



*Legacy Letter of
Doris Hodges Heiser*

June 9, 2013

Dearest Laura, Rachel, Stephanie and Carolyn,

It is my seventieth birthday, and I have been retired for two years. What better time to write this Legacy Letter to you and share a little about our family heritage, what I think is important in life, and my joys—of which you are on the very top. I hope you will share this letter with my much loved son-in-laws Todd, Nick and Ankur, and our grandchildren Kyler, Kaden, Cecilia, and Samantha, as well as our future grandchildren. I want you all to have a better understanding of me as a person through some family history and hopefully enhance your lives a bit by sharing some insights and lessons I have learned along the way.

Each of you certainly has enhanced my life in special ways:

Laura, you are our oldest. So many things about you make me proud. You have such strong passion and desire for making the world a better place. I don't think you could do any work unless it was something you wholeheartedly believed in. That stick-to-itiveness spills over in your leisure as well. Whether you are dragonboat racing, whitewater rafting, running or biking, your abilities and commitment are amazing.

Rachel, your beginning was traumatic for your dad and me—being born two and half months early, yet to look at your life now at forty-two, you are so strong, bright, compassionate and friendly to everyone. You just light up any room with the love and caring you show for your family, your patients and your friends.

Stephanie, I'm so happy that you have become a teacher. It is such an important profession, and you are SO well-fitted for it. You are absolutely great with children, including your own. I admire your easy-going nature and dedication to teaching and parenting. I was so proud of you and Rachel running the Jacksonville Marathon. When Rachel said she really wanted to do it, you readily said you'd join her—I EVEN love those tattoos 😊

Carolyn you are my baby and will always be my baby. (Remember the time just the two of us stayed up north skiing? It wasn't always so bad being the youngest—was it?) I so admire all your hard work as a student and now as a lawyer. You have always been willing to put in the extra time and effort on whatever you are doing and you get results. You are the only one in the family that would submit a school project early. I don't know where that trait came from, certainly not from Dad or me!

Family Heritage

I am excited to share a bit about our family heritage. Our heritage is a touchstone of our past, but it is also an anchor for the future. New York Times columnist, Maureen Dowd, said "Planning the future without knowing the past is like planting cut flowers." (Like my Dad—your "Papa"—did at your Aunt Diane's wedding so the house would look nicer.) I hope learning more about your family heritage will provide deeper roots for you and our descendants. We have some real STARS among our ancestors, of which I am both fascinated and proud—and I hope you are too.

Our ancestor William Brewster on Papa's side came from England on the Mayflower in 1620 and landed in Cape Cod, Massachusetts. (It is only fitting that we all LOVE Cape Cod to this day

and feel “connected” to it.) On my mom’s side, the Wyckoffs were Dutch and were also early settlers in Brooklyn, New York. The Wyckoff House is still standing in Brooklyn as one of the oldest remaining homes in the country.

My Mom’s Side

One of your ancestors, your great, great-grandfather, T. DeWitt Talmage, was a famous and beloved Presbyterian minister. He was like the Billy Graham of his day, and like Dr. Graham, he was considered to be a great orator. I have his biography “Authentic Life of DeWitt Talmage” and a chapter written about him in “Kings of the Platform and Pulpit”. I also have a book that he wrote about his trip to the Holy Land called Talmage’s Life of Christ as well as several books with his sermons—many of which were printed each week in the New York Times. His biography noted that he was a believer in physical exercise and that he “had a peculiarity respecting running. I always run a little every day. Five minutes of a good stout run will give as much exercise as two hours’ walking”. AND you all thought the exercise gene came from your father’s side 😊!

His daughter, my maternal grandmother Maude Talmage Wyckoff (whom I loved dearly) often talked to me about her father and I remember very clearly when she told me about going with her father to Russia to bring grain to the starving Russians and meeting the Czar of Russia in the 1890s. The Czar gave Dr. Talmage a golden onyx tea set. My mother’s oldest sister, Betty, eventually donated that tea set to the Ithaca New York Historical Society.

My grandmother, Maude, was the youngest of T. Dewitt’s four daughters. Thus there have been four generations of four daughters—my grandmother/your great grandmother, your grandmother, your mother (me) and each of you were one of four daughters. (My grandmother did have a brother, but nonetheless there were four daughters.)



