

The Gift of a Handwritten Note

by Kenita Gibbins

The paternal side of our family sent excellent handwritten letters. Looking for written messages every day became a ritual with me. Because I loved getting letters, I became a correspondent with at least five people. When I was in high school, I decided to write to a soldier fighting in Viet Nam. There had been an article in the *Oklahoma City Times* that our military men would love to receive letters. I was hooked up with Jim. Our letters went back and forth for about six months. And then I received a letter stating that he loved me and was coming to see me! I was writing about my adventures as a teenager just because he seemed lonely. He was describing Viet Nam for me, and I was very interested. Jim never mentioned his family.

My mother told me to write that I am sixteen years old and that I only wanted him to have mail. "Should I tell him that I have a boyfriend?" Mother said, "I don't think you need to spill that bit of information." Jim did not reply to my last letter.

I continued to be a letter writer, but I stuck to writing a cousin and two aunts. They grew up writing letters since they were on my Daddy's side of the family.

To this day, I still write letters and notes. Last month I mailed out 13 postcards. I felt terrific when people would call or write a note thanking me for my message. Especially living through the fear of getting sick with the Coronavirus has made us cognizant of just how important our families, friends, and neighbors mean to us.

Since I'm a member of the Windsor Gardens Writers Group, I feel writing letters is my forte, but I continue to try to write good essays. I find it fun to have a topic assignment each week. We need each other for inspiration.

Writing a sympathy note will always be difficult. I know to never say I know what you are going through. Even if we have gone through terrible times, we all have different experiences; therefore, we don't know what a friend is feeling.

The important thing is we stay close to those who need our comfort, and they will offer us the same when necessary. That is why family and friends give their love for little and significant times in our lives. We need each other.