

George R. Casey



George Raymond Casey  
August 22, 1906—March 8, 1973

St. Philip Neri School, Class of 1920  
Bowen High School  
1924 or so: Ore boat job with John Woulfe  
University of Wisconsin, BA 1931  
Semi-Pro Football, Fort Atkinson Blackhawks  
U.S. Army 1941-1945  
Stationed in Langport, Somerset, England  
Married Alice Kilty June 13, 1945  
Eva Winifred Casey born June 13, 1946  
MaryDaniel Casey born July 3, 1947

Colostomy Nov. 1970. At a family gathering at his nephew Patrick's beach house in 1971: "If I knew this was going to be so much fun I'd have brought more bags."

Unlike Mom, Dad was not given to reminiscing about childhood. Credit Aunt Lyd with this story: Once when an unfortunate cousin visited, George tied a dead mouse to the light string in her bedroom. Note to 21<sup>st</sup> century readers: Back in the 20<sup>th</sup> we used to grope around in the center of a dark room for a string.

I recovered an ex-girlfriend's memories of Dad's youth in the form of a letter, dated 1942, recalling 1925-27. It was in a shoebox full of Dad's WWII correspondence that I retrieved from a Somerset attic in 1975. "It is not going to be censored at my end, although it will be at yours." So it was only half private. But it *is* a daring letter for a nun, hence all this justification. "Do you remember my first visit home after I had entered? Poor Mama made that dreadful break, but you had the grace to laugh! We should have done more laughing together instead of the misunderstanding, but then, you know what they say about true love." "...memories of a walk and argument down Merrill Ave. coming from Siegle's....it was always fun making up....Are you shocked that I remember? My dear, I cherish those memories of our youth, practically childhood, it seems, from this advanced point....our golf games...your credits at Crane and the loving way in which you thanked me....I'll never forget the incident at the Chicago Club dance....I could go on recalling things that you have probably long forgotten, but then you were the last man in my life. I wasn't the last girl in yours, nor the first, hence I don't hold myself responsible for your state of bachelorship....I'm sincere in saying I feel pleurably wicked in writing thus to you....Do you know that you still come after Mom in my Litany? Dan comes 3<sup>rd</sup>." (4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> are nuns she names and describes.) "Do you wonder about Dan's place? Perhaps it is himself, or maybe because of his relationship with you, but at any rate he is very dear to me, although whenever he writes he starts out Sister □□, never using 'Dear.' Isn't that cute? ...You should know how much Dan thinks of you. Believe it or not, while we were in Washington, we used to speak of you, on those rare visits he used to pay me. I think he was afraid the prior would not approve, even though I'm almost old enough to be his mother...but not yours.... I'm just making the best of the best opportunity I ever had in 15 years... Lovingly, □" The opportunity was being in the hospital. □ had George's army address because he had sent her a birthday card. Of birthday cards she says, "If you only knew how I look forward to a certain one. And you are so faithful. I do give you credit for that."

Dad did reminisce about college. He loved it. From an old yearbook now lost I seem to remember he majored in history and minored in math. He required tutoring in German. He spoke of his digs above the Capitol Cinema, and waiting table at a fraternity house. We have a photo of the "Varsity Toters," part-time movers: George Casey, Ed Swiderski, Sam Swenson, Lawrence Neupert, and Ken Herbster. Was it Aunt Mary who told me about a carload of Caseys driving to Iowa City in 1928 to see George play football? A letter by Uncle Bob to seminarian Dan survives about a football weekend in Madison in 1930. Practically a play by play, but Bob also speaks familiarly of Dad's friends, so I know Dan knows them already too. Best of all, Dad had these wonderful friends for the rest of his life. I have a snapshot of him in 1972 during his annual football weekend in Madison, in a red hat in somebody's kitchen, drink in hand, laughing with Muriel Swenson and Joanie Herbster. I remember a couple of New Year's Eve parties at our house in the '50's. Joanie Herbster's mother, visiting from England, was right in the thick of one of them. Joanie was an English war bride. I'm sure the gang watched the Rose Bowl together the next day, but that probably took place off-stage at the Palmer House where they'd stay for a treat. To this day MaryDan uses the cardinal and white "W" blanket under the Cooper Christmas tree, as we used it at 2719. I still wear the "W" sweater on select occasions.

