

Diary of Tim Mikkelsen

May 1994 through October 1996

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Forward

When I started this diary, I wasn't sure exactly why I was writing it. At various times (and mostly) it was a mechanism for me to deal with the stress. At various times, I was hoping that I would eventually be able to let Virginia read it. But, that, sadly, can not happen. I also, at times wrote it with the thought that my children and their children may someday read this. I am not sure if I want Mandy and Ben to read it because it has been a very difficult and sad two and a half years. I don't want them to be sad. If anybody does read it, I have left this the way I wrote it. It is a window into my life and how I had tried to deal with this terrible part of my life.

Tim Mikkelsen
October 4th, 1996

Prologue

My life has been turned upside down since May 13th when I found out that Virginia had a brain tumor. These notes are my diary of what has been going on during this tumultuous period. I think the main reason I'm writing this down is to serve as a type of release and to deal with the emotions and stress. This is written as I remember it, to the best of my abilities.

Tim Mikkelsen
May 30th, 1994

Prelude

Virginia had been having what we thought were severe sinus headaches. She had gone in to our family doctor since late April or early May. Our doctor, Dr. Merkel, prescribed regular antibiotics. She was really tired and had severe headaches. On her birthday and Mother's day, she wasn't able to go out and do anything. She just rested at home. I needed to drive Virginia to the last of her final exams. She went in again and Dr. Merkel prescribed stronger antibiotics. By the 11th or 12th, things were still not better, and Virginia made an appointment to get into an allergist.

She has also mentioned that, in retrospect, she had some vision changes. She said that there was a sense of 'no sharp edges'. This wasn't so much a fuzziness or lack of focus. The way she describes it, it sounds more as a perception change than vision. She also said that one night, before the hemorrhage, things 'snapped back'. This was the only way that she really knew that something was going on. She also mentioned a metallic taste in her mouth (again in retrospect).

May 1994

Friday, May 13th

On Friday the 13th, I drove Virginia to the allergist appointment. The allergist found yeast in her sinuses. (This turns out to have been a normal reaction to the high antibiotic levels.) I got her prescription filled and got her home (and I went back to work - we were in the middle of trying to figure out what to do strategically at the division - again). I got home that evening and she was looking better. We ordered pizza from Pizza Hut. She ate some (her appetite had not been great over the last week). She was resting after supper. I went upstairs to work on the computer for a few minutes. Ben called up that mom was in pain.

She was sitting up, shouting about the pain in her head. I got her a pill (for the yeast) and

started to get her upstairs. I was able to get her from the couch to the foot of the stairs. She was unable to help and I was able to get her down on the floor. I called Dr. Merkel's service and got a call back from one of the other doctors. I described the symptoms and he said to get her to the emergency room. I couldn't get her there myself, so I called 911 for an ambulance. This was all around 8:00 PM.

During this time, Ben and Mandy got very scared. Ben went down into his room. He later said that he thought about it and realized he wasn't helping, and came back up and was very helpful. He held her hand while she was lying there. I was very proud of him. Mandy was very distressed and was crying. I think I snapped at her to leave the room (and I feel very badly about that). It was very traumatic for her and I am not bothered by her reaction. She has been dealing with this by, mostly, holding things inside.

A fire and rescue got to us first. They came in and took the information about the symptoms. Thinking back about their reaction and approach, they recognized that something serious was wrong. The ambulance came and they put her on a stretcher. In the process, Virginia threw up. She was conscious off and on during this period. They got her into the ambulance. They said for me to follow them in the car. I had the kids go down to Larissa Schendel's house (a new friend of Mandy's). Following the ambulance, they turned on the lights (to my surprise). I kept following them - because they said to. I only did one 'marginal' driving move on Horsetooth right near College (going through a left turn lane, but going straight). After we turned left on Lemay, a policewoman pulled me over. She didn't arrest me, but told me that I was making the ambulance driver nervous. This was around 9:00 PM.

I got the hospital and did the pre-admitting stuff while they were running a CT scan. I also called Cindy about this and told her to take care of the kids. Cindy had gotten to the hospital by 11, I think. The kids were at Mandy's friend's house. After what seemed to be a long time, the emergency room doctor came in and told me that they

had found a brain tumor on the CT scan. (Virginia told me later that she had been in the CT machine and heard them say that it was a brain tumor. She called out that it was only a sinus infection.)

Dr. Donn Turner, the neurosurgeon, came in after the scan. (He lives in our neighborhood, and Virginia knew his wife slightly.) He said he thought that the tumor was a very serious one - a grade 3 or 4 astrocytoma. The tumor had hemorrhaged. If he did not operate, she would not have any chance of recovery, and would die within 24 hours. The tumor was lemon-sized and in the right parietal lobe. It had pushed the center line of the brain a great deal to the left. He said that the tumor would mostly recur and the prognosis was that Virginia would survive between 3 months and 2 years - but that it would be back. He also was unsure of how much mental or physical damage would have done - although it occurred on the non-dominant side - which was somewhat hopeful. But, I had to decide to let her die or take the chances of reduced mental and physical capacity. At this point, the outcome did not look good. I had decided to let Virginia die. This was colored in part by our shared understanding of each other and the high risk of mental damage. It was also affected by my experience with my mother - where I decided to try to keep her alive. This ultimately resulted in my mom dying about 3 weeks later.

Virginia was not conscious at this point. After I told Turner about my decision, he went over and looked at her pupils. The right pupil had been dilated (a bad sign). When he looked again, the pupil contracted, this indicated that the brain had responded to the mannitol (an alcohol sugar-substitute) and the damage was not yet too severe. He also called out and Virginia responded. I asked her if she wanted to live, to have another year or two. She called out: "Yes, I want another year or two". I told Turner to go ahead and operate.

During this whole ordeal, I kept wanting to wake up - this just couldn't be real. We were good people, we hadn't done anything wrong. I also cried some. I called Virginia's folks that evening letting them know what was going on.

Saturday, May 14th

Cindy and I stayed at the hospital. The surgery went on from around 1:00 AM through around 3:00 AM. She was moved up to the Neurological Intensive Care Unit at about 3:30 AM. She was intubated (to help her breathe in case there was some trouble caused by the surgery).

