

A Spy on the Bus

Memoir of a Company Rat



Margean
Gladysz



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Arbutus Press • Traverse City



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Arbutus Press
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www.Arbutuspress.com

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS CATALOGING-IN-PUBLICATION DATA

Gladysz, Margean.

A spy on the bus : memoir of a company rat/ Margean Gladysz.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographic references.

ISBN 978-1-933926-07-0

1. Gladysz, Margean. 2. Transportation--United States--Biography. 3. Greyhound Corporation--History. 4. Business intelligence--United States--History. I Title.

HE151.5G53G53 2008

388.3'22092--dc22

[B]

2008001057

First Edition: May 2008

ISBN 978-1-933926-07-0

Printed in the United States of America

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Acknowledgments

Overall, I must thank the patrons at the Kalamazoo Public Library from whom I learned that you can never have enough original source material—that someone, sometime, somewhere needs it! There is little available about the early days of the bus industry and nothing about the inspection function.

If my mother, Dorothy Worst, had not walked the half-mile to the mailbox and then saved all my letters, this book would not have been possible. I can never thank her and my father, John Worst, enough for the support they gave during my years on the road. They sent money, coats, prescription cookies and letters that told me that home was truly where my heart was.

Chiefly responsible for this book, however, is Marsha Meyer to whom one Sunday I related the tale of unearthing these letters about my unusual youthful occupation. She told me they should be published. On the answering machine when I got home was her directive to call Michael Steinberg, professor at Michigan State University and editor of “Fourth Genre: Explorations in Non-Fiction.” He told me not to procrastinate. Without their professional encouragement I would never have pursued this project.

Collecting themselves after learning about my “past,” John Lohrstorfer and James Jasiak helped me resolve the problems of names and money.

Jacquie Heidamos, Carolyn Martin and Catherine Larson helped greatly with editorial eye suggestions, and comments.

Best of all, great friend Fred Peppel, who always suspected I had a “past”, helped me with set-up concerns and provided subtle nagging. He was the last reader of the manuscript. I can never thank him enough.

I must thank former bus driver authors who helped me in my preparation to write and with publishing suggestions. Robert Beard gave much encouragement and laid out “homework” in the form of books written by pioneers in the field of bus transportation. Thus I was able to place my own experiences within those of Russel A. Byrd, John W. Adams, Jim Lehrer, Howard Suttle and Bob's own book. John W. Adams was most generous with his advice and told me that the most fun would be in the writing. He was right. Thomas Jones of the Motor Bus Society was also helpful.

Most of all, heartfelt appreciation to Susan Bays and all those at Arbutus Press who brought this manuscript to life.

Of course, without my husband Edward's support (and listening ear when I would call him in to relate an adventure I was reliving again), I could never have tackled the project. He put up with late meals, skimpy meals, and meals out as these pages were produced. Now our two children, John and Margean Jr., will understand why we traveled the back roads so much.

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Dedication

To the bus drivers (and their successors) who drove their mechanical steeds with such *joie de vivre* and delivered me to my myriad destinations along the road of life.



Margean Worst 1942 on the farm

The Road Out There

It was 1946, I was 18, a college graduate, and about to become a spy. I was going to “hit the road”. But what was it like—this road—when I had hardly been out of Kalamazoo?

When World War II ended in September of 1945, life started again in the country. No more rationing of automobiles, tires, coffee, meat and sugar. Companies ratcheted up to supply new products and replace those worn out. Along with booming business came major strikes—1946 was the high point of work stoppages—in the railroad, shipping and coal industries. Concern about Communist influence in unions engaged the country.

By 1947 the average family made \$2,589 a year, with 81% making less than \$3,000. Lawyers made an average of \$7,437 and physicians, \$10,500. The average one-family house cost \$3,292 to build, exclusive of land; \$1,198 would buy a Ford two-door sedan—which you would fill with 21 cents a gallon gasoline. Whiskey was \$3.98 a fifth, Coca-Cola and Pepsi-Cola were 5 cents a bottle. Razor blades were 25 cents a dozen and cigarettes were \$1.34 a carton. There were no birth control pills.

An overnight room at the Y was 75 cents. A room in a good hotel cost about \$2.00. Most did not have a bathroom—you went down the hall for shared tub and toilet facilities. Rooms did have a small washbowl, raising suspicion that it had been used as a urinal! One was lucky to have a ceiling fan usually opening a window and the transom over the door for cross-ventilation got you natural air conditioning. There was no radio in the room: there was no TV yet.