Four Wyckoff Sisters

Four Hodges Sisters with Papa and Grammy

When Maude had her daughter Betty, she was born very early and was so tiny no one thought she would survive. It was at this time that she became a Christian Scientist, believing that Christian Science saved Betty's life and helped her to survive and thrive.

Grandma (Maude) was a joyful lady and I always loved it when she came to visit or I could go visit her. I would go to the Christian Science Church with her and I didn't mind because I knew it made her happy that I went with her AND we'd always go get an ice cream sundae afterwards. She left me a beautiful silver tea set that I truly cherish. I am sure she used it regularly in her home to serve coffee and tea to guests. I remember one time she served lunch to me and two friends I had made in Ithaca, New York where she lived and she gave us finger bowls and we had no idea what to do with them. She explained that they were for cleansing our hands between courses.

Maude's husband, my grandfather, Clarence Wyckoff, whom I never met, inherited a million dollars around 1900 when his father William O. Wyckoff died. (William had made his money as one of the owners of the Remington Rand Typewriter Company.) Just prior to marrying my grandmother, Clarence went on a relief expedition to a remote region of northwestern Greenland in search of famed Arctic explorer Robert Peary. Your cousin Kim Fairley wrote *Boreal Ties* (which each of you has) about the expedition.

My aunts and my mother grew up with a lot of wealth. Clarence invested poorly and started a lot of ventures (sold airplanes to individuals before airplanes were popular, painted taxicabs yellow before Yellow Cabs were in, etc.) too soon, risked too much and lost money in all of them and by the time he died, my grandmother was penniless. Her son-in-laws (including Papa) had to support her, but she never knew that because they didn't have the heart to tell her that her husband left her penniless.

Maude and Clarence's daughter, my mother Barbara Frances Wyckoff, was a very loving and caring mother. She was a bit of an introvert, not an extrovert like my father (Papa) clearly was—and I guess I took the most after him, but hopefully inherited some of those caring qualities from my mother as well. Besides being kept busy as a mother, my mother found time to be a volunteer for the blind. Her focus was on writing books in braille. I remember her doing this work when all that was available was a stylus pushing holes into a special type of heavy paper. It was a very labor-intensive process. She eventually got a braille typewriter, and taught many volunteers how to type braille with the new typewriters as well as writing many books in braille herself.

My mom's volunteer work inspired me to want to do volunteer work too, and make a real difference in other peoples' lives. The braille work (except for the teaching) was solitary, which suited my mother well. It's important to volunteer and I am hopeful that each of you will fit more volunteer work into your busy lives eventually when you have the opportunity.

My Dad (Your Papa's) Side

My father's relatives were equally interesting. For example, renowned Professor George C. Hodges—my father's grandfather, referred to as "Dadda" by my father and my much loved older cousin Janie (Jane Hodges Imobersteg)— was often referred to as a *universal genius*. He taught chemistry, physics, geology, astronomy, physiology and botany for 33 years. He was described as "nimble of body as well as mind, never tiring". He held many positions at the Utica Water

Company in New York State, including bio-chemist and president. An article about him said “The professor is a friend of newspapermen, who go to him for any sort of miscellaneous data no one else seems to have and they usually get it!” and that even at age 85 he was still at work every day promptly at 8:30 A.M.

My father’s father, was called PaHodges. His real name was Campbell E. Hodges; he died shortly before Laura was born so in his memory Laura became Laura Campbell Heiser. In the summers he lived in upstate New York in Pleasant Point on Lake Ontario, where we’d vacation when I was a child. I guess, from what I was told in later years, he was considered somewhat “stiff” (not showing a lot of emotion), but not to me. I adored him. I would follow him around like a puppy dog. As soon as I’d hear him come outside to go for his morning swim, I would jump right out of bed, put on my bathing suit and follow him down to the lake. Down at the lake, he’d wear sneakers to take his swim because there were rocks all over the beach and in the water. My grandfather and I would play tic-tac-toe on the rocks using rocks to write the Xs and Os.