I had put a 'DNR' - Do Not Resuscitate - order on her chart. At this point I wasn't sure what was going to happen. And if things went badly, I did not want Virginia to end up in a vegetative state if her heart stopped and they revived her. This felt very strange and I did not like doing this. But, I also felt that I had to make conscious and mature choices about things - I had to be an adult.

Dr. Turner said it could be 1 to 4 days before Virginia regained consciousness. So, I went home to get some sleep. Obviously, I did not sleep very well. I went through a range of emotions. One thought was that I did not want to be alone - Virginia and I are supposed to be together. I had always expected to die first - of some heart disease related problem (because of my family history). I also thought a lot about having to be strong and stable for the kids. I didn't know if Virginia was going to live or die.

Before I got back early Saturday morning, Virginia regained consciousness. This was very fast. By noon, I think, they had removed the breathing support. She was obviously aware and still her. This was a tremendous relief. But, things were still pretty tenuous.

Dr. Turner saw good muscle tone in her left side and was able to get reflex reactions. There was also some sensation. But he said it would be another 1-2 weeks before we would know what, if anything, would come back on that side. Dr. Turner warned me that the recovery would be slow.

Art and Lee, Virginia's parents, came in Saturday afternoon. They had not gotten much sleep Friday night after I called. I didn't really hesitate calling - I would want to know immediately if something was going on with Mandy or Ben. They did not tell the rest of the family back in Des Moines until Saturday morning. Art said that Vickie did not take it very well.

Monday, May 16th

Virginia has been improving quite a bit. So, they moved her from neurological intensive care unit to the regular neurological floor. She is able to eat well, but there is some slight loss of sensation on the left side of her face.

They have been doing tests to see how she is doing. The left side is still not moving, but has sensation. She is very groggy from the surgery, but did very well on the speech therapist's screen. The only thing that she did poorly on was some shopping and math related portions.

She gets very tired. Someone has been spending the night with her every night (myself, Cindy or Art and Lee). I feel better with someone there.

Wednesday, May 18th

They finished up the speech screening. They do not have any speech therapy scheduled because she is doing great. I think the nurses and aides and doctors do wonder about Virginia, because of her sense of humor. She appears to be mentally

unaffected and makes her normal jokes and snide comments. A lot of the staff doesn't get them (and I think they think she is confused or babbling).

In the evening, I was at home with the kids. Lee, Art and Joyce were over at the hospital. Virginia needed to go to the bathroom and the nurse asked everyone to step out - which they did. The nurse felt she had to step out for just a minute. Unfortunately, she did not ask anyone to step in to help (and they were all out in the hallway. While the nurse was out, Virginia fell off the toilet and hit her head. Fortunately, she hit on her forehead and not on the surgical area. I came over shortly after this happened. I am not very happy and talked with one of the nurses about this. Apparently the nurse responsible felt very bad about this (AND SHOULD!).

Thursday, May 19th

Virginia was moved from the neurological floor to life skills rehabilitation floor.

Friday, May 20th

Virginia moved her left leg a little. This was a big deal. It gave me a great deal of hope.

Saturday, May 21st

Art and Lee brought the kids and lunch over to the hospital. We ate down in the courtyard by the cafeteria. Virginia was very alert and was awake for a long time.

Sunday, May 22nd

I came over early in the morning. While Virginia was in the bathroom, she had a seizure. This was just a few seconds, but it was very scary.

Because of the seizure and a rash and some swelling they did another CT scan. They were looking for an infection. One doctor wanted to do a spinal tap, but Virginia got pretty pissed off about this and said no. Art and Lee were going home. But because of this, Lee stayed on. It turns out that Virginia had a reaction to the Dilantin (the anti-seizure drug) that caused a rash and the fever (up to 103 degrees Fahrenheit).

Thursday, May 26th

Lee went back home. This didn't get too emotional (which was a bit of a surprise to me). Virginia got the staples out. She also had an MRI (magnetic resonance imaging) scan.

Friday, May 27th

Dr. Turner saw Virginia in the hospital, and gave her the news about the MRI (before I got there). There was another tumor deeper in her brain which is surgically inaccessible. Virginia and I talked about this. Obviously, this was very depressing to Virginia. She had wanted the tumor to be removed and then work through the other therapies to make sure it was all gone. I wish that I would have been there when Turner talked to her.

I did talk with Turner later that morning. I drove the few blocks from the hospital to his office. (Remember that the tumor was revealed on Friday the 13th, it struck me as very odd that Turner's office address was 1313.) He told me the same basic information, but with some more detail. He felt that this was not unexpected. The location of the other tumor (approximately walnut size) was next to the thalamus. He was not unhappy with how things were going with Virginia. He felt that it was as good as we could have expected given how things looked on the 13th. He thought there would be some improvement in her left side condition, but not radical leaps. He felt the prognosis was that the tumor would recur in 6 months to 3 years, probably on the longer side of the period. Again, he mentioned that she would retain her functions through to near the recurrence of the tumor. All in all, not a pleasant discussion.

Virginia was released from the hospital and we got home around 11:30PM.

Sunday, May 29th

We (Virginia, Cindy, Ben and I) got out to the mall for a little bit. We had lunch there and did a little bit of shopping.

Tuesday, May 31st

Virginia had a series of 3-4 small seizures early in the morning. I called Turner's office about this (and got a partner). These make Virginia very tired. She went to bed to rest. Since I couldn't really do that much, I went into work. I attended a staff meeting that my new boss had called. It was supposed to be fairly long involving a discussion of the new organization, but I only stayed a while. I did pretty well and contributed, but it was very strange and I was very worried about Virginia.

June 1994

Wednesday, June 1st

We saw Dr. Turner. He did not provide a lot of information. He ordered up another CAT scan for the swelling and for the seizures.

We saw Dr. McIntosh in the afternoon. He recognized the rash as being another medication reaction (the Tegretol). He got Virginia on a third anti-seizure medication - Fibutol.

Thursday, June 2nd

Saw Dr. DiBiose. Saw the MRI photos. The remaining tumor looked a lot bigger than I had imagined. The visit to DiBiose took a lot longer than expected so we got back somewhat late. I took Ben to "son's day" at HP. He got to see some demos (and sent me some e-mail). Then there was a panel session (in which I participated). This was rather fun to do.

We (Cindy, Ben, Virginia and I) went out to Mandy's last concert of the year. The band sounded really good. It was very strange sitting there and having some people look at us - they obviously wanted to know what was going on.