In 1946 there were 3,316,538 miles of road in the country—80% unpaved! Sometimes only one lane was paved and a car could drive on that lane until meeting an oncoming car when one would have to take to the dirt. There were some brick paved roads. Most often, paved roads ended at the city limits. There were no Interstates.

Downtown was the hub of activity: there were no suburbs, no shopping malls, no motels. There were tourist cabins here and there, but most travelers stayed in hotels or tourist homes.

In rural areas, many families still did not have cars and it was not unusual to see wagons on the road and hitching posts in villages.

But all this was shortly to change.

I Prepare For The Road

My first road was Worst Road, the mile-long dirt stretch between 33rd and 35th south of Galesburg in Kalamazoo County. Locally it stayed “Worst Road” long after the county named it “East M Avenue”.

We had moved from Kalamazoo to the farm on the south side of that road in 1932. During those Depression times, my dad, John Worst, worked 6-hour shifts at Kalamazoo’s Sutherland Paper Company which gave him time to deal with the farm. Eventually, he would be night superintendent of their East-side mill. My mother, Dorothy Weber Worst, a city girl, fell in love with country life and soon could milk a cow, plant a garden, and deal with chickens and pigs—as well as with myself and my brother Gordon.

I remember relatives visiting, kittens in the haymow, the outhouse, kerosene lamps, neighbors stopping, chores, hired men, picking potatoes, thrashers, mice in the corn shocks—all the things that made up life in the country during the ‘30s. The world came to us through the Kalamazoo Gazette, farming magazines, Liberty, Life, The Saturday Evening Post, and a battery radio. Finally, in 1933, electricity arrived and technology started to change our lives – a milking machine for one thing, refrigerator for another.

Lessons were learned: self-reliance, responsibility, observation of the natural world, and family as the bedrock of life. My parents lived and taught these well.

My second road was down 33rd to where it meets Kilgore and where Comstock Fractional #1, the one-room, red brick schoolhouse built in 1868, still stands. It lacks the two outhouses and the long shed that could hold horses that it had then, but it does have electricity now. If you Google “kalamazoo comstock” and open the 1933 citation you can find me in the front row wearing an apron. I had started Kindergarten the day after my fifth birthday on February 28, 1933. That mile-long dirt road was well worth walking: true to all the things said about one-room schools, its teachers gave me a wonderful basic background and graduated me when I was eleven.

My third road was 35th, where, long before school buses, two-and-a-half miles of walking down Schram’s Hill and across the Kalamazoo River, brought me to Galesburg High School. Here were the “city kids” who didn’t have to go home to do chores: here were afternoon football games because there were no lighted fields then: here were penny-a-spoonful suppers that brought city and country together. Along the side of the assembly room that seated all the students, a row of bookcases held books and encyclopedias that were my first exposure to lots of reading material and my favorite reading was about other countries. The teachers mentored and monitored us through 1939-1943 and when the eighteen of us graduated, all the boys went off to war and most of the girls went off to work or marriage. I was fifteen and I was going off to college.

US 12 went through Galesburg on its way to Kalamazoo and was my road for the next three years. Western Michigan College of Education had gone on a year round schedule and filled its dormitories with V-12 and V-5 marines and sailors so I lived at home and rode the Great Lakes Greyhound Line through those years.

While I concentrated in history, political science, and social studies, my science requirement was filled by geography courses which became my favorite classes. I could visualize land, its features, its climates, and how these shaped the people that lived on it—my upbringing gave me background and empathy. This became the area that I wanted to specialize in. Dr. William Berry, head of the Geography Department, suggested the University of Chicago’s Geography Department and contacted them for me. Indeed, they would accept me, but all scholarships and fellowships were going

returning veterans.

~~So this eighteen-year-old was going to have to take time to earn money for Graduate School.~~ My thoughts turned to the Great Lakes Greyhound buses I had ridden for the past three years. I sent a letter requesting employment to its Inspection Department and was accepted. Although privately worrying, my parents never conveyed this to me—I was “sensible”.



My Saga Begins

What was this hush-hush spying business I was about to begin? It promised travel, adventure and money to go on to graduate school—this job as Company Inspector or Company Spy with the Great Lakes Greyhound Company. It would be a dream job for a young woman when the average teacher salary was \$1,277.00 a year.

