

Precious Pilgrim,

It's my mama's seventieth birthday today. Out of celebration, I would like each one of you to put this love letter down and with great gusto, sing "Happy Birthday" to Mama. After completion, I request that you stoop down in a crouched position and then do a jack-in-the-box jump, as high as you can. At the zenith of your jump, please muster up all of your cheerleading skills and enthusiastically yell - "Whee!" - that's right, "Whee!"

This exercise is not only good for your cardiovascular system, but it is also an appropriate tribute to Mama, for this has been her battle cry for as long as I can remember.

Whenever we came upon beauty or surprise or joy, Mama couldn't help but come forth with a "Whee!" In fact, it has become such a family tradition with my own group, that whenever we gather, we end meal blessings with "Whee!" instead of "Amen." Try it. It's also a great substitute for "Hallelujah" or "Thank you, Lord" or "Praise Jesus!" and it doesn't get half the stares. That's what I'd like to do today - a big "Praise Jesus" - a big "Thank You, Lord" - a big "Whee!" for my Mama.

Right now I'm riding and writing in a white convertible, with the top down. It is so much fun! I haven't ridden in one since I was sixteen years old. We just came to a quick halt because five deer jumped across the road - I mean a four-point "Whee!" Grand! They must know it's Mama's birthday, too!

Back to celebration! I have a mental picture of a "Daddy picture" that I carry. I also hold one of my Mama. It was taken on Christmas Eve about 1958 when I was ten years old. Our family always had the Christmas Eve party and all friends and relatives were invited. The star of the night was, of course, baby Jesus and we would sing His Christmas carols.

The other star I remember was Mama. Each Christmas Eve Daddy would give her a gorgeous new dress for her to wear to the party. It would be made of chiffon or silk or satin and often jeweled. This particular 1958 dress was strapless, white silk, to the floor and had panels of cut-velvet roses down the back. In the picture we're standing facing each other and it is obvious from my adoring gaze that I knew she was the most beautiful mother in the world.

And today, to me, she continues to be the most beautiful mother in the world! You know the number seven is very significant in our Bible tradition. It is the number that stands for completion. Of course, Mama isn't complete - yet. She won't be in this world - not until her eternal birthday - but her beauty is getting deeper and deeper. The strapless dress was grand and becoming - but today her beauty is so much more glorious.

I love the last chapter in Proverbs 31. So many of the verses seem to be speaking especially about Mama. "A capable, intelligent and virtuous woman. -- She is far more precious than jewels and her value is far above rubies or pearls. -- She

opens her hand to the poor, yes, she reaches out her filled hands to the needy. - Strength and dignity are her clothing and her position is strong and secure; she rejoices over the future. - She opens her mouth in skillful and godly wisdom, and on her tongue is the law of kindness. -- She looks well to how things go in her household, and the bread of idleness she will not eat. -- Her children rise up and call her blessed and her husband boasts of and praises her. -- Many daughters have done virtuously, nobly and well, but you excel them all."

May we pause - for all the Mama's - for all the women of virtue - for all the shining stars. May we get into a crouched position - do a "jack-in-the-box" jump as high as we can, and with all the cheerleading skills we can muster - yell, "Whee!" (Amen, Hallelujah, Thank you, Lord, Praise Jesus!)

*Especially today for Beverley White Dunn - alias Mama.
Happy Birthday!*

*Your daughter and sister in Christ,
Lucy*