I'm only exaggerating slightly when I say that the only thing Dad told me about the army was that he didn't like it. Nevertheless, his WWII is well documented in letters to "Dear POP and ALL." Here's what Sister □□ says about one: "You may not know it, but I recently read a letter that you wrote them. Fr. Dan, who writes me about as often as you do (darn you both) sent it to me. He seemed to think I would enjoy it just as much as I would one from him, and strange to say, I did! It gave me a deep insight into your heart and that of your family, as in going the rounds of the Caseys little homely notes were added." In 1942 Sgt. Casey arranged to have \$15/mo. sent to Mona so that "during the next few months or few years (?) you can pay off any small bills that come to 7247 for me...I don't usually deal in such high finance, my attorney takes care of all my big deals." In England in 1943 he gets a bicycle and acquires two puppies, Eleanor and MacArthur, for camp mascots. Dad tells about the "guests" in the stockade for which he runs the personnel office. On leave in London, he mentions attending Mass at Westminster Cathedral. "The interior is not completed yet (it must be a WPA job?)" He mixes with all walks of life: "My copy of 'The Robe' is being circulated around the neighborhood. Right now Fr. Kelleher, the local parish priest has it, and Mrs. Scott, owner of 'The Rose & Crown' wants to borrow it next." He comments on the movies they (prisoners included) see, and thinks of POP at the Hamilton. Two of his bridge foursome are WWI French war brides, now both widows of doctors, Mimi and Lisette. On his birthday he has "HARE, cooked the French way." "I've really gone internationale," writes Dad. He improvises a handball court. "And to think that as far away as Milwaukee is from Chicago there are Germans patrolling the beaches" reminds me of how Dad explained to me once how big an aircraft carrier is: "From here to Walgreens." When his unit arrived in "sunny (that's a lie) France" in Oct. 1944 they built their camp. The Germans "are really better workers than the American prisoners. The attitude of the German prisoner is that he is LUCKY to be where he is—while the American prisoner feels that he has been more or less FRAMED." Dad got 24 hours in Paris/Versailles.

On their honeymoon in northern Wisconsin, my mother told me they had a drink with an army buddy, who said, "How about that old lady back in Somerset?" Dad replied, "She was no old lady."

Dad was fascinated by a neighbor's Revere tape recorder. Finally he splurged on one. He got his money's worth: He enjoyed it for the next 19 years, mostly for music recorded from FM. There's a tape of all the relatives at house-to-house, 1954, introducing themselves. "Kay Casey, over 21, and white." Kathy Drumm, 8: "Why didn't Imogene Coca take a bath?" Her Uncle George: "I don't know, Kathy, why didn't she?" "Because Sid Caesar."

We went to the country for 2 weeks every summer. Until 1956 we traveled by train. We were given the use of a 1929 Model-T for the duration by Neups's brother Paul, who had a farm. We rented a cottage on Lake Ripley. Dad golfed with Neups while we gallivanted with Nina Neupert. Once Jeannie and Kathy came. The Drumm Livery Service prevented them from taking family vacations. Hurray for the Civil Service with its regular hours and vacations!

Engineer Custodians for the Chicago Board of Education worked Saturday mornings. I spent many a Saturday morning in a school gym or a school library. The Henry Horner had this neat freight elevator that was manually operated by a rope and pulley by the passenger. We also benefited by Dad's previous career as a fireman. We'd stop in to visit at the fire station at 73<sup>rd</sup> and Kingston on walks with him to the library. There were still crutches in our basement from the time Dad fell off the hook and ladder, so I was particularly interested in that impressive vehicle. We got to go on hose-exercising outings on the fireboat, down the Calumet River and out into Lake Michigan.

In renting out the four-room apartment at 2719, Mom and Dad gave preference to families with kids. Jean and Eddie Russell, who had two sons, stayed 20 years. Dad counseled Eddie on how to get into the schools. It was a win-win for the Board and Eddie. Eddie went beyond his job description, planting borders of flowers around the buildings, etc.

Patrick was a fan of the sauerkraut Dad made some Saturdays.

Once Mom and Dad were invited to a wedding in Eau Claire, Wisconsin. "Reception to be held in the Church Hall." Dad said, "You know what that means." I didn't. "No liquor."

In everyday life Wyler's lemonade was his drink. We had it at every meal. Memory: Sitting around the kitchen sipping Wyler's, and Dad musing "I haven't heard from Swider in a long time...He could be in jail."

A week or two before Dad died, Swider came down from Duluth on the bus. Neups came from his little town in Wisconsin bearing...extra Morphine(!). A Chicago doctor said in awe, "I couldn't have gotten that."

Telling me about his day: "We had a religious ceremony and everything." (The last rites).