Virginia is still very restless and itchy.

Friday, June 3rd

Because of the swelling and the second seizure, we went in for the CT scan that Turner ordered. This went pretty well, but was pretty tiring.

Saturday, June 4th

Julie came in. I went out and got a mattress and frame (a decent bed) and a night stand. Since Julie and everybody else is going to be out to help, I wanted to make the room as comfortable as possible.

Virginia is feeling better, but she has some edema in her left leg.

Sunday, June 5th

Virginia, Mandy, Julie and I went to Nate Turley's fourth birthday party at Roland Moore Park. Virginia was feeling pretty good, but her left leg is still a little swollen.

I'm forgetting things - I was supposed to call Susan Ison back about going down to her place. I totally forgot this. I think it is stress related.

It has been a little over three weeks since this all started. In some ways it doesn't seem that long and in others it seems to have lasted forever. I am going to start going into work again - trying to get things back to a more normal state.

Monday, June 6th

I went back to work for a bit today. Part way through the day, I found out that Alan had his regular staff meetings on Mondays from 11:30AM to 1PM. I went to that and had my lunch there.

I called Vickie and had a good discussion about what was happening with Virginia. Vickie was going to be coming out and bringing Angela. I expressed my concern about how Angela might deal with it. Vickie responded really well to this. (I had been concerned, but had to ask since Virginia's well being is involved.) Vickie felt that Angela would do just fine, but would talk with her.

Wednesday, June 8th

Before Virginia's treatment, I suggested that Virginia call Pam (a brain tumor survivor). Virginia talked to her for about 10-15 minutes. This seemed to help Virginia. Pam made a comment about the linkage between yeast and yeast infections and its impact on the body's immune system. This really clicked for Virginia - she has had serious yeast infection bouts over the last year.

We went to Virginia's first radiation treatment. Went well, but Virginia did get tired. Found out that DiBiase is quitting and leaving in 2 weeks. Not thrilled, but I think we have already gotten a lot of the value from him at this point. Virginia got somewhat emotional.

I went to Mandy's school and picked her up. She had some foam cushions (from an old couch) that she had made into a wall for 'Romeo and Juliet'. She also had a small part in the play. (But this was an in school production - so we didn't see it.) I went to Ben's market day (a simulated economy) at his school.

Mandy has been moody. Virginia has noticed this. I had a brief talk with her. I worry about her getting really upset and getting suicidal.

Virginia had a deep nap in the afternoon. After she woke up, we went out to BeauJo's pizza for dinner. She seemed to be feeling pretty good.

I think it was tonight that Vickie called and said that Angela would not be coming out. She had asked Angela and Angela was concerned about how she would react. I am very happy about this because it means that Vickie can concentrate on Virginia.

Tonight I am really feeling the stress and overload. I am still worried about Virginia (obviously), the kids, my job, myself. The kids are getting on my nerves. I had asked Ben to get ready for bed (already pretty late) and he putters around getting something ready for school that I said that I would. After telling him several times to stop and get ready for bed, I get really upset at him and we both go to bed pretty upset at each other. Things feel very out of control and indeterminate. It is somewhat like I'm on a roller-coaster and I can't control it or get off of it and with no clue as to how long it is.

I range from being very positive about Virginia beating the cancer to very pessimistic. At various points I think about funeral arrangements and at others I think about how soon Virginia will be able to finish her degree. I know that I've been surly with everybody tonight. It is obvious that I need to lighten up and take care of myself. But, even though it is obvious, it is very hard to do.

Thursday, June 9th

We went through Virginia's second radiation treatment. This went a lot better. However, we talked with the nurse afterward and Virginia got a little emotional. This doesn't bother me. She is entitled. During this, the nurse warned us about 'thrush' - supposedly a side effect of the steroids and/or radiation. The nurse checked Virginia's mouth and she had it - it is a whitish coating of the mouth. Part way through this, the nurse mentioned that thrush is a yeast infection (YET ANOTHER!). I don't know if Virginia and I are fixating on a secondary problem, but she had lots of yeast infections prior to the tumor event and was treated for a vaginal yeast infection in the hospital, and now this. It seems like it could be a possible source of the problem (yeast infections can screw up a person's immune system). Dr. DiBiose prescribed an anti-fungal. It turns out this is the same anti-fungal that the allergist had prescribed on May 13th.

Dr. DiBiose also took this opportunity to mention that he was going to be moving and the following Friday was his last day. Although not a super big deal, one of the therapists was taking vacation and another put a different therapist on Virginia's case (because of some muscle problems). All this made me realize that I wanted some sense of continuity and support from these various people.

Virginia went out with Julie to look for wigs. She bought two synthetic hair wigs. This made her feel really good. They went to some place in Loveland called

Probasco's (I think). Apparently it is a wig and bible store. According to Julie and Virginia, the sales lady talked non-stop.

I went into work for a little while. I went out and picked up some gift certificates at a book store for Ben's 4th grade teacher (Mrs. Friehauf) and his special education teacher (Mrs. Sanders). Then I picked Ben up at school. We got home and found out he had forgotten his lunch box. We drove back and got it and went out to wash the mini-van.

We (Virginia, Mandy, Ben, Julie and I) went out to see a movie tonight. We saw Maverick. Virginia stayed awake for quite a while, but got very tired in the second half of the movie. But she seemed to enjoy it (with her new wig).

Friday, June 10th

Virginia had a checkup with Dr. Turner. This went pretty well. He said to drop her anti-swelling medicine down to one tablet a day. He seemed impressed by her improvement in her leg. I also got him to sign a handicapped parking form. I hope that we won't need it very long.

We then went for Virginia's third radiation treatment. This went well, but she gets very sleepy afterward. I checked with DiBiose about the reduction in anti-swelling. I checked because I don't necessarily trust them - they do their own thing without any 'program management' or formal process.

I went into work again. Even though the days are pretty short, I get very sleepy and groggy around 2:30. I worked until after 5 PM. Things are as confused as always at work.

I stopped off at the grocery store on the way home. This was a mistake - going shopping on an empty stomach. I ended up getting \$75 worth of groceries. When I got home, Virginia was practicing moving her left arm. This was on a table with a towel underneath, but it was one of the first clearly visible movements. It was great! She is improving a lot, but because I am around a lot, I don't get as big of a sense of change as I should. I know Virginia has this same sense as well. But things are clearly getting better. She also got measured for a leg brace during one of the therapies.

