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Letter, Virginia Brainard to Dudley, Merl, Nellie, Constance, Eleanor, Charles and Ned Brainard [October 6, 1940]

Virginia Brainard

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Roberts Hall
Iowa State College
Ames, Iowa
Oct. 6, 1940

Dear Daddy, Mother, Grandma, Connie, Ele, Charles and Ned,

What a wonderful birthday I had! Your box and letters came yesterday morning and I was so thrilled. And to top it all off my three room mates gave me a dozen roses!!! I was absolutely floored. They are so beautiful---a lovely deep shade. I can hardly wait for tonight when we can celebrate with a spread. I thought I'd wait because Virginia had to go home for the week-end and Mary Lou had to visit her Mother at her grandmother's---everyone ran out on me for my birthday, of all days. We all felt bad about it but it couldn't be helped so tonight's the night. The kids next door and across the hall are going to get fruit and cheese crackers and so we're all going to get gloriously stuffed!

I opened my box right away---I couldn't wait---everything was just wonderful. I love those hankies and needed them, too---but I hate to use them, they're so pretty. And the bath oil was what I needed more than anything. The water is so hard here and I didn't have anything that smelled so nice. All the girls here use bath oil by the gallon and I just couldn't feel dressed up without having some to use in my bath. Thanks so much. Now I can go to a party without feeling "unfinished!"

And did I need those pajamas! I didn't realize I was so low on them until the heat wore off. I think I caught cold from sleeping in my thin ones and my pink ones were dirty and I just didn't have anything. I'm afraid I'm going to be wearing them all the time from now on, I needed them so desperately. I put them on for the first time last night and they made a big hit with the gals up here. I'm going to parade around without my housecoat sometime. They're too good-looking to be missed---and plenty roomy, too. They fit me just the way I like p.j.'s and I can't figure out how you and Grandma did it without having me thereto fit.

Wednesday

This just how busy I've been! Not a single spare minute to finish this. I've had several tests so far and sometime scheduled for next week. But I'll try to finish this right now so I can thank you for the very lovely birthday I had even though I couldn't be home for it. The cake is all gone now and it was wonderful! We all just loved it. It came through perfectly, too. I hope you'll s'prise we sometime soon with another one!!! It was one ~~xxx~~ of the loveliest birthdays I've ever had and it was such a thrill to get all the things you sent and to share them with the kids up here. Thanks so very, very much.

Well, I've had my first stories published in the Student, the college daily paper---and two stories all at once, too! I'm also handling all Roberts Hall news---special request by our house pres. and house ~~mother~~ mother and they're calling me "publicity director." I told Miss Geoppinger, my T. J. teacher (the one we talked to last spring" and she said "That's wonderful!" It really isn't very much but the very smallest part helps a great deal. We're also having an Open House Oct. 19 ~~xxx~~ to entertain all the men we're coralled so far and I'm chairman of the invitation committee. Each girl can invite one man and turn in the name of one or two others so we'll have a sizable and very personable stag line on hand. Only trouble is that I can't decide who to ask for myself. I turned down three dates for last Sat. and Sun. Last Fri. night was the Ward Round-up. All the fellows from the Ward system went around to the various dorms and danced for about half-an-hour at each place. We had a

stag line four man deep and a constantly shifting and changing crowd of men. Of course, quite of the fellows hung around if they located something they liked! I had a wonderful time and met dozens of fellows, three of ~~whom~~ I'm very glad I'm going to see more of! Don was there and danced with me. I didn't see him ~~for~~ for more than a few minutes, tho'. because I was cut-in on right away.

This Friday night we have an exchange dance with Hughes Hall, the biggest men's dorm. That means that we gals from Roberts Hall go over there to dance from 7:00 to 8:00 and then have the rest of the evening to "develop anything that may have begun there" as Rev. Barlow said to us when the first church mixer this fall ended a whole hour early. He's a wonderful person with young people, incidently, and the church parties are not only huge successes but we have to ~~go~~ arrive twenty minutes early every Sunday morning in order to get any kind of a seat at all!

I must tell you, too, about one of Mrs. Barlow's famous English teas that I attended last Friday. There must have been fifty of us and when we got there we were all seated (somehow)---the ~~house~~ house was very crowded, I thought, but Mrs. Barlow said to us, ~~Don~~ "Our house really isn't crowded, girls, its just nice and crushy." She is so dear and I could listen to that very English accent of hers all day. I've never heard anything like it, not even in the movies, Eleanor. She made us a little speech in which she welcomed us all not only to the church but to her own home. I really felt as though I belonged. I have never met anyone like here--so sincere and gracious and the best hostess---she just made the church and their home our home and we all felt a part of it. She is truly a very wonderful person.

Mother, the food she served, too! They were all her own English recipies. Little tarts with rasberry cream filling and salad fillings and a mixture of meats rolled up in pie crust. And I really liked the tea. You would have disowned me, the way I ate! I kept taking more when there was some left on my plate and even when I still had some in my mouth! We just couldn't resist them and she was so thrilled when we kept on taking more and more and she just piled our plates! I wish you could have been there, Mother. St. Cloud will never have anything like it.

My work continues to be hard and filling up every minute of my week days. I don't do a thing but study. I love it, tho', this feeling of having something to do every minute of the time and my work fascinates me, instead of boring me the way it did last year. It isn't a "grind," either. Its just doing everything from day to day. I cant get enough of journalism. We had a test last week and I missed only two points. We also had a News Quiz and I missed four. We're having a Chem. test next Wed. and so I'm working on that.

Mary Louise Halstead came over from Des Moines to see me last Sunday. I wasn't expecting her and was very glad to see her. I think she's coming up here for Homecoming. When can I go down there to visit her, I wonder. She wants me to come as soon as possible. I'll have to see how my work stacks up. She's going home for Thanksgiving. We have five days off--Wed. a.m. to Mon. a.m.

You say I'm spending too much money. I needed that sweater. I find I can't wear any of my jackets ~~under~~ under my coat--they're too bulky---and I have to wear my coat all the time now because its so cold in the morning. The rest, as you can see, went for things I also needed. Its the incidental that counts up. Since then I've spent only about a dollar. It went for ~~the~~ dorm dues (\$~~2.00~~\$~~5.00~~ \$.50) and 50 penny postcards which I need to send for material for my journalism files.

So, I had ~~\$9.00~~ \$ 9.00 left. I say, I had because I have some very bad news for you. Yesterday noon I locked our door and went down to lun~~ch~~. I met Janet, my room mate, coming up. She unlocked to door and forgot to lock it again when she went down to eat. During that time someone ~~wix~~ walked in and took \$ 5.00 from her and all the money I had left. Whoever it was took everything but my board check that you just sent me. Everything. I have Auntie Coila's birthday dollar and that's all. That happened yesterday noon and ~~Monday~~ Monday afternoon \$ 5.00 was stolen from Janet. She thought she must have lost it at first, tho' she couldn't ~~see~~ see how that could have happened but now we know that was stolen, too. Please don't blame me because, altho' I've said very little about that side of it, its really Janst's fault. She left our door unlocked both times and ~~ix~~ I always try so hard to keep it locked. But money is just ~~now~~ worry with her. She has her own checking account here and can draw it out whenever she want~~ss~~ it. For me its a great deal different but its hard to make her realize my circumstances and I don't like to drag out the subject and say to her "Do you realize that's all the money I had left until Thanksgiving?" ~~Nowk~~ that~~ix~~ its gone that would~~n~~'t do any good anyway. We reported it and are saying absolutay nothing about it. Our huse ~~mo~~ mother and president are working on it. They have several suspects and we're also keeping an eye out to see if they won't try it again. It just ~~makes~~ makes me feel terrible, especially since its through someone else's carelessness. Of cause, Janet lost \$ 10.00 but it doen't mean anything to her the way it does to me. I don't know if we'll be able to get it back or not. In the meantime, if you could send me just enough to keep me going I can get along. I have nearly everything I need now but there are always ~~ix~~ things that are coming up. I never saw a school that collected money right and left the way this place does. Ill let you know just as soon as there are any developments.

Except for this, I am very well. My cold is nearly gone except for the cough. Thanks for the medicine and stuff. I also had to buy \$.60 worth of medicine over at the hospital when I~~w~~ went over to be looked at. I ~~hm~~ ~~xxxx~~ never going over there again! They didn't do anything for me that ~~xxxxxx~~ I couldn't have done .

Now my typewriter's on the blink, too - which means I might have to have it serviced, in addition to everything else! That's the reason my typing is so terrible. The thing won't space after each letter. It gets stuck.

Its nearly dinner time so I must close. My laundry is coming with this. Please don't worry about that money too much. We're doing everything and I'll get along on very little. Thanks so much for all your letters. I shall try to write each of you a note - Love,
 XXXXXXXXX
 Virginia