

April 25, 1958

My name is Marilyn Anne Meyer. I live in Montclair, NJ, on Gordonhurst Avenue. I have a little brother and my best friend is Jennifer Almquist. I hate dolls but my Oma gave me one for my birthday. Today I am 8. My Mommy and Daddy gave me a Dear Diary. My handwriting is not very good.

Here's what I do best. Get into trouble. I like to look at Mommy's things. I'm not allowed to do that but I forget sometimes. She has a green bag that has legs and it's next to her chair and she keeps her knitting in it. I like to look in her bag because she has a little plastic box with red and blue and yellow rings. I don't know what they do but I like the colors. There's another little box with a thing that you pull and a cloth ruler comes out. I like to play with that a lot.

Mommy has a brown and white egg with a handle on it, it's like a baby rattle. Mommy says it's for darning. I say darn a lot. I wonder if that's the same thing and she says darn to it when she knits.

Mommy showed me how to knit so I would stay out of her bag. We went to the 5 and 10 and she bought me some knitting needles and the most beautiful yarn. It is red and blue and yellow and purple and orange and there's a big red heart on the paper around it. It says Red Heart. I am knitting a scarf. I love to watch the colors change. I lose the stitches but Mommy says that's OK and at least I am sitting still and not running and getting into trouble. I'm always in trouble. My little brother Richie is 4. He can't knit. He just is a big pain. He gets into my stuff. And he's dumb.

April 25, 1968

God, I can't believe I'm 18. And I got accepted at most of my colleges!!!! I wanted to go to NYU but I have to go to Wilson. What a drag. All girls. Huge drag. I'm still seeing Jimmy. He is so incredibly fab. And so cute in his sailor's uniform! I wish he were home more but I'm really happy that high school is almost over-only 2 more months! And it's almost a year since Daddy died. I really, really miss him so much. But at least I have Jimmy. I think I love him.

I was looking in Mademoiselle magazine and they're showing some super-fab bulky sweaters. I was thinking that maybe I could remember how to knit so I asked Mom to show me and it came back to me right away! But first I'm going to make a sweater for Jimmy and then I'll try something for me. So I bought some yarn (Berella something) and a pattern for an Irish sweater down in that funny yarn store in Bloomfield. The yarn is really thick. Mom had to show me how to cast on for the 90th time but I think I've got it now. And I just started to make the first piece, the back. It's really even more fun than it was when I was little. And I think I've got the hang of making the cables. It's really very geometric, not that I like math or anything. Jimmy will be so surprised when I give this to him. It says to make the sleeves 20 inches long. I wonder how long Jimmy's arms are? Oh well. I'll guess. Knitting this sweater will make the time go by until he comes back from sea. I really miss him so much but if I make this sweater, it will tell him how much I love him. And I do! He's so incredibly cool.

April 25, 1975

Well, it's my 25th birthday but I feel like 100. I did bring home a little kitten tonight, a stray. He's an orange tabby. Jimmy put Jenny and Corinne to bed but I went and woke them up so they could see the kitten. Working the 3-11 shift at the Hospital Center is OK but I wish I made more money. Being a psychiatric technician doesn't pay. It's a damn good thing I've gotten good enough at knitting to sell layette sets and afghans to people at the hospital. It helps a lot when all you make is \$4,500 a year.

Tonight I was looking at a beautiful knitted coat in McCall's Needlework & Crafts in Tahki Donegal Tweed. But I can't afford that. Way too expensive. Maybe I can keep the money from the christening dress I'm knitting for a woman. She's going to give me \$20 for it!!!! But I'd better give the money to Jimmy for the rent, I guess. The Donegal coat will just have to wait.

April 25, 1983

I'm still not believing my luck! I was so busy at my new job, assistant knit/crochet editor at McCall's Needlework & Crafts, that I almost forgot that it was my 33rd birthday today. I'm still trying to understand what publishing is all about. After all, I was hired for my knitting expertise, not my publishing background. I don't know squat about publishing.

It's funny to go to work and sit in an office and knit. I'm learning to write directions the way McCall's N&C formats them. Sometimes, I get a call from a reader and help them out on the phone if they don't understand the directions. Often I will just sit and knit to prove out a stitch pattern. And of course, we have a library with every knitting book ever published. I'm now beginning to design my own sweaters. Well, of course they won't be published in the magazine-the fashion editor chooses the styles-but I'm really getting pretty good at doing my own calculations.

At least now I can put knit/crochet editor on my resume. I think I might like publishing almost as much as knitting.

April 25, 1996

What a birthday! I spent the morning with Jenn at the OB-her baby's just about ready to come. The doctor had me take her immediately to Hackettstown Hospital. We know it's going to be a boy-Ian Michael. And thank God I always have my knitting with me. I'm working on a little strawberry cap for Ian. Of course, I've made Elisabeth a few things too but she's 4 and starting to tell Grammy exactly what she wants. I know Elisabeth will give Corinne a run for her money!

I'll grab my knitting now and work on the fruit cap and wait for the phone to ring. Jimmy's downstairs in the basement messing around with the ship model he's building to keep himself occupied. Then it's off to the hospital as soon as we get the call! Another grandchild! How great is that? Jimmy's secretly glad it's a boy this time. Well, not so secretly! He'll teach him how to build ship models and I'll teach Elisabeth how to knit. Or vice versa.

April 25, 2002

I didn't pay attention to my birthday today, not very much. There's not much to celebrate. Tonight I sat in the living room, knitting. It's the only thing I can do to keep myself from crying again. Jimmy has been gone almost 3 months and I still cry every day. My family and friends have been wonderful. But my knitting is my only comfort now, it seems.

Jimmy had been so weak for the month after Christmas. Then he was in the hospital, with a diagnosis of possible leukemia-the oncologist said it looked like he would need chemotherapy and a bone marrow transplant. I knew in my heart that my Jimmy was living on borrowed time. I spent every minute I could with him, talking to him while I knit away on a sweater. The hospital discharged him and he came home, weak, tired, sick. I sat in the family room with him and we watched TV together. I was knitting to keep my sanity.

We went back to the hospital a week later so that he could get some low-level radiation for his throat. His tonsils had enlarged and none of the

doctors knew what to do. As the technician led him away, he waved his little wave to me. I put down my knitting and said, "I'll be right here knitting when you get back." They called the code 10 minutes later. The doctor said, "We tried everything but we couldn't save him."

And now, on my birthday, I have found my knitting again. Every row that I knit takes me further away from that horrible afternoon. Every stitch that I focus on gives me renewed hope that I can carry on. I will finish that sweater now, to give me purpose. After all, it's just the patterns of my life that are forever changing. Happy Birthday to me.