Mandy and Julie went out to shop and eat dinner. Virginia, Ben, Cindy and I ordered a pizza. Virginia stayed up for a while (till around 8PM), but got very tired. Then Ben and I went out to look for his end of school present/reward. He has done very well at school this year. This went pretty well, but toward the end, he was tired and got very upset when I wouldn't loan him some money to buy a toy. When we got back, we went downstairs and cleaned up his stuff from the last day of school.

I get tired of people asking how it is going. Several people want to know about the tumor - was it malignant. In general I don't get specific, but say something about no brain tumor being benign. Lots of people are really helping, but some are just annoying.

Saturday, June 11th

Virginia slept very well, but woke up very groggy. She did not feel very good all morning long. She had a headache. I got her some Advil. Her edema on her head looked a little bit bigger in the morning. Because of the headache, I gave her a second Decadron (anti-swelling medicine).

Vickie flew in today. Virginia and Vickie got a little emotional at the airport, but not that much. Virginia, Cindy and Julie had arranged with Joyce to get me out of the house. So, Virginia, Ben, Cindy and Vickie went to the mall for lunch after they dropped me off at home. I know they are trying to help. When Joyce got to the house, we spent about an hour working through the insurance forms (she had agreed to help me with them). After that we went out, at the same time that Virginia and everyone got back from the mall. We went to Walrus for some ice cream. It was nice talking with Joyce, but we ended up talking primarily about Virginia and the cancer and its prognosis. So, I didn't really get that far away from all of the stresses. But, the thought was appreciated.

While we were at Walrus, an acquaintance (Mark Mackensie from HP) saw me and asked how Virginia was doing. He had seen Virginia and I at the hospital several weeks ago when we were sitting outside. He had heard from someone that it was brain cancer. Still all very strange.

Joyce was helpful, but I can see her struggling with this whole situation. She has a lot of unresolved emotions associated with her mother's death (of cancer). I think her mom died about 10 years ago.

After Walrus, I asked Joyce to take me to Target so I could get Ben his television (to reward him for his good report card and effort during the school year). When we got back, Ben still wasn't done with his Saturday chores. I asked him to try and finish them. I put on some Mozart. (He seems to do much better on homework and chores with classical music.) With all the help, I didn't do much, but we had barbecued burgers, hot dogs and some catfish (for Virginia).

Towards the end of the day Virginia was feeling much better and very chipper. She did some therapy (and did really well with her leg and knee). Julie was using this to help pass off information to Vickie and I. After this, Virginia stayed up and we all watch 'LA Story' on laser-disc. (Julie hadn't seen this before.) After that we watched some of a National Geographic program on caves. Virginia finally got to bed around midnight. She did really well today.

Sunday, June 12th

We got up and took Julie to the airport. Mandy and Ben stayed home with Cindy. Virginia was a little emotional when Julie said good-bye. Julie has been great. She has a great set of skills - encouraging but focused. I think she is probably a great teacher. On the way back, we get McDonald's for lunch (not very healthy...). Virginia is pretty tired today.

I went out to do some shopping with Mandy. We stopped at Target and Best Buy. I am looking for a better monitor or intercom. (The one I bought at Sam's doesn't work very well.) I finally find a pretty good one at Radio Shack. While we are at the mall, I get Mandy some Dairy Queen ice cream. We then go to the grocery store. I am also looking for a movie that Virginia wants to watch - 'The Man With Two Brains' with Steve Martin. They don't have it, but Mandy gets 'Robin Hood - Men in Tights'. I went out later and got Virginia her movie at a regular video store. For supper, I fixed pizza dough in the bread maker so we could do home-made pizzas.

Cindy is starting to get on the kids' nerves (and vice versa). She has been a great help, but is still not used to living with people. We got the Robin Hood movie and Cindy takes it downstairs and starts watching it. She apparently didn't think to check if anybody else wanted to watch it. I think she is used to living alone. I also see that she acts differently when she, Virginia and Vickie are all together. She and Ben have been picking at each other as well. I have mixed emotions about this - she has been incredibly helpful and supportive, but she doesn't know how to deal with the kids. (Of course, I'm not particularly effective myself at times.)

In retrospect, I can see that I am stressed out and concerned about Virginia's recovery and how slow it is. Cindy and the kids are getting on my nerves in part due to my concern for Virginia and in part due to their interactions with each other.

Monday, June 13th

It has been a month since this all started. In some ways it feels like yesterday, but mostly it feels like it has been years. I am going in to work and seeing how it goes with just Vickie taking Virginia to her radiation therapy. This works out well for Virginia - so she says. I actually did a fair amount of work, but I still have some trouble concentrating.

At the start of the day, Virginia is obviously feeling better. I don't feel as bad going to work when she is feeling good.

Part way through the day, I return a call from a woman, Amy Shao, who works for HP in the Bay Area. I saw her respond to a question in alt.cancer.support (a network

notes group). She left me some voice mail. She had a grade 3 brain tumor in her non-dominant parietal lobe. She went through surgery, radiation, a second surgery and 2 different chemotherapy treatment cycles. She is at 5 years since her last treatment and appears to be cancer free. I tell Virginia about this.

I leave work around 4PM and do some errands. I needed to pick up a will at our lawyer's office, because she is going on leave. I also look around for some grab-bars for the shower. Virginia is awake when I get home. She had only a short nap and has had a very good day. After supper, she and I go out to Builder's Square for a grab-bar (since I can't find a better place). Part of the reason is that I am trying to get a nice looking one (white) as opposed to the industrial stainless-steel variety. After this we stop off at Target. All-in-all, a good day. When we get home, Butch Hoxmeier is pulling weeds in our yard. People have been incredibly helpful. I don't know how I can thank them for all that they have done.

I still want our life back and I see the chance for that. I am also concerned about what else could go wrong. But, I know that worrying won't do any good. I try to concentrate on doing what I can to make things turn out for the best. Progress at times seems great, but the next seems tortuously slow. I hope that Virginia will be walking by the middle of the summer (mid-July) and in good shape (physical and emotional aspects) by the end of the summer. I suspect her hand might not come back very well, but I think she will get good arm motion by the end of the summer. I hope that it all comes back, but I don't know. She has mentioned several times that the tumor is dead. I don't tell her any different, but I think that it takes quite a while.

