

1975

Dear Ruth - Happy Birthday, July 24th! Your energy astounds me! Yes, your letter crammed with impressions of Las Vegas, Mesa Verde, Zion national park, Bryce, etc. exhilarates me and takes me with you in its vivid recounting of impressions. Bless you for sharing with us!

This has been a Black July. Horrible, humid weather, black skies, tropical rain that doesn't cleanse the air but leaves us breathing 90 per cent water-laden humidity. Glen thought at first it was that he was affected by the humidity that he felt so tired, (yet plugged on in his job, taking the subway down to the muggy city to meetings) wondered why he felt dizzy, got up in the night to retch (I think I'm fighting off a virus, he said), came home at noon for a bowl of cream of celery soup, fell deep asleep ~~on the ground~~ across the bed as if inadvertently) got up and went back to the college, 25 minutes away, and FINALLY when his back began to hurt him, made an apptmt. with Dr. and was put immediately in the hospital.

He had a bleeding ulcer and had lost HALF THE BLOOD IN HIS BODY, bleeding into his bowel. He had noticed his stool was black, but thought it was because we had been eating blueberries. His hemoglobin was 47 % of normal. Had he lost it all at one hemorrhage it would have been fatal, but it had been over a week, I presume.

The Doctor pointed out that Glen is the "ulcer-type", over-conscientious, over-ambitious, an achiever, a person who does everything for others, will not relax or quit working. (I had nagged him to take a vacation with me this summer, but he resolutely refused to even come home early or take any afternoons off, except that one P.M. he came home sick and even then struggled back down to his office!) He reminded me in no uncertain terms, "I have a career to pursue and we are extremely busy with budget and problems, etc.etc.)

If you try to fool Mother Nature, God'll getcha.

Glen is now taking a vacation, perforce. Duodenal ulcers strike susceptible persons in the age bracket of the fifties, and with type-O blood. Glen fills the bill. The exacerbations of worrying about his mother and putting up with my gripes about my father no doubt contributed. But most of all, I believe the contributing factor was Glen's compulsive weight-reduction program. He lost twenty pounds and gained an ulcer.

206 The last time he was checked by the Dr. he was advised to lose weight, being about 210 lbs. Glen said, Do you have a diet for me? and the Dr., our neighbor and "friend" (?) replied, to be funny, I suppose! "Just shut your damn mouth."

Glen, being the perfectionist and overly-disciplined individual he is, took it too literally. We had had a traditional ritual in the ten years we've come to N.Y. to have a huge breakfast while reading the N.Y. Times. We had orange juice and half grapefruit with multivitamin pill, egg on toast with bacon, doughnut and coffee. EVERY morning! It was our social event together, this huge leisurely meal to start the day. He cut everything out except the orange juice and grapefruit. With this acid start of the day he then proceeded to eat NOTHING until dinner. All day his empty stomach churned with the frustrations of stupid and vicious students, abetted by the strong citrus acid beginning, until the hole ate through to a blood vessel. Yet, strangely enough, he didn't complain of stomach pain. He said, "I've been having a lot of gas while dieting"- he misinterpreted the colicky pains as gas pains. Took no patent medicings or anything to clue me that he was uncomfortable. He ate his usual big dinner with much too much meat, (which stimulated the formation of hydrochloric acid in digestion) at night. So he lost pounds.

We were just grateful it wasn't cancer, or something more esoteric than that badge of the harried executive.

Today is his first day home from the hospital, ten days after admission. He has to eat something or take Maalox every hour to coat his stomach. Bland diet, peace, etc. Nirvana, a change of life style would be advisable, but, knowing Glen, I doubt it will come to pass. He is very restive, chewing at the bit. But he's scared enough to lie about and read right now.

I must say it was rather exciting for Grandpa and X to drive to the city every day to visit him in the hospital which was across from Gracey Mansion, abode of the Mayor

and his hospital room overlooked the East River with boats going by, etc. The little adventures with the Nurses, and chats in the waiting room were fun for Dad, in contrast to his boring life in Scarsdale. The head nurse was very perceptive. I was inquiring about something and she said, pointing a finger at me: "You're a WORRIER." Then pointing at Glen: "YOU are too, but you cover it up." Yes, I know my darling covers everything up. He is known at the Church as a very controlled, rational, kind person. One of the ladies said, "Tell Glen to put himself at the top of the list of the people he is always doing good for."

But you can't punish yourself by always controlling your own desires. (For example, the softboiled eggs came raw one morn at the Hospital. Do you think he would ask the Nurse to return them? No. When I came an hour later, he just hadn't eaten any breakfast. When they forgot to bring his midmorning and mid-afternoon snacks of custard or cheese and crackers, he was furious when I said I'd go inquire. HE CAN'T STAND TO BOTHER ANYBODY OR PUT THEM OUT. So his stomach juices attack himself. (I did tell the head nurse he wasn't getting the snacks and he subsequently didn't miss any, but he would KILL me if he knew, I told her. She nodded, Yes he would.)

That's what the firm grounding in the Christian religion did for Glen.

Really repressed him.

Nuff said,
Love, Bev.

B.N.
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