

February 25, 1988

Dear Grandma,

Happy birthday!

You are living proof that 80 is young. You're so busy and active and we're all so proud of you.

I'm not so good at collecting photos, but being the oldest of the Iowa grandkids, I have lots of happy pictures in my mind, so I'm sending you them in words. So many have to do with new experiences and ideas you were part of in my life.

My earliest memories are of the old place east of Spickard where you and our dear "Uncle Fudgie" lived. It always seemed so natural to call our grandfather that, yet to this day I don't even know where he got the idea. Sometime or other I "grew up" and began to call him Grandpa Grant, but he was Uncle Fudgie first. To this day that place has so many pleasant times.

I think of driving there over roads that seemed to be muddy more often than not. When we arrived we drove up this long winding lane that seemed to go straight to the house, but it turned left and went around the house. That fascinated me because I had become used to straight driveways.

Inside there was this wonderful warm kitchen, and lots of good food. What I remember most vividly is your cottage cheese. Probably because I was young, it had never occurred to me that cottage cheese could be "made." It was just miraculous that you could do that. And the flavor, when I think of it I can still taste it, it was a little tarter and firmer than the dairy-made stuff Mom bought. You must have worked and worked to make enough cottage cheese to fill me up when I came.

I surely never got bored when we visited you at that old place. In my young imagination there were hundreds of buildings on that farm; each one was full of adventure. And, and if Jim, Barbara, Andra or some other older child was available, I could go to the creek. Years later, I learned that Grandpa sold some walnut trees and imagined them as the wonderful ones I roamed amongst at the creek.

Another thing that fascinated me was the front of that house. It apparently had a two story porch once, because I remember a door upstairs that opened into thin air. I remember one family gathering, sitting what was left of the porch, talking and talking with Andra. And, I still wish I could go swimming in the gold fish pond that was filled in the front yard.

That house was always warm and comfortable, even though I remember having to sleep in cold rooms, which I didn't like. And one time I went to high school with Barbara, we had to walk across fields to get to the bus.

Surely, you have some responsibility for my own love of cooking for people. Another picture I have in my mind is you cooking for the school at Spickard and the tales you told about it. I was pretty young when you explained to me how when you tasted food, you had to pour a bite into a teaspoon first. That seemed so peculiar then. Makes perfect sense today.

I remember the "new place" too. I have always been a great one to go barefoot, and as a child thought I had tough feet from it, but one time some of us went for a walk in a cornfield, I think it must have been fallow that year. Anyway those tough stalks really taught me how soft I was.

There was always magic at your house. Not only could you make cottage cheese, but I remember how Grandpa talked Sally, I think out of sucking her thumb.

Since you moved to Vinton, we've shared so many memories, I just don't have space for them, but I want to mention a couple. There was a chicken killing in the back yard over on 5th Street. Whenever someone says, "like a chicken with its head cut off" I know exactly what they mean.

Do you remember when you taught me to applique? I still have that skirt and blouse. It's a yellow and orange flowered circular skirt that I sewed sequins on the skirt. You helped me cut out a flower, stick it down with flour paste and taught me the blanket stitch to put it on a ready-made blouse.

One more memory and I'll quit. Thank you again for our Christmas dinner last year, it was so nice for me to relive the old days and eat all your special foods. Even more I really liked the opportunity for Derek and Sarah to have one of your special dinners, now that they are old enough to remember.

Grandma, this can only be a sampler of memories. We all love you so much and praise God to have you in our lives. You don't seem 80 at all. I wish you many more birthdays as happy and healthy as this one.

.lm50
Love,
Eve
.lm10
.ff