Virginia was very restless and got up around 11:30PM. She was obsessing about an X-ray that the radiation folks took. She wants to see it very badly. We talked about this (Virginia, Vickie, Cindy and I). I explained that it was just a positioning test and would not show anything. (She wants to see what is happening to the tumor.) I explained about how the MRI is the diagnostic tool of choice - X-rays show almost nothing and CT scans are limited in value. I then explained the process and how it wouldn't make any sense to do a scan until the fall (like October). Then her brain will have recovered from the radiation. She seemed to accept this pretty well. I also said I thought the slight headaches and swelling were a sign that the radiation and her body were fighting the tumor. The swelling was caused by fluid which are a normal side-effect of white-cells and T-cells attacking and killing the tumor.

After this discussion, Virginia, Vickie and Cindy watch TV until around 1 to 1:30AM. 'The Thorn Birds' miniseries is on. They all really like this show. It doesn't do much for me (being about a love story between a Catholic priest and an Australian woman). I go upstairs and rest in our waterbed. (The regular mattress is less comfortable than the waterbed.) The girls apparently make rude comments all during their show.

During the night I have a dream that we win the lottery. The numbers on the winning ticket in my dream include 1, 4, 5 and 7. I wish I could remember the

others. I guess I subconsciously think that we are ready for some good luck with all this stuff with Virginia going on.

Tuesday, June 14th

Virginia is feeling pretty good today and has a good day. Vickie takes her to radiation. Kathy Warden comes over for lunch. During occupational therapy, she is able to move her finger just a little. This is the first time for this and so is very good news. Unfortunately, Sharon (the OT) is going to be on vacation until July 6th and the coverage may be a bit spotty. I also heard from Virginia that Dick (I've forgotten his last name) came along for the OT session. He is an acquaintance (through Marilyn Heckendorn) and a really nice guy. He had been in personnel at the hospital, but is now back into nursing.

I went into work right around the time that Virginia and Vickie head off to radiation. I have a pretty typical, but busy, day. I'm trying to clean up some hiring and customer issues. I am doing okay with this, but it is hard to care about a lot of the stuff because it just isn't that important. I head home at around 2 PM and stop off at Dr. McIntosh's office to pick up a second bottle of the anti-seizure medicine. I get home in time to see Virginia go through physical therapy. She does well and is still doing new things at each session with the therapists. Virginia has mentioned that she gets strange tingling sensations in her face and left side (as the connections are being re-formed).

Tom and Mel Huibregtse and their come over with supper. They are a little late and get here around 6:30PM. I was getting a little upset that they were late - worrying about Virginia. I can intellectually see all these various manifestations of stress - but I still experience them. Virginia walks about 6 feet from the wheelchair to a regular chair at the kitchen table (with a little bit of support from Vickie and I). Supper goes very well and Tom and Mel's kids are well behaved.

After Virginia has a shower and gets ready for bed, she wanted to see Mandy's suitcase. (This is because tomorrow is when Mandy goes to Washington DC for 6 days.) I ask Mandy to come up, but she is on the phone and stays on for (what seems to me to be) a long time. I get on the phone twice trying to get her to come upstairs. She sounds a bit huffy (and I am getting upset about all of this - her reaction, my reaction, etc.). Virginia and Mandy have a good time going through her suitcase. Mandy has done a very good job of packing. I think she will have a lot of fun.

I can see that Virginia is feeling better and wants to get back involved. I need to remember to not protect her and 'mother' her all the time, but to let her start getting back into things.

I haven't called Julie or Art and Lee since they have gotten back to Des Moines. I especially want to do something for Julie, but I don't know what it is. I also need to do something for Cindy Hoxmeier and Joyce Turley. They, and all the others, have been great. In talking with Vickie, I am trying to plan ahead for the next couple of weeks. It looks like there will be two weeks (the last week in June and the first week in July) where we won't have any family help. In many ways, this needing and asking for help is one of the hardest things, because we, as a family, and I personally have been relatively independent.

I worry sometimes about my health. What would happen if I got a tumor or had a stroke or an accident? It is a very disturbing set of thoughts. I am really feeling the need to get more in control and get more organized. I feel that there are a huge number of things that I should be doing. I feel bad about taking the time to do this diary - I wonder if this is useful at all. I know that these are normal concerns and feelings and some signs of overload. I need to take time for myself and relax, but it is almost impossible. Tomorrow, I'm going to a scrap parts auction and also out to dinner and a movie with some friends (Rick, Tom, Robert, Paul Bame). This should be fun, but a part of me still feels guilty about it.

In bed, Virginia said that it was good to be alive. I continue to be very relieved about this - that all of the struggle to come back is worth it to her.

Wednesday, June 15th

I got up very early and took Mandy to Blevens Junior High for her trip to Washington. I gave her an extra \$50. She seems okay, but there is still something going on. I wish that she would talk to me about whatever it is.

After they take off, Cindy LeBaron (Mandy's friend Brittany's mother) sits down to talk with me. She tells me that Brittany is worried about Mandy and her being bulimic. This is something that Virginia and I have worried about. We have watched her eating. She is thin, but does eat. I hadn't noticed that she vomited after meals - even rarely. She does worry about being too fat - a lot. According to Brittany's mom, Brittany is worried about this again (with all the stuff with Virginia). Brittany is aware of Mandy throwing-up. I guess that this is at school or down at her house. I want to discount this, but I know I can't. I have seen Mandy struggle with the situation with Virginia. I know that she also wants a lot of attention. I would like to talk with Virginia about this, but I don't want this weighing on her too. I'm planning on calling Scoot Crandel about this and what I might do. Cindy LeBaron doesn't want Mandy to find out that Brittany told her. I respect her wishes for this - ethically and also my desire to keep the communication lines open. I am really glad Mandy is getting away and should have some fun for the next 6 days. (There are times when I wish I could get away for a few days, myself.)

When I get home, I upstairs and laid down in our bedroom for a few minutes. I want to know why my life has turned so bad. I know that I'm actually very lucky (over all) and that both the kids are very good kids.