PaHodges loved to collect a great variety of things. He had a huge collection of old Currier & Ives prints which he had collected and framed earlier in life every time he could scrape together a few dollars (they were really cheap back then—they later became valued antiques). He also had a lot of metal toys like iron banks and all manner of different metal figures. My favorite collection he had was the live turtles. He had lots of them in a pen and I can just see him chopping up pieces of beef to feed them; even the snapping turtles loved Pa Hodges and he was never bitten. I also would go out with him at night sometimes with flashlights to try to find turtles as well as frogs and toads, which he also collected.

I’ll never forget the time PaHodges came driving up to the house with what looked like a strange woman sitting next to him in the car. His wife, my step-grandmother, was looking out the window trying to figure out who this unfamiliar woman was. It turned out to be a mannequin he bought from some antique store. He loved pulling pranks like that. When Dad and I would be leaving Pleasant Point and would say good-bye, he’d always say “Don’t stop at any thurst parlors along the way.”

My father’s father and my mother’s mother meant the world to me. I received so much love from them. I am eager to pass on that kind of love to my grandchildren and create close relationships as I had with my grandparents. I hope I can make some kind of lasting positive impression on them. I hope I will always be a song in their hearts.

Most people really loved my father, Robert Winchester Hodges because he was outgoing and enjoyed life. He was often the life of the party and loved to tell stories (some of them somewhat exaggerated—but that made the stories better of course until I corrected him 😊). An example was when Rachel was born very prematurely and her doctor was featured in a magazine ad—my Dad built that into her being called “The Miracle Baby” and being featured on the front cover of Time Magazine. He was also very sentimental. My father worked in New York City as the Vice President of a company called Associated Merchandising Corporation. Work was stressful and he had long days commuting from New Jersey, yet he was a very dedicated family man.

I went to a small all-girls school in New Jersey named Kent Place. I appreciate how involved Dad was at my school. He was President of the Board of Trustees. Education was very important to both my parents. I received a very good education at this school, which provided many leadership opportunities including being in competitive sports and President of Student Government as a senior, which gave me confidence in my abilities in the years ahead.

My parents were not perfect people, no one is, but they were always very good parents to me and I knew they loved and cared about me deeply. They had their issues. As a husband, my father loved my mom, but was often too demanding of her, expecting too much. If she were alive today, she would probably tell other wives to assert themselves more, and think more about what they want out of their lives.

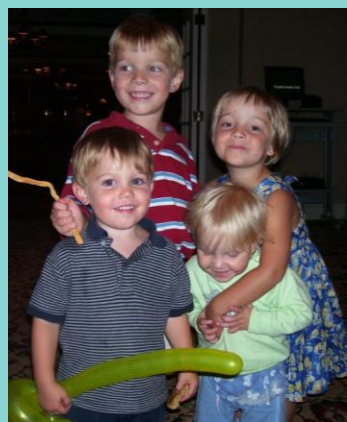
After my mom died, Papa married another wonderful woman—Maryrose. Maryrose was the perfect step-mother. She made Papa very happy and also was very caring and loving to me and my sisters and our families. I often say I had two wonderful mothers.

Life Lessons, Values and Joys

Bursting Into Song

Music has always been an important part of my life. I especially love all the old time music. As you know, when some word or phrase is used, I often burst into song. I may not know the whole song, but I'll sing the first line or the first couple of lines. I'm in a singing group with the Junior League, and we go to nursing homes every Monday afternoon from January to May to sing all the old songs written by songwriters such as Irving Berlin and Cole Porter. It truly is a joy to me, and the best part is watching the faces of the people we sing to light up and then sing right along with us.

When Kyler and Kaden lived nearby, and Ceci and Samantha would come to visit, they were a captive audience, and I would play recordings in the car from the nursing home singing "gigs." They learned some of the lyrics from these old songs, and would sometimes sing along with me. As they grow older, they will probably think these old songs are corny, but perhaps the songs will also put a smile on their face remembering our special times together.