Just 22 years old in 1946, the bus industry had “officially” started in Hibbing, Minnesota, hauling iron miners. It swiftly grew, and early on Greyhound and Trailways became recognized travel names. Smaller companies became objects of takeover, merger, and rivalry.

Because this was long before everyone had a car, buses could be flagged down at roadside and corners, and people paid cash to ride. Drivers pocketing this cash and not issuing a cash-fare ticket was a concern of the bus companies. Another concern was road safety and handling of expensive equipment. To deal with these issues, companies hired or maintained personnel to “check” on honest drivers, safety, and equipment handling. This I was about to learn how to do.

So off to Detroit I went, straight from the farm near Galesburg, Michigan, to the big city. New people, new places, twenty-hour workdays, report writing, and homesickness were conveyed to my farm parents in almost daily letters.

It took almost four years to get the sand out of my shoes and return to a “normal” life. Eventually I married, had two children, received an MLS and became a professional librarian, but I never forgot what America looked like before there were Interstates, when roads were unpaved, when the population was only 139,928,000, and when buses picked up and left off travelers at the crossroads in front of their homes.

In September of 2003, I was digging in my trunk and unearthed the forms, inspection training materials, report copies, and other memorabilia I had put there over 53 years before. Best of all, there was the thick notebook holding the typed copies of the hundreds of letters I had sent home. Deeply detailed, these kept my farm parents abreast of my life on the road—the work, the people, my adventures, and the country—in short, the bus transportation field, the inspection function, and the social conditions of the post-war era.

July 2, 1946

To John Prater
2503 David Stott Building
Detroit, Michigan

Dear Sir:

Having graduated and having spent a restful vacation, I am now awaiting a call to begin work. I am sending this reminder in order that I may make definite arrangements in regards to living space.

If a vacancy hasn't presented itself but is still pending, might I suggest that it would be timesaving if I were trained and ready to step into the position the moment that a vacancy occurred?

Very truly yours,

Margean Worst

July 8, 1946

To Margean Worst
From John Prater

Dear Miss Worst:

This will acknowledge receipt of your letter of July 2, concerning employment with this company. A vacancy does exist in this department and at such time as you are available for work in Detroit, I shall be ready to complete the necessary details for your employment. If your arrangements are completed by then, you may begin work on July 16, 1946.

Very truly yours,

John E. Prater
Great Lakes Greyhound Company



I Begin

My Periods Stop

I Faint

I Move

My Roommate is a Prostitute

The Beginning of the Drinking Affair

I Meet the President

July 15, 1946

From YWCA, Detroit, Michigan

Dear Ones: What a day: if I can only remember all that I'm supposed to remember. What with worrying about rooms, trying to read memoranda and the like, I nearly went crazy!

As you know, I've got my permanent room. Could anything be better than room and board with someone with whom I work and only twelve minutes from work? I'll tell you about her: she evidently been married twice or else her alias is Mrs. Week, because they call her both Mrs. Bork and Mrs. Week. Ella has a three-year-old daughter, Katy. Her husband at one time was a cop, then a inspector, and is now working for the gas company. He goes to work at 7:30 and I can ride down with him when I wish. She is enthusiastic about the work: in fact, she doesn't think it work! No one in the office does.

Tomorrow first thing, I have my physical, then to the office to study some more (and get paid for it), then at 3:00 we're going to Bay City on a special assignment. On said run, the driver has been making out cash fare tickets for less distance than actually traveled and pocketing the difference. So Mr. Prater has put four of us on checking for this. On the way back, we'll check an extra man [*a driver working the "extra board", available for "second sections" when there were too many passengers for the first bus, or to fill in for an ill or vacationing regular driver, or to pull non-bid assignments*].