I met Virginia and Vickie and Ben for lunch at Blimpies. After this we all go over to Dr. McIntosh's for a checkup. Everything seems to be fine. He seemed impressed with her improvement. After this, I take Ben to work with me (so I can take him to a scrap parts auction). He has been in a great mood all day. He sat down and drew while I worked (which took about an hour). There is a going away party for Judy Walker (and some other folks). During this, an engineer asks some questions about how Virginia is doing and also asks about if the tumor was malignant. I get really tired of people asking this. If I wanted to let them know, I'd tell them.

Ben and I went to the auction at the Loveland HP site. I bought some stuff for myself and a printer that Ben could use with a calculator/computer that I had gotten Ben for his birthday. Shortly after we got home, I took off again to go to dinner and the movie with my friends (Tom, Rick, Robert, Tim and Paul Bame). This was fun, but it didn't feel right going out and 'having some fun'. Dinner felt a little strained. The movie ('Speed') was a good action movie.

When I got home (around 9:30), Virginia, Vickie and Cindy were watching movies ('Malice'). Mandy had called while I was out. Virginia said it sounded like she was having a good time. After Virginia got ready (with Vickie's help) for bed, she did some physical therapy. I could see some real improvement. Her left leg was moving faster and in a more controlled fashion. Using the vibrator, I was able to get one of her toes to twitch (since Vickie had seen the therapist do this and told me about it). She really is doing much better and staying more alert. The edema (swelling) in her foot and head were looking better.

Thursday, June 16th

Virginia slept very well. She did not need to get up at all during the night to go to the bathroom. She does seem a little tired today. This was especially true after the full day that she had - radiation, physical therapy and getting out to get her wig styled.

I went into work after I got Ben off with Joyce. She took him to the water slide in Loveland (essentially all day). It is very hard to concentrate on work. I was involved in a teleconference about a potential custom consulting job (for Boeing). This went okay, but one of my engineers thinks that I was asking questions that were too negative. The rest of the team involved thinks that the questions are reasonable. After lunch, I have a meeting with a sub-team involved in a related topic - general solutions. This is a tough meeting - the team has done some thinking but has been wandering. They need leadership that I have not provided or delegated. Towards the end of the meeting the same engineer pushes hard on moving ahead. She is very unhappy about the slow pace of progress. This is very difficult for me to

deal with right now. It is especially hard since we are in the middle of getting a new general manager (i.e. things will change) and since my team just moved to another manager and since my new boss is relatively cold on the solutions business that we were pursuing. After this meeting, I really wonder if I should keep my job, or if I should request a staff job (which Alan, my boss, offered). Sitting here and reflecting on it all, the engineer who was pushing is always overly aggressive and has a tendency to jump before thinking. Also, she is very different in style from myself and the rest of the team - I don't generally agree with her approach. I realize that I do add value and all the stresses is causing me to question my value and judgement and contribution. I may still try to do a staff job, but I won't jump into it because of one bad meeting.

I got home a little after 5PM. Virginia is very tired, but is doing pretty good. She walks from the couch to the main bathroom - a long walk. This consisted of Vickie behind her and me ahead of her to spot her and to help if she loses her balance. She does a very good job. She then walks back to the kitchen for supper. We watch TV for a while and then a movie ('The Man with 2 Brains'). When I talked to Virginia this morning, she thought she had watched it last night. This concerned me - wondering if this was just fatigue or some result of the radiation. While they (Virginia, Ben, Vickie and Cindy) are watching the movie, I go out to get some stuff to rig up foot stirrups on the exercise bicycle for Virginia to use. When I get back, I work on the stirrups while Virginia goes in to take a shower with Vickie's help. Vickie is doing a very good job with the therapy stuff.

Ben got a headache in the evening. Before he went to bed, he was very concerned about this. He wondered if this could be a brain tumor like Virginia's. I explained that it wasn't, but I was tired and was a bit brief in my response. I went downstairs later and explained in more depth. I know both of the kids are very worried about this. Ben even wondered if it was contagious. I think the second time I talked to him, he did understand that this headache was not a tumor.

I know I have to take some time off over the next couple of weeks. Part of this is because it will be just Cindy and I. The key reason is that I need to take some time to get into detail on alternate cancer therapies and look at the various treatment trials as well as some of the dietary information. My approach to Virginia's tumor is a systemic approach. Virginia's full recovery is the goal and it will involve the surgery, radiation, love and support (friends and family), diet, exercise, and attitude. The diet and exercise and attitude are especially important for rebuilding her immune system. I think her recurrent yeast infections really screwed up her immune system and was probably a big factor in the cancer getting started.

Friday, June 18th

I worked at home today. This worked out pretty well. Vickie took Virginia to her radiation treatment. I came down during Virginia's occupational therapy. She did very well and was able to move her left arm a little.

At lunch, there was quite a crowd - Joyce and Nate Turley, Susan Ison, Cindy, Vickie, Ben, Virginia and me. I ended up sitting at the stove island because there wasn't enough room. When there is a huge crowd, I feel like a fifth wheel.

After lunch, Virginia was going to go shopping, but decided to just take it easy. She walked quite a bit during the day and is getting much smoother about it. It actually feels like pretty rapid progress. I hope we don't backslide on this. She was a little tired - from the radiation I guess, but not bad. Her edema in her leg and head look pretty good today.

I heard from Joyce about some more information about the herpes virus treatment for brain tumors. Previously, we had only heard of this lab animals. (Dr. DiBiose was the first place we had heard of this.) The treatment is that you inject herpes virus into the tumor. The herpes interacts with the cancer cells and they become 'herpes variants' of some sort. Then the patient is injected with a vaccine to kill herpes. In the animal trials, 13 out of 14 of the animals were seen to have been cancer free. Joyce found out about human trials (and 8 people have gone through it). The trials appear to be occurring in Des Moines! This would make all of it hugely easier - being able to stay with family and have the support right there.

For supper, I picked up Young's and we ate at home. We all went out to see 'City Slickers II'. Virginia walked some more - steps are pretty hard, but even that is improved from this morning to this afternoon. Virginia stayed awake through the entire movie. (She wanted to get out of the wheel chair and so I got her in one of the theater seats. This was much more comfortable for her.) It was a cute movie - nice light entertainment.

Mandy and my brother Tom had called while we were out. We didn't try calling Mandy because it was too late out east. I did call Tom back. He just hadn't heard and was wondering what was going on. Towards the end of the evening, we watched the news reports about O.J. Simpson surrendering to the police. Virginia went in with Vickie and Cindy to get ready for bed. Getting into bed, she raised her weak leg into bed just like normal. It was pretty amazing. All in all, a good day.

