first afternoon and evening visiting with Aunt Anna Lou in the home. The next morning she woke up with an earache. We were told that she would have to wait a week to be taken to the doctor, as it had to be scheduled for the nurse in Billings to take her. Later that morning arrangements were made and we were able to take her to her local Red Lodge doctor. (I guess they were drawing straws for who had to take her to the doctor, because she does not like going to the doctor. But they managed to get the clinic to squeeze her in so that we could take her.) We had no problem with her not wanting to go. I was glad to have the opportunity to meet her doctor, Dr. Zavala.

The earache turned out to be minor, and the doctor put her on Actifed. He also told her he wanted her to start using a cane, because it would give her stability. At "97" she shuffles a wee

bit. (The caretakers told me she refused to use the walker which was in her room.) She likes her doctor and surprisingly did not refuse the cane idea. We went to the drug store and bought her a large magnifying glass to help her read, and a cane. The magnifying glass was bought because she has no vision in her right eye. She told us that she can see only light and dark with that eye. She should have had surgery on the eye years ago. She used both the cane and the magnifying glass while we were there, and said the cane helped her balance. But I noticed when pictures were taken she asked Travis to hide the cane behind his back. So, don't mention the cane to her because it stands for "old and sick" to her.

Encouraging her to use her magnifying glass, Vince went over each page of the nice "Dear Friend" book Alice Bell sent her. She could then read and enjoy the pages. We took the page of her mother's picture out of the book and propped it up on her bed stand. She loved being able to look at a large picture of her mother, and blew her kisses occasionally. She has the family Jarboe calendar on her wall and had labeled every single person in the entire book.

That afternoon was bright and sunny so we took her on a picnic into the Beartooth Mountains. Even though she lives at the bottom of the highest mountain in Montana, she can see no mountains from that location. Vince and I took our family in these mountains almost every weekend during the short summer months while we lived in Montana. We took my mother camping there every time she came to visit us. Lillian loved to go to those beautiful mountains. Aunt Anna Lou enjoyed the ride through the mountains, and had a very good time on the picnic. I discovered that she loves Chicken Tenders. We got back a little after dark, and had an enjoyable evening together in the home. The fresh air of the day made the three of us tired, but Aunt Anna Lou was wide awake, remembering childhood stories for several hours.

Other than the private bedrooms of the residents, the home is built in the open air arrangement with the living room, kitchen and dining room all open without walls between rooms. The living room has a big TV, and each of the residents have a TV. Tender Nest provides her with good food, and caring providers, but I was very surprised that there is literally NOTHING there for the residents to do except sit out on the porch in the morning and the evening, and watch television. I assumed they had an activity director, but certainly do not. Even the books that I saw there for the residents to read were all small print romance novels, which no one read. I have since returning home, sent Aunt Anna Lou a box of eight large print paper back books which I bought at a library book sale. She told me her greatest pleasure in life used to be reading.

I do not remember my aunt having such a dry wit. During our visit she was constantly saying things which were just statements to her, but were very funny to us. Her remarks were particularly amusing to Travis, and he chuckled at her for three days. We enjoyed the next morning with Aunt Anna Lou, and later said good-by to her to return through Colorado and to finish our 6800 mile trip.

Despite the nice home where Aunt Anna Lou lives in Red Lodge, there are several major problems in her life, and I will share them with you, her family. First of all she is immensely lonely for family. Everyone else has sons and daughters coming to the home occasionally, some on a daily basis. Aunt Anna Lou has only Harry's son and daughter-in-law who come every few months. But she informed me that they were not like "her" family. She talked to us about many

of you. She thought the relatives she had not heard from were "dead and gone." I told her differently.

Because of her great lonesomeness for contact with family, Aunt Anna Lou has reverted back to her childhood life with her sisters and her Mama and Papa. When we first got there, that was all that she talked about. She remembered story after story, and repeated the same things many times. My heart broke for my aunt, who will never have a son or a daughter come to visit her, and very few, if any, relatives will ever "drop" by like the other residents in the home. The caretakers told me that she sometimes goes back to bed during the day from boredom and lonesomeness.

I finally told Anna Aunt Anna Lou that, other than her two living sisters, the rest of her sisters are all in heaven, and she can't live in the past. I told her that Nancy, Ada, and Myrtle (the women in the home) will have to be her pretend sisters now, and that they needed her friendship also. I made sure that she sat on the porch with these three women and talked to them during the day at the big dining room table. All of these women like her very much and admire her education and her ability to comment on the newspaper headlines and about the new on TV. Casey and Mikie tell me that she has become a little closer to these three women in the past few weeks. They also say Aunt Anna Lou is singing occasionally now. I remember thirty years ago when she used to sing a lot as she did her work. My mother used to do the same as she worked around the house.

Josephine gave Anna Lou some pretty stationary. I left a pen with her and my address written on a card. To my surprise last week I received a letter from my aunt, probably the first in ten years or more. I didn't know she could still write, but she can very well. Please write to your Aunt Anna Lou, using the address below, and she will answer your letter. It would brighten her day and her week. She will read, and re-read your letter. Or call her. Her room is only a few yards from the kitchen and the long breakfast bar where the phone is. They gladly take the phone to her, and they do it right away. If each of you would make a ten minute call to her only once a month, or drop a ten minute note to her, her days would be full of the family she so loves and thinks about.

I did not grow up around Aunt Anna Lou, but met her when I was ten years old. I learned to know and love her later in life living two hours apart for thirteen years. But, I am sure each and every one of you have many special memories of her going out of her way for you in some way when you were a child, or later in life. This is "**pay back time**" for a lonesome old lady.

Love,
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