All told, my day's pay starts at the doctor about 8:00 and finishes at 9:00, twelve hours. With the \$8 I made today, that makes \$20 for two day's "work". Not quite understanding it myself, I'll try to explain the pay system. We get \$8 for each day we "work", regardless of whether we spend it in the office, making out reports, making out our itinerary, or on the road; and everyone pads that time generously to try to make a 12-hour day out of it. We buy tickets out of our own money and get paid back the next payday: thus, always running two weeks behind in road expenses. Ella says that everyone in the office is perpetually broke, borrowing from the "kitty" to tide over until payday. The office is very generous in this, asking whether you need money: Ella came in this morning with 4 cents and left with \$5; Thurston Allen came in broke and left with \$40. We need, said Mr. Prater, about \$150 loose money for each two-week period: that's why I need all that money. Lord only know how this will resolve itself and when I'll be running at a profit. Any expenses connected with the job—telegrams, reservations, taxis, phone calls, mail, meals, hotel rooms, anything—go on our "swindle sheet"; that is, "anything within reason" quoting the manual. The expense account goes into effect only when we're out of Detroit.

More about the people with whom I work. Mrs. King, the office secretary, is an old hag (say that to others) who thinks inspectors are dirt: she has charge of keeping all run [*trip and driver*] information current and runs the office routine. The other secretary is a singer, beautiful, and hates single girls: she is to be married in October, likes to have the male inspectors notice and make over her, but asks Mr. Prater to put up bulletins against anyone putting their arm around her (you know the type). Consequently, she makes cutting remarks about Miss McKay, the other single inspector, and, I'm warned, will start on me pronto. She has charge of writing up our "quick draft" reports, which then go to the Main Office. More Ella: she loves to sew, makes lots of her clothes, and has a charge account at Kerns, a big department store; she worked before for Mr. Jakeway, didn't like him at all, thinks there's no one like our boss, an ex-FBI man. They all say the same thing, worship the ground he walks on, and say that he spoils one for ever working for anyone else—he's so fair, generous, kind-hearted, etc.—the whole force has a bad case of hero-worship. Miss McKay: a girl of 21 who belongs to the Baptist Church, loves her job, lives about two blocks from Mrs. Bork and goes with....Ted Frye: a dapper young man with philosophical reading tastes and four aliases. Next is Thurston Allen: an unmarried young man who spent all afternoon figuring out a five-day assignment only to have it go u

in smoke when he was assigned with us to this Bay City special report assignment. To date, this is all I know of our big, happy family.

I don't see how they get any work done in the office what with gossip, trade talk (which at the moment has me completely in the dark), trips to the "john" (which I now know means toilet), trips to get coffee, the boss coming in to chat, and mean looks from Mrs. King. By the way, Mr. Prater has told Ella my age...probably why she's taking such a motherly attitude towards me. More Ella—she's about 30, 5'8", auburn hair, built like a bean pole, laughs all the time, talks a mile-a-minute, has a swell sense of humor, and had me out with her on company time shopping for a gold kid belt.

Now, as to what my work consists of! My God! I'll never be able to remember everything. Forms for this; forms for that; forms for this company; forms for that company; forms for terminals; forms for drivers and other personnel; daily report forms; daily work-schedule forms; quick-freeze forms for Fares, cash fares, children, deadheads (*a non-driving driver riding on the bus*), employees—all to be kept track of; driver appearance and courtesy; operation of vehicle; safety, traffic, and rule violation and so much else that there's no use putting it down. We cover Capital Greyhound, Central Greyhound, Flint City Lines, Greyhound Detroit Suburban, Canadian Western, Great Lakes Greyhound and Valley Greyhound. This takes in all of Michigan, Ohio, Indiana, part of Illinois, Canada around the lakes, and Louisville, Kentucky, to Washington D.C. We are assigned drivers, and from this we map and route our itinerary. Our daily work schedule contains what we have done for that day, what we expect to do the next and where we may be reached. Then comes the fun: after making out the itinerary, it's usually our luck that the driver we're to check won't be on and our work's in vain. Over all of us hangs the awful fate of becoming "known" or being "turned up": we must feel like an ordinary passenger. So much for the business end.

It gives me a headache to even write about it. Still I'll make out. Everyone seems to have taken a liking to me and is helpful. They all love their work so I don't see why I can't do it and love it too. There is just so much to learn that right now I feel swamped. Don't worry. The room is settled. Ella will help me move. I'm working. It's 8:00 so must take a shower, do my exercises and go to bed.
Love, Margean

July 16, 1946

From YWCA, Detroit, Michigan

Dear Ones: This morning I woke up at 5:00 wide-awake. It's now 6:45 and I'm waiting for the "Y" Coffee Shop to open. I've been studying my map to locate West Grand Boulevard where I must go for my physical. Lord knows how I shall get back. This morning I'm wearing my gray dress with blue accessories.