After Virginia got into bed, I went upstairs and did the diary and exercised for a bit. I've finally gotten the hang of the Nordic Track. I really like it and it is a good workout. I feel that I have to take a lot better care of myself - for Virginia, the kids and for me. When I get back downstairs, Virginia needs to get up to go to the bathroom. While we are in there talking, she gets pretty depressed. Part of it is she is in a sort of denial about the cancer. She says that she is not worrying about it (or I guess really dealing with it). This bothers her that she is spending all her energy on her left side rehabilitation. (She is worrying about not worrying.) She mentioned

how she liked the movie, but that when she is watching these movies she thinks 'Oh, there's something else I can't do'. She is also frustrated by her perception of her slow progress and especially by her left arm. She seems pretty satisfied with her left leg. She is also depressed because Vickie is leaving. These 'changing of the guard' periods are an emotional roller-coaster for her.

Saturday, June 18th

Today we (Virginia, Cindy and I) took Vickie to the airport to go home. Ben had Charlie Hoxmeier spend the night, so Ben and Charlie just stayed home while we went to the airport. The airport went all right, but Virginia got understandably emotional. On our way back home, Virginia had a good cry. We got her home and settled on the couch where she rested for a bit.

I fixed lunch for everybody. During Saturday noontime, Ben and Charlie were playing with Virginia's therapy ball. They got a little loud and so went downstairs. They were still loud and Cindy went down. According to Ben and Charlie, she was 'pretty mean' about it. I need to talk with her about how she interacts with Ben. After we got done with lunch, I took Ben and Charlie to get Ben's and my hair cut. After I got there, I found out that Charlie had a baseball game - so I dropped him off at his house while Ben stayed and got his hair cut. Ben and I went to the mall and I shopped for some shirts (and got Virginia 'Robin Hood' on laser disc). Before supper, Ben and I were talking and he mentioned that 'nobody listens to him'. I have been trying to keep a keen eye on Ben, Mandy and Virginia. I try to indicate to him how important he is and that I do try to listen. I don't think this came across well, because he starts getting very upset. (I suspect he just wanted to have a little 'pity party', but I turned it into something bigger that he wasn't ready for.) I barbecued hamburgers and salmon on the grill. Virginia ate a lot of salmon.

Virginia was pretty tired today, but seems to be doing much better than last weekend. After supper, Cindy and I got Virginia ready for her shower. This is going much better with her leg coming back and the grab bar in the shower. Before we get started Mandy calls. Everything sounds like it is going well and she is having a good time. After Virginia's shower, I do a bit of therapy on her leg and arm. She is very frustrated with her arm - which I try to put into context (by comparing its progress to her leg and the lack of therapy on it). She goes to bed early (7ish).

I do some laundry and other stuff. Cindy irons some shirts (I bought cotton shirts by mistake today). Ben and I have sort of a rough evening because he takes from 7 until 10 to get his room and the basement family room cleaned up. I got down about every 1/2 hour to see how it is going. I really try to give him a chance to do it without me intervening. I end up needing to turn off the family room TV and then the TV in his room later. It doesn't go too badly - but it is frustrating because I am really trying to keep an even keel with him.

Virginia wakes up around 10PM and goes to the bathroom. Cindy is the one helping. Virginia is feeling pretty good or something - almost like she is drunk. She talks for around 10 minutes with an Italian accent. After she gets back to bed, I finish a bunch of chores - laundry, dishes, cleaning the refrigerator, cleaning out and reorganizing some of my clothes, installing some medical search software (that Cindy got from her boss), etc. I always knew that keeping a household running and neat was a fair amount of work, but I have an even better appreciation. I have gotten very used to a very nice, tidy house and it drives me crazy when it is messy, dirty or things are out of place. I suspect part of this fastidiousness has to do with me looking for some tasks that will keep me occupied and give me a sense of accomplishment. It is getting really late (1:30AM) and I should be getting to bed - but I want to exercise first.

Sunday, June 19th

It's father's day. It is not particularly what I had in mind. Virginia seemed to sleep pretty well. We got up sort of late. Her edema in her head was a little worse, but I think that was because of her lying doing more than usual yesterday. After breakfast, we puttered around. Virginia did most of the work getting herself dressed. We got out the door a little late to get Lee at the airport. Lee seemed impressed with Virginia's walking.

After we got Lee, we went to the mall to get lunch. We shopped just a little (at a bookstore) after eating. Virginia seems pretty awake and not as tired as last weekend or yesterday. We got home and Virginia did some exercises and watched TV for a while and talked to Lee and Cindy.

We arranged for the Turley's to come down for dinner. Ben and I ran to the store for some more groceries before they got here. I barbecued catfish and Joyce, Lee, Cindy and Virginia did the rest of the meal. Nate (Rick and Joyce's youngest) was getting on my nerves a little - a steady stream of 'watch this' and his bumping into me. I got the dishes cleaned up. I am feeling a little sorry for myself again - even though I am thinking "why don't they help me", I don't ask for help. Rick and I go upstairs and I show him America Online (a dial up computer service) and a new CD ROM I had gotten in a magazine at the mall today. After a while, we head back downstairs and I get my father's day present. I had told Vickie about a general-coverage receiver. It turned out pretty classic. Virginia and Vickie went up and Vickie described what I wanted, but Virginia said 'oh, he already has one of those'. I do, but it is an older Sony with no analog tuning and a bit unreliable. So she bought me an amateur 2 meter FM hand-held transceiver. She bought me a very nice one - it probably cost in the range of \$225-275. I was thinking about one, but not very seriously. I had one previously, primarily for access to a phone patch (the ability to make phone calls). I got rid of that last one in part because Virginia made 'CB-style' comments when I would talk to her on it. (This made me feel foolish at the time.) For access to a portable phone, I plan on getting cellular phones for Virginia and I. So, I don't really

want it, but it is nice. I don't want to make Virginia feel bad if I take it back. So, I don't know what I'm going to do. (Again part of this is my just being very tired.) I guess it does bother me some that I clearly communicate what I wanted and didn't get it.

