

Dear Mother [Goldye Wilhelmina (Saddler) Fleming]

Written by Her Daughter Berna (Fleming) Lewis - February, 2011

This is a personal Memoir to write to you about some of my feelings. In a way, it will help me feel better about my behavior as your daughter.

I haven't always been as kind and compassionate as I could have been. It is especially painful to remember your vulnerability when you were old and widowed.

I will start by thanking you for making my childhood happy. You helped earn the money needed. You were a faithful wife. You gave birth to ten of us over twenty-eight years. We did enjoy brothers, sisters and the small town advantages. The problems came along regularly but you faced them with some equanimity. Your piano playing inspired all of us to take interest in music and I am still so enjoying music in my life.

I would have housed you in the big house but it never happened. We did have two lovely get-togethers in Madison before Dad passed away. He and Lennie and Donna brought you down to Madison in the fall of 1957. Lennie took Dad to a World Series game in Milwaukee; they enjoyed it a lot. While they were gone, we women had a baby shower for the neighbor lady. Later, you and Dad joined George and me at a park in Northern Wisconsin and loved seeing the others that came too. I produced a picnic for you all. That was the last time I saw Dad.

I know Maurice's death (my oldest brother) was hard on you. He had such a struggle with his life. He was never happy with Adele but Bobbie was a great joy to us. Although Bobbie was handicapped, his Mother took such good care of him. She was so loved by her family. Their divorce was such a blow to us all but quite understandable as Maurice's symptoms of bipolar increased with time.

I must make a few comments about your strengths. You were a very hospitable hostess. When we visited Richard Fleming in California (dad's nephew – son of your cousin Mabel), he remembers how good you were to his family the fifteen years they lived in Pepin. Remember Uncle James was killed in a fire when the 3 boys were very young. Richard remembered your kindness to them, remembered your taking in a hobo that worked on the big house on Main Street. Your mother stayed with us off and on. You always welcomed other family members.

For a while when I was in high school, I would come home from school and wash the lunch dishes. I would then go downstairs where you were watching the store. We would plan supper together. I may have even gone across the street to the grocery store. I would then get supper for our gang. You were so patient with me.

You did spank me one evening. One spanking in 18 years isn't bad, huh? I wasn't watching Margie good enough. I probably improved my babysitting skills right away.

I want you to know that I noticed how good you were to your mother. You never criticized her. You handled that relationship very well.

Now through the letters you wrote Dad when he was in Alaska, I have quite a different view of you. You wrote every day. You did very little complaining. You were holding your end of the bargain of marriage to the best of your ability. You were the dutiful wife.

Thank you, again, Dear Mother Goldye. I think I may have acquired some of my best qualities from you. I do honor your memory.

**Berna Lewis
March 8, 2011**

P.S. Remember this. Dad and Maurice joined the Masons Organization. You were asked "How does Sherm like the Masonics?". Your reply "I don't know. He doesn't talk in his sleep."

3/13/12