Ella said that our tickets today may be \$6, Thursday, probably \$14. The Western Union mail office is just three blocks from work and I hope the money you're sending gets there soon.

More on work: Organized the first of the year, the aim of the office, never achieved, is to check each of its thousand-odd drivers four times a year. The first three months they hit about 50%, this last three months less because of all the special assignments. Ella rarely takes overnight runs: she has a daughter and husband to feed.

Now 8:20 at the West Detroit Clinic. Couldn't find the bus to take, so took a cab, 75 cents. Passed the physical: eyesight poor; blood pressure 112 (what does that mean?); a blood test and lots more. Back to town on a trolley.

At the office from 10:30 till 1:00 studying and learning from Ella: from 3:00 until 9:00 on the road; from 9:00 till 11:00 in my room writing reports. Ella left at 10:00 and I did one report all

myself; we will check and compare in the morning. A 14½-hour day, counting from the clinic until finishing reports!

As I said yesterday, there's so much to learn that I'm swamped, but things are gradually shifting into focus. Ella was very, very, very pleased with my work today. My watch isn't accurate or large enough and I really need a luminous dial. I will be getting a book of synonyms. Just try to think half-a-dozen words that mean courteous, clean, smooth and other things that have so many variants meaning and feeling.

Now if I can remember all the day's gossip. There are eight inspectors, and I've met them all with today's Mr. Cross and Mr. VanderWhy. All of us, except Cross, are under 30 and college grad except VanderWhy who is studying Police Administration at Michigan State. Mr. Cross and Ella are holdovers from Mr. Jakeway, who formerly ran the inspectors and was let go about the first of the year. There's a bulletin to the effect that anyone associating with him is to turn in a resignation.

You don't know the debate that went on about hiring me, an 18-year-old, and I've a sneaking suspicion that that is why I'm going to live at Ella's. Over and over I hear what a swell fellow Mr. Prater is. If I can only live up to the big hopes that Ella says he has for me.

Do you know, or can you guess, what my room and board will be? \$7.00 a week! Isn't that marvelous for a separate room and meals when I'm home? Ella is simply marvelous! Her husband is a big six footer weighing a mere 280 lbs. Whenever you come over bring some beef or a chicken for my new family.

There was much more, but I'm so tired I can hardly see. Tomorrow it's more study and a run to Flint again. There are four of us on one run for four days to check cash fares. That means work from 10:00 a.m. (at office, on road, and on reports) till 11:00 p.m. at least. Letters will be short and sketchy especially after filling out six report forms as I've just done. I'm dead! Love, Margean

July 17, 1946

From YWCA, Detroit, Michigan

Dear Ones: Worked 9 hours today. Didn't go to Flint: McKay and Allen beat us and there was no double [same as "second section", an additional bus when there are too many passengers for the first bus]. Back to the office and inside of half an hour we were out checking suburbans [bus service nearby suburbs]: what a beating. We rode the Wyandotte Division from Gratiot Avenue to Ecorse. I won't attempt to put down all that went into the report, but it was a harrowing experience for which we "panned" the driver to the limit. The bus back was much better.

I've gone through everything in the office except the "blueprints" which show the location of every driver every minute of his time. From these we ascertain whom we are going to catch. Tomorrow morning I'm to make out an itinerary for Ella and myself. I want to do more interurban [bus service between cities], as that will become my chief duty: I intensely dislike suburban work—the form is hellish!

Thanks so much, I received the money this morning. It came last night, but I forgot to check the desk when I came in with Ella. I had no trouble getting it cashed, and it reposes securely in my bra and girdle. It makes me feel easier. Payday falls on the 5th and 20th, so everyone is broke right now. Sticking around Detroit doing suburbans, six inspections costing only 60 cents.

You should see the information we have on drivers. Almost all of my old Kalamazoo to Detroit drivers are up for re-inspections. (That means that if a driver is inspected and rather serious violations are turned up, he is automatically re-inspected within 30 days: in the event that this inspection reveals the same fault, another inspection is given, after which severe disciplinary action is taken).

We have one driver on the Jackson to Kalamazoo run that I know. Every inspector, male and female, is actually afraid to ride with him. Because of these automatic re-inspections, he was suspended for three months, but I saw him on extra board just two weeks ago. Mentioning this to Ella she surmised that he must have pulled somewhere because his three months aren't up yet.