Mandy called and wished me a happy father's day. Later, Ben went with Turley's to spend the night at their house (since he and Jeff are going to piano lessons together). After he left, I realized that I really missed both of them a great deal and would like to have had them around on father's day. It didn't feel much like it was father's day to me. I get the garbage out (and do the cats' litter box since Ben went to Jeff's house). After that, Lee, Virginia, Cindy and I sit and watch a little TV. Then I get Virginia into bed. I am very tired and more than a little depressed. I mention that I need to figure out if I need to do a staff job. Virginia says that I should - for a year. Because by then 'she will be back to normal'. I don't respond very well to this because I was hoping that things would be much better by the fall. I tell her that I am feeling down and that this is not probably the best time to talk about this. (I feel bad for feeling depressed.) She says that she is sorry that she is screwing up my career. I tell her that she isn't, but I am not very convincing. She is more important than my career, but my professional career does matter some to me. (In part, I do need it to maintain our home and life and medical care.) And this is going to have a big effect on it. (And even though I am getting hopeful about dealing with the cancer, I still don't know what is going to happen.)

Monday, June 21st

Virginia woke up at 6AM and wanted to get up for the day. She wanted to start getting more independent. Unfortunately, I wasn't quite as ready and I was dead tired - I just wanted to sleep and she kept wanting to move around - getting ready. I did not respond really well to this. It makes me wonder about how many unconscious ways that I slow down her progress. We got up and had breakfast.

I went into work and it went okay. I had several meetings and I'm doing a little better. However, one of the areas that I'm responsible for is totally falling apart - the Atria relationship. There are problems in Japan, the U.S. and Europe. It is a problem, but I don't get overly excited about it. (It had severe problems when I got responsibility last September. Maybe I could have done more, but that doesn't seem that important now.) In one of the meetings, I talk with my new boss (Alan) and mention that I am not happy with how I'm doing and that I will be taking a little time off over the next couple of weeks. When I get back I hope that I can tell him whether I want to do my management job or if I want to do a staff position.

Virginia has had a very good day. When Lee and Virginia showed the physical therapist how she walked, the therapist was blown away - very surprised. Virginia was walking very well and did not have any bad habits (which I had worried about). She was using her ankle (which shows that it is working) - this was a surprise to us.

She wasn't over-locking her knee. The therapist tried to call and get the AFO (ankle-foot-orthodic) canceled since she didn't see that Virginia was going to need it. This was all really great news. Virginia got a side-walker support. The therapist was also very impressed with my foot-straps for the exercise bicycle (using some Velcro strips and some knee pads).

I do notice that her hair is getting thin on the right temple and the side of her head looks a bit red (both side-effects from the radiation). Lee talked to Vickie on the phone. Vickie had called the Des Moines hospital about the herpes trials. She found out similar information (that there were 8 patients). It turns out that they did not do any radiation, but only the herpes treatment. The results were encouraging. Apparently, they also said that the trials were for patients with tumors in just one spot - supposedly different from Virginia's location. Vickie will call back and get more information. I talked to Lee about all this and pointed it that if things go well, we won't need it. And if they don't, it will take some time before things are critical (like a couple of years if some luck is with us). This would improve the probability of broader trials.

Ben had a really good time with his piano lessons. After supper, Virginia rests up waiting to go along to get Mandy. Ben and I finally go up around 10PM. It turned out that their bus had a problem and they are coming in an hour later. Virginia gets up when I finally bring Mandy home at around 11PM. Mandy had a great time, but is really bushed. They talked for a while and Virginia then takes a shower. A good day.

Tuesday, June 21st

Virginia slept in pretty late today - around 7:30AM. I had to get up since I had a full day of meetings at work - a management meeting from 9AM-1PM, an evaluation with one of my team members from 1-3 and a project meeting with part of my team from 3-5. A very busy day. I think I'm doing a little better at work (being somewhat useful), but I will be taking off some time, but not as much as I wanted.

Lee took Virginia to radiation again and Virginia walked all (or most) of the way from the car to the office. She walked a lot today. This made her tired, but she is doing very well. She did get depressed today because her arm is pulling out from her left shoulder (because of the left side weakness). So she needed to start wearing the arm sling.

In the evening, I asked the kids if they wanted to help with Virginia. Ben said yes. Mandy said something like 'I guess, maybe'. And she had a sullen, pissed-off sort of look about it. I asked them to help with the left arm stimulation - for each of them to do it twice. Ben was very willing. Mandy did not look like she wanted to. This bothers me. I know Mandy is having a tough time with the teen years in general, but I expect her to be more helpful. Late this week or this weekend, I will sit down with each of them separately (since I think it will work better) and set expectations for

how they can help. They both are having a relatively normal summer. But they both need to pitch in - to help Virginia, to help around the house and I need them to help me. I expect this to generate some emotions, but they are a part of the family and they need to help.

Wednesday, June 22nd

Virginia slept well again - I think it is a combination of the radiation fatigue and her walking. I tried to work at home for most of the day, but this didn't work out that well. I went with Virginia to her radiation treatment. I asked the nurses about the effects of the X-rays (since it wasn't exactly clear). I thought that the X-rays destroyed the tumor cells (because they were weaker), but that they also did kill healthy brain tissue. I was correct. The redundancy in the brain can, apparently, deal with this. I suspected this, but knowing it makes me concerned - but we didn't have a lot of options.

Virginia is very frustrated by her arm. Although, I can feel some improvement. I really want the kids to help out by brushing Virginia's arm with a small nylon brush. They haven't done it. I am going to bug them about this and get them moving. Mandy did some laundry today (one of her new chores) but only with a fair amount of grousing. And then she only did part of it - I think Lee did a good portion of it. Ben actually was in a good mood and cleaned up his room tonight. I was impressed.

Virginia and I went to ShopKo and got some new shoes that would fit over her ankle brace (an AFO). She will probably be off the walker/cane and be on a 4-footed cane next week. I hope to build a 'funky' cane over the next week - one that looks like a flamingo.

I wonder how things will go for the rest of the radiation - if she will backslide or be terribly fatigued. I hope not, I want to get past the physical problems and start really dealing with the tumor and possible second treatments. Even though I hope they won't be necessary, I want to be prepared because I suspect that we will need them.

Friday, June 24th

Yesterday (Thursday) was a pretty bad day for me. I went with Virginia to her radiation treatment (because I wanted to ask some questions of Dr. Lim - her new oncologist). I wanted to find out about the course of treatment and damage to normal