The Grandchildren

Kyler, Kaden, Cecilia, and Samantha

Certain songs in life bring back wonderful memories. "*I Love You, What More Can I Say*" is Dad's and my very special song. The letters ILYWMCIS are engraved in my wedding ring. I believe music, and especially the older music, is just so joyful and romantic. Two other favorites are "If They Ask Me I Could Write a Book" and "Bewitched Bothered and Bewildered". So don't forget to make time to sing and dance in your lives—and when something happens and you start singing about it, think of your mom and laugh and ENJOY!

Getting Along in This World

There are very few people in this world that I don't enjoy spending time with. Dad jokes that if I don't like someone, they must be REALLY annoying. However, we all have to get along with others, even though we can be so different from one another. We can go through the same experience as someone else, yet look at it so entirely differently. It's important to be aware that just because a person sees a situation very differently, does not mean that person is wrong or trying to be difficult. Instead of judging that person or thinking they are attacking you, it is important to make the extra effort to try and understand the other person's perspective. Find out where he or she is coming from and why. That person may have an entirely different angle or insight, and you very well could learn something or at least not resent them anymore.

I think it is important to travel, especially out of the United States, and I am glad that Dad and I and each of you has had opportunities to do so. Travel helps us learn about different kinds of people and different ways of thinking, but most of all you realize how lucky you are to be an American and live in the United States.

Religion

As you know Dad and I go regularly to Bayshore Lutheran Church which is very joyful, accepting and welcoming, thanks to wonderful Pastor Norene and Pastor Paul. But we realize that church isn't for everyone. I do hope, however, that you and your children have some type of spiritual life. I hope you spend some quiet time feeling and thinking about the higher meaning of life, and hopefully believe that there is a God, in whatever form you believe. None of us knows what is going to happen after death. No one knows what God has in-store for us. We all have doubts at times too. I believe that there is a God and that there is life after death. That's partly why I feel so positive about life, and I don't fear old age and death. Whatever beliefs you do have, I hope they give you comfort and peace.



Doris and Ed— Young in Acapulco

“I dreamt of meeting Prince Charming and having a happy family and that is exactly what happened, yet so much more.”

Marriage and Family

Yes, it is true that your dad and I have had an unusually happy and loving marriage. You may think that our lives are idyllic and we never had any real problems, but that is not the case. We may make it look easy, but sustaining a happy marriage is a lot of work and a lot of listening. People can see things differently, especially men and women—have you noticed that? ☺ I know you have because we’ve talked about it. I think men and women process things differently. So I say “Viva la difference” rather than letting differences annoy or upset you.

I’ve learned over the years that if your dad would get upset with me, I would want to make it all better right away, but with Dad it didn’t work that way. Sometimes you just have to step back and not fix it immediately, but instead slowly heal whatever it is, and realize that love isn’t always easy. You have to try to understand where the other person is coming from. Even if you cannot understand where he is coming from, try hard to accept it and move on. As my mother said, “You jolly well better just figure out how you can live with it.”

I am so proud to see how all four of you share your love with our grandchildren. Each of you clearly love children. As parents, Rachel and Stephanie, you have really taught me—a lot. You are very calm, patient and loving with your children. I see you help your kids to develop in every way they can. You trust that they are all smart human beings, and you help them bring out the best in themselves. This is important in sustaining a marriage and friendships too.

Probably the longest relationship you will have is with your sisters. It is so easy when you live in different parts of the country as you each do, and you have your own friends and families, to get distracted and not stay close. I remember Papa saying that he hoped that my three sisters and I would stay in touch after he and my mom were gone and I wish the same for the four of you. The sad thing is I’ve talked more to my sisters Diane and Jennifer in the last few months during my sister Beejay’s surgery, illness and death than I have for years. I don’t want that to happen to the four of you. I wish the four of you will always stay in touch, care for one another and overlook the little things that may annoy you about each other and look at the best sides of each other.



Four Hodges sisters and four Heiser sisters at Cape Cod 2004.

Over the last several years, my sisters and I vacationed together at Cape Cod. We so enjoyed those times—playing cards, sharing memories, having fun together. I encourage the four of you to make time for getting together to both relive memories from the past as well as creating new ones.