They throw the book at just about every driver I know. Having ridden with them for three years, I may be prejudiced in their favor. Saw an old copy of "Greyhound News" today, and who should stare out at me but one of my old drivers. Thinking back it would be hard to find anything to "throw at him", but that was before I knew about cash fares and issuing receipts and other stuff.

I move Sunday to Ella's and she is coming after me. Had some good meals today, but I'm just not hungry, rather from nervous strain or heat, I don't know. Well, I'm tired, but must press, wash up, do some things, take a bath and do exercises. By 9:05 I should be in bed. Love, Margean

July 18, 1946

From YWCA, Detroit, Michigan

Dear Ones: Here it is 12:30 a.m. and I've just finished my reports. I put in fourteen hours. Today we were told that a new pay policy went into effect the 15th. We are now paid a flat rate of \$1 an hour plus tickets and an out-of-town per diem of \$7. Figuring by that, I've already made nearly \$50 this week.

I was over to Ella's for a delicious liver and bacon dinner today. Her little girl is at the stage where she keeps asking the same questions. Ella is a college grad who married at 25 and is now 30. Her husband is a huge man and does he eat! This shaded brick duplex should be cool. My room tastefully furnished with twin bed, bookcase, dresser, table and rocker, is cozy. I believe this will work out fine. As I don't go to work until 3:00 tomorrow, I'll move one bag of clothing.

I've gotten my previous reports back from JP (John Prater, boss, that is). Two misspelled words. Very little checked wrong, just need fuller explanations. By the way, I made a special report on the Comstock congestion on the early morning run into Kalamazoo which results from the ticket agent not opening when the drugstore does: the report is going through.

The men I'm working with are certainly a nice bunch. While in the office today, Allen, who is usually given the special assignments, gave me pointers on out-of-town travel and hotels. Ella says that I need never be afraid to inspect out with Frye, Cross, Allen, or any other for that matter. In fact, I'll have to.

By the way, before I can work any Canadian runs, I must have my birth certificate. Please send it.

It is 12:50 a.m.: I'm dead! This is a horrible scribble, but after all those reports in good penmanship, my fingers can hardly guide a pen. My first paycheck ought to be well over \$100 and I shall be able to send back much of what I've borrowed. Love, Margean

July 20, 1946

From YWCA, Detroit, Michigan

Dear Ones: Just a line while I'm waiting for Ella to come and move my belongings. That is, she is coming if she doesn't have to sing at two weddings this morning. A college-trained contralto, she sings in Church and at weddings.

I'm going to Flint by myself today just to see what I can do. Then tonight, maybe, I'll do a suburban or two.

Yesterday we started out at 3:00 p.m. to do six Mt. Clemens and Birmingham suburbans. I can see right now that my daily capacity will be three or four: six I cannot keep separated in my mind. The last ride, from Royal Oak to Detroit, was terrible, a "cowboy"! Everything in the book he did wrong: weaving, crowding, cutting in, running lights. His multitude of sins caused me to spend 45 minutes writing him up.

Naturally I'm making plans on the how and when we can see each other. Anything you bring over in the line of meat and vegetables for us would be nice. We'll eat at Greenfields, a cafeteria, and absolutely the best place in Detroit to eat. What good stuff! What large helpings! What tasteful presentation!

I'm losing weight and my dresses are hanging. This isn't because I'm not eating but because I'm not getting enough sleep. I have been going to bed so late and then waking up at 6:00 unable to get back to sleep. One day I got 3½ hours, another 4, and last night the longest, 6 hours. I'm not tired though.

I hope everything is fine at home. I really miss the country, although I can't say that I'm really homesick for I'm too busy. I look forward to letters from you, especially one containing my birth certificate. Love, Margean

July 20, 1946

From Detroit, Michigan

Dear Ones: Two letters in one day is really too much, but I might as well relate my adventures.

After doing some work in the office, I caught my bus, alone, to Flint. I got along just swell with my "audit" (passenger count) and everything went fine. You should have seen me. We take our notes on easy-to-hide, little 2x3" spiral-bound notebooks and use pencils about 1¼ inch long. Anyway, I put this notebook in my white rain-hat on my lap, along with my raincoat, pocketbook, and a paper-bag filled with two small books, raincoat belt, map, schedule and gloves, and wrote my notes with my hand in the hat. There's a catch to it: I have to immediately decipher the notes after leaving the bus.

