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November 1985  
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Dear Aunt Ruth,

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How exciting this project of yours is! I've read it cover to cover. As a child I always looked forward to those incredible family get-togethers at Grandma (Maude Moore) Spickard's house. One of the best things was the other kids my age. Though I have several first cousins my age, they lived in California and Florida. But when Grandma Spickard called the clan, there were bunches of Kents, Jim Spaulding, and Larry Shipp. Eventually I outgrew it, but as a small child I was in awe of Judy Harding and Bonnie Spickard. I Remember one get together about the age of 10 or 12 when Anne Kent and I talked the whole day.

Of course, the food was also a big item. Among all the choices, I loved the watermelon best, cause (great) Grandma let us have seed spitting fights in the back yard.

Except for the little kids, we girls wore dresses to these affairs cause otherwise Grandma would accuse us of running "around half-nekked." And when she said it, it was a fate worse than death.

An interesting piece of family trivia: My grand parents John and Onetta Mageehon Spickard first met, I'm told, at the home of Jim and Helen McCall Kent. Jim was Grandpa John's sister Goldie's brother-in-law. Helen was the youngest sister of Onetta's mother. I really find this amazing in today's world where my similar relatives live thousands of miles away.

And about me and my family, we're four. Stephen and I met while both students at Iowa State. We were matched by a computer at the Third Annual "IMB Dance" on October 28, 1965 and married seven months and seven days later. When I finished the one year I had remaining on my degree we moved to Washington, Iowa where Steve served as the junior high school guidance counselor and I commuted 20 miles to teach several kinds of social studies at Keota. The following summer, we splurged and took a six week trip to Brazil, fulfilling Steve's promise to visit a high school exchange student buddy. We returned to find "Greetings" in the mailbox, Steve had been drafted. I remained in Iowa teaching for a short while, but eventually became a camp follower, spending time in Hepzibah, Georgia and Poopyang-dong, Inchon, Korea.

From the time we returned (June, 1970) till Derek was born in December 1971, we seemed to be tying up lots of loose ends before settling down. Steve finally finished the Masters degree he'd been working on when we met and landed the first of three successive jobs that fall under the State Department of Public Instruction umbrella. We managed

an apartment building and bought a convertible. By the time Sarah was born in October 1974 we owned a duplex, but it had only 2 bedrooms, so we began the search for our "handyman's dream house" loosely translated "nightmare." Finally, in May, 1975 we became

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owners of a 1925 1½-story home, that was solidly built, needed

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only a minor amount of remodeling, but was in need of heavy duty redecorating, including infinite layers of paint on woodwork. After 10 years, we've made it all the way through the first floor, but we still awaken to the chartreuse ceiling in our upstairs bedroom.

One reason the house takes so long is that our placid babies turned into children. Derek is now a sturdy young man of almost 14, with an inexhaustable imagination. He has played at the violin since second grade, has a monstrous collection of comic books, and talks of working as a special effects man in the movies some day. He carries vast knowledge of the two latter subjects in his head. At 11, Sarah has more diverse interests. She is a pianist, soccer player, likes acting, loves cooking and sewing, and currently has a passion for Halley's comet. Her head runs to the fine points of everything, so we've nicknamed her "Lawyer".

Somewhere along the way, my sister Sally got me involved as a freelance food writer, working at first under her supervision. Meredith Corporation (the Better Homes and Gardens company) keeps me as busy as I want to be. So I have to my credit the Tupperware #4Homemade Is Better#5 Cookbook, Whirlpool #4Micromenus#5 that's packed with their microwave oven, and Tyson #4Chicken, Just for You#5 as well as two complete issues of #4All-Time Favorite Recipes#5 magazine (1984 and 1986).

Several years ago we both got bitten by the computer bug, me because Meredith went to it and that meant no more typing manuscript and carrying it in to the company. Steve got involved via his job at Career Information System, a computerized vocational interest survey the State of Iowa makes available to help secondary students. When schools began to invest in micro-computers, they no longer wanted to pay telephone charges to use the mainframe system. So he hopped in with both feet, learning to program the little buggers as well as his existing duties revising information about careers and educational institutions. As a consequence we now own two Apple computers. A modem allows me to write at home, then send copy downtown via telephone. He owns several hundred disks of public domain programs which he claims are a continual source of programming details. They look like video games to me. Never-the-less, he loves the work, and that's a true blessing.

I wish you God's blessing in this enormous undertaking, Aunt Ruth. Thanks for letting us share in it.

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Love,

Eve Pederson Mahr  
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