

August 26, 2002

Dear Mom, Hillary and Sarah,

I'm very sorry to have missed you all this weekend. Sue's service was very nice, and it was good to renew a little bit of contact with dad's side of the family. Since you couldn't make it, I'll give you a quick Jesse's-eye perspective on the day. I'm also sending along the program for the service, mostly for the poem at the back written by Sue.

The church where the service was held is the church right next door to Foss Home, where grandma lives. The building was perfect for the occasion. It's a big, funky, very steep A-frame with stained-glass windows lining the bottoms of the walls and also a line of windows at the very apex of the building along one of the roof-tops (for me, this line of windows, and the light they let in, rescued the structure from hideousness).

Dad, Sylvia, and Paul all spoke, and all the speeches were very good, and appropriate to the giver. John sang a song and said some words as well. The star of the occasion, of course, was grandma. She kept reminding us that Sue was on to a better place, "the best place there is." At one quiet interval right when the service was beginning, she said, for all to hear, "will you do this again when it's my turn?" In the hallway outside her room in the home, she twice broke into dance, raising her cane at hip-level, parallel to the ground, and swaying in circles with it. And the house just outside her window—she used to live in that house! Many, many years ago. It was an emotional day, but I didn't lose composure until, toward the end of the ceremony, in the last verse of "Shall We Gather at the River," grandma, sitting directly in front of me, broke down and sobbed. Dad put her arm around her and the pastor came to console her. For all her lost facilities and positive outlook, there was still a big sadness there, and a need to grieve the loss of her daughter.

The pastor said some very nice words, quoting his last conversation with Sue, where she said, "I am so happy!" She had requested balloons, which we placed at the altar for the service. Afterwards, back at dad's house, everyone took a balloon and we released them all into the sky. It was a lovely moment.

For (in the sense of "despite" and also "because of") all her oddnesses, we're going to miss Sue a lot, and I really do think she was and is an angel in our lives.

*Jesse*