Stretching Yourself

I strongly believe in the value of stretching yourself and stick-to-itiveness. One example I have thought about SO many times was when Dad was in law school and I was teaching and working towards my master's degree. We had very little money: \$5,000 was my first year of teaching salary. I came across an educational opportunity that excited me: an economics institute which offered a \$500 stipend to attend an economics course and receive 6 hours of graduate credit towards my masters degree. I had absolutely no background in economics, but I applied for the stipend anyway even though your father thought I was a little nuts, but when I got it, we were both thrilled.

Another time I stretched myself was when some acquaintances on the national Association of Fundraising Professionals Board with me asked me to go on an *OutwardBound* trip—five days of canoeing in the boundary waters in upper Minnesota. I had never canoed in my life and had limited outdoor experience, but I seized the opportunity and the experience was a real thrill for me and is something I look back on often with great pride.

It's so easy to feel intimidated or unsure of yourself when given the opportunity to venture into new or untested waters, but I demonstrated to myself that if you give it your all and don't give up, you can do almost anything you set your mind to.

Hopes and Blessings

My biggest hope for all of you is that your lives are as fulfilling as mine has been and continues to be. I hope that most days you feel like you are making important contributions, that you feel

valued and happy. I hope that you appreciate what you have rather than worrying about what you don't have. It is so easy to fall into a mind-set where you focus on what you're missing in life, or what you wish you had or what you wish you could do. Concentrating on the positive and trying to let go of the negatives whenever possible will make your lives more successful and fulfilling.

I hope you always remember the wonderful times we have had as a family. When the entire family gets together, it can get so loud that the noise could drive some people crazy; not us of course! There's so much discussion, excitement and enthusiasm for living in our family. I hope we always experience that *joie de vivre* when we get together and that each of you will continue to feel that throughout your lives. We are all very blessed to have a family that truly cares about each other and any one of us would jump to do anything for the other one if they could. I hope you and the grandchildren will continue to have such a strong, loving and supportive family.



If I were saying "good-bye" to you today for the last time, I would want you to know how lucky I feel to have had each of you in my life. I dreamt of meeting Prince Charming and having a happy family and that is exactly what happened, yet so much more. I have thoroughly enjoyed being a mother. You all have given me such joy seeing the successful careers you are building, knowing your wonderful husbands, and spending time with my amazing grandchildren. I am a bit biased BUT I know each of you agrees with me that they are absolutely the brightest and cutest kids in the world.

I had an incredible education and career. I loved going to the University of Michigan and our seven years in Ann Arbor were extremely happy ones. As you know, Dad and I are still very active members of the U of M Alumni Club here in Milwaukee. GO BLUE!



Doris & Ed at football game in Ann Arbor, MI

My 27 year career at the Greater Milwaukee Foundation was exciting and fulfilling. I loved working in philanthropy and helping generous individuals and families to create lasting legacies through the Foundation. I am proud that we have a Heiser family fund and I know that each of you will someday enjoy being a philanthropist with the fund which we have left for each of you. I am so happy that Dad and I ended up living in Milwaukee—I LOVE this city! My career has led me to meet many wonderful people who truly care about Milwaukee. I have also had the great opportunity to spread my expertise on community foundations to lots of other people in the U.S. (through classes I have taught) as well as to Cumbria, England through my German Marshall fellowship, and to nonprofit organizations and foundations in the Czech Republic and Slovakia.

Dad and I talk about if something should happen to us tomorrow, we don't want you to sit around and mope because WOW, we didn't waist a moment of our lives. I know it seems crazy to you girls sometimes, but we have had so much fun cramming fifty things into each treasured day. In addition to spending time with our family, we've traveled extensively, we live in a great community and have cherished friends. I've had the opportunity to meet so many interesting and generous people in my life. I truly feel blessed.

After I am gone, I hope you will imagine me dancing among the celestial stars with Fred Astaire (and of course your wonderful Dad will cut in to dance with me as well!). I hope you will remember me for my enthusiasm, for my contributions to the community and philanthropy, for being a good mom, a good wife, a good grandma and a good friend. I hope that I brought joy to the people that I've interacted with, both professionally and personally.

Most importantly, I want you to know that you have been at the root of my very fulfilling life. I hope you will always feel my comfort and my embrace. May we all be blessed with many more amazing and joyful years together!

I Love You, What More Can I Say?