If I didn't look like an average passenger, I'll eat my hat. It was 98. There I was, carrying coat, pocketbook, bag and hat, sweat on my face, my hair down, chewing gum, and grumbling with everyone else. I waited in line for that 11:15 bus from 11:00 until 11:57, and finally got on the third section: my aching feet!

Coming home showed my good pre-work, bus-waiting tactics. There was a mob of us at the Flint terminal with everyone pushing to beat the dickens. When the driver pulled in, he stopped exactly in front of me. Now the next is mean and I'm ashamed to tell you: there were about five inches between me and the door, and this woman next to me literally fell into that five inches trying to beat me in. She "fell" in sideways, so I just took my elbow and gave a good, sharp, hard shove and back she went. The driver had seen her and wouldn't load her at all. Three people getting on the bus congratulated me on "getting the situation under control." I found it was easier to make this run alone, I could concentrate on all the things I had learned.

I believe I'll go north. I don't have it made out yet, but I think I'll go some morning to Flint and have a layover [wait time between bus rides] for the next Bay City bus. Stop there for the day and write reports; then the next day leave Bay City at 1:34 a.m., arrive at Mackinaw City at 7:00, stop over for the day and turn back. Something like this would give me light runs, practice and over-night pay.

Got your letter: you capitalists! And here I am in the hole for three months with what I've borrowed and a watch and prescription sunglasses to buy. This long trip will make a nice indentation. How about insurance, Dad? See what you can get for me and take the money out of our joint account.

(when we get it). With some of the drivers like the one last night, I'll need it. Love, Margean

July 21, 1946

From Detroit, Michigan

Dear Ones: Well, I've moved and everything is pressed and put away. Although meat is terribly scarce and terribly high, we had a great company dinner with Ella, her husband, her brother, Kat myself, and co-worker Mary McKay. It's now 8:00 and they've gone on a picnic. I was too tired, and besides, this is the first time all week I've been able to relax and listen to a radio.

It's always cool here with big shade trees all along the street. It's a good section of town, only twelve minutes to work by bus or twenty-eight by trolley. Just around the corner are stores, cleaning establishments, a movie theater and a lot of general shops; you can find anything you want.

When my birth certificate gets here, I've got only Windsor and Pontiac suburbans to train on. Probably by next Thursday I'll be my own boss. Starting tomorrow there's a new system inaugurated in the office: instead of having drivers assigned to us, we pick the ones we want, go after them, and if we don't get them, they go back into the unassigned section. This way it's easier to plan an itinerary, and it's also much easier for me to stay off suburbans.

The way to make the real money is to get out of town and stay out: you make at least \$15 a day that way. The trouble with everyone, except Mr. Cross, is that they don't keep enough money on hand so that they can go out and stay one to two weeks: they run out the first week and have to stick in town doing suburbans until payday. I hate suburbans, although they're really easier except for the form. I'm going to try to keep \$100-\$150 running money for each two-week period.

The inspectors, collectively eight, draw about \$2500 a month and the company figures that each report costs \$10. That's a lot of money and a lot of responsibility resting upon an inspector's shoulders.

I hope to God I turn out well: if will to work makes competency, someday I ought to be "crackerjack". I know right now it's the best thing for my personality that I could ever have done: will develop self-reliance and self-assurance, neither of which I now have. I can't tell you how much I like the people I'm working with. They all have so much poise coming from being sure of themselves and their ability to handle a situation. I only have pseudo-poise from keeping my mouth shut, trying to appear sophisticated and not asking questions about everyday big city occurrences of which I am so appallingly ignorant. If I just open my mouth one knows I've never been around. I haven't a line of free and easy chatter or a snappy comeback. The office atmosphere is one of staccato wit, most of which passes over my head. I never was a good mixer and I'm more acutely aware of that than ever now. What rambling! Still it's true, I feel out of place. But the work and the way it's organized are fascinating.

How about more letters, more news. Remember anything is news to me: even the most trivial thing, like the humming bird, calls up remembrances of a home that meant, and means, so much to me. Love, Margean

July 27, 1946

From Detroit, Michigan

Dear Ones: Arrived back last night safe and sound at 1:05 a.m. and took a taxi home (\$1.15). I'm writing this in the office while Mrs. King is out to lunch, then I'm leaving for Toledo. Will probably

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