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Letter, Virginia Brainard to Dudley and Merl Brainard [November 4, 1940]

Virginia Brainard

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Roberts Hall
Iowa State College
Ames, Iowa
Nov. 4, 1940

Dear Mother and Daddy,

So Charles has Chicken Pox !! Heavens, I thought that we were all through with that. I had to laugh when I read about it because it sounds just like home! Never a dull minute. But that's true around here, too----there is never even a spare minute for me. I'm enclosing a picture of me taken two weeks ago. I hope you'll be able to notice the six or seven pounds I had gained then. I've lost it again, though, and I'm losing some more pretty fast.

I'd like to get this straight about my dropping Sociology. I know that you feel as though I'm not "getting your money's worth" and I don't agree with you. I dropped it only after ~~xxx~~ I'd discussed the whole question with my counselor, my journalism teacher, my house mother and a woman here at the dorm who's a journalism major and went through it all, too. She's graduating at the end of this quarter and she told me that they ~~xxxxxxx~~ just aren't interested in you at all if you don't have at least a B average and they eliminate all but the very highest at the end of the first quarter. And now I've got a B average in the course and I've got to raise it to an A or I won't even be able to go on with journalism. And just how much money would I be wasting if ~~xxxxxxx~~ if they asked me to drop journalism ~~after~~ when that was the only thing you sent me down here for? I can't explain how handicapped I am in that course because you can't put yourself in my place and visualize it but I just couldn't have made such a high average and carried everything I started out to carry in the first place.

In his letter last week, Daddy said that he'll expect nothing but the highest grades from me. What do you consider the # "highest grades?" Do you want a 4 point (A) average? If you do, I'll do everything to try to get one but I'll warn you from the start what it will cost. I was talking to Edward Allen the other day about Daddy's letter and I told him about it. He said, "Do you realize that only one out of every thousand here in school ever gets a 4 point average? And especially the first quarter in ~~xxxxxx~~ school? Your spring quarter here you might be able to work up to it but not your first quarter. You just can't expect or try to get the impossible because it is the impossible"

Next I talked it over with my counselor and she told me this: (she called me in for a special conference, too, by the way) "We have just received the rating from your tests which you took during freshman week and they were very very high. So, considering those together with the record you made last year, we have decided that you should be able to do very good work for us. You probably could get a 4 point average, because you undoubtedly have the ability, if you did not do another thing but study, if you cut out everything but your work. But what would you have when you finished? You must realize that there are other sides to college life other than just your work and your biggest job is to give yourself a well-rounded education. You must develop yourself along every line and your studies are only one part of it.....I had several counselees last year who had 4 point averages and nothing else. I wouldn't have them teaching for me or any children. They have their high scholastic average and nothing else and they are just a total loss. They haven't jobs and can't fit themselves into any place in society. So, if you feel that you have to cut out everything but your work, I just want to urge you against it in every way possible and warn you that it will be a very costly experience for you in every way. I don't think you realize how greatly

different our standards are here at Iowa State from other colleges. Our C average is equivalent to an A average in the college you went to last year. ~~XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX~~ So it that's what you want to do with your college life I can't stop you from doing it but I want to urge you against it."

Well, I have a work schedule that I've been following. Miss Sunderlin, my counselor, helped me make it out. I have an hour in the morning off for breakfast, an hour off for lunch at noon and an hour off by dinner in the evening. Our time from 4 to 6 every p.m. is supposed to be reserved for recreation but I use that time to work on my journalism. I get six hours of sleep every night and so that gives me quite a bit of time to study in the evening---nearly 5½ hours with an hour off on Monday evenings for House meetings.

I asked my house mother about the refund on that \$5 deposit and she said that I don't get it back. It goes on reservation for a room for next year and if I don't plan to live in a dormitory next year, I get it refunded to me in the spring just before school closes. Oh, and I want to tell you about the checks for my board. They should be made out to "Welch Hall" instead of the college. When they're made out to the college I have to go way over to the Treasurer's office and have them endorsed and it makes quite a mix-up for the office. I've been in there so many times this fall what with my tuition check and everything that everytime I give my name they say "Oh, yes." My board bill doesn't come up for until Nov. 18 so I'm sending the check back---okay? Will you make me out another one?

I haven't recovered any of my stolen money and nothing further has developed on it, either. There has been an unusual amount of stealing this fall. There have been several announcements of other thefts and we have been warned at dinner and at our house meetings to be very careful of our things. Last week-end the fraternity houses were looted and \$80 taken from one, \$20 from another, etc. The college is quite stirred up about it and the lead story in the Student the other day was all about the frat thefts.

The requirements for journalism are 12 inches printed in the Student by the end of the quarter. I've had 21 printed already so I feel pretty easy about journalism now and can concentrate on my other work. I was awfully worried for awhile so now it's a load off my shoulders. I'm going to get on the Student staff and so typing and copy reading for them if I can because it's important to spend some time in the Press building. Lots of times stories break that are given to reporters that just happen to be in there and then, by reading the copy that regular reporters and staff writers hand in I can learn more about the style of writing and news coverage that the Student likes.

~~XXXXXXXXXXXX~~ Lois Shumacher from St. Cloud--she's an Alpha Delta Pi down here--called me and invited me to meet her over at the Union this afternoon. We've seen each other several times and she's called me up several times, too. So I went over and we had a long talk about St. Cloud. She had about six of her sorority sisters with her and so I think it was a mild form of rushing. It was a lot of fun except that I didn't like the "sisters." Lois is swell but the others were so darn hard and tough and rather fast and sporty that it made me a little sick. I was the only girl at the table that didn't smoke and it didn't bother me in the slightest. But all the same, I couldn't help but think that if all the Iowa State sorority gals are like the ones I met this afternoon--excepting Lois--I can say "Oh, no--not for me--thumbs down." Janet, my room mate, is a Tri-Delta pledge, and she says that the pledges are not allowed to drink or smoke, break dates or go into the Union for a coke any time

during the week and they also have to spend all their free hours during the week in the Library studying. And they're even on probation when they go out of town--down to Des Moines, for instance--which means absolutely no going into any questionable places to dance or eat and questionable means places where they sell drinks. So the Tr-Delts really make them toe the line and maybe all sororities aren't so bad after all. But I didn't think so much of what I saw of the ~~AE~~ A D Pi's. Maybe I shouldn't be writing all of this--it might not be ethical, so maybe you'd better get ride of this page to pack it away someplace where the wrong people won't get ahold of it.

This school ~~is~~ expensive and I don't mean the big fees but ~~x~~ the little things that come up all the time. I naturally didn't want my allowance for October ~~xxx~~ because things have been so expensive for you anyhow, but I wish you could send me my money now instead of at Thanksgiving. I tried to string it out until then but I'm down to nine cents now and two bus tokens. I wouldn't be so bad but I haven't enough to send my laundry home so could I please have it ahead of time? And please tell me what allowance arrangements you want to ~~make~~ because I'm pretty hazy on what I'm going to get and how long I should string it out. You see, I thought I'd get my next money Nov. 1 and didn't have enough time to budget forthree moreweeks. So anything you want me to do I'll follow to the letter.

What is so hard to plan for financially is the personal things that I need that I have at home all the time--they are "unmentionables" so I can't write them. Then there are school supplies all the time--~~xxxxxx~~ paper, postcards for journalism, mimeographed material for Chemistry, A Chemistry apron (which I still haven't got), a lock for my Home Ec. locker, pamphlets for my library course, they don't serve Sunday ~~xxxxxxx~~ suppers here at the dorm so I either don't eat if I haven't any money or I have to eat out. Then there are church collections, house dues, a fee for an OpenHouse we had several weeks ago that we all had to go to, and over Homecoming there was the Barbecue that took the place of Friday evening dinner which wasn't served in the dorms. I usually want to eat but if I haven't any money I just skip a ~~xxx~~ meal. This is the real student life, all right. I haven't been to a single movie since school started or spent any money at all for any kind of amusement. But I can't live much longer on 9 cents.

I asked my house mother about Thanksgiving vacation and I'll have to move out of this dorm and into another one. Also, they don't have any meals here at all so I'll have to eat out all the time and she said that I wouldn't be able to stay here for less than a dollar a day just for meals alone--which amounts to about \$5.00 for the five days of vacation. And a round trip ticket to Cedar Rapids costs \$3.98 so there would be something saved by going to visit Virginia. I certainly wouldn't get any studying done by staying here, either, because Mrs. Young told me that they have dances every night and shows and get-togethers and social hours during the day so the time is filled up. These all cost money.

Only ~~thee~~ weeks to Thanksgiving and then only three more weeks until Christmas. Its going to be so much fun going home ~~xxx~~ for the holidays. Won't we have alot to talk over? I can hardly wait but once I get home I'll probably be champing at the bit to get back to school again!. Doris May won't be there Christmas, and it just won't be the same. I just can't get over their ~~peaving~~ and I just can't believe it. Things won't be the same without her and everyone will miss the Surfaces. I must close now and study for a Chem test.

All my love,
Virginia

P.S. How about another cake, I wish please? Helen's folks were over here from Illenox last week and brought her some things to wait her last week and brought her here to wait for a "spread" Virginia's parents make and brought us a regular feast. I wish St.

Too bad May I'm got a letter saying to her and not to be discouraged. She'll get it. I'm as behind on writing and I just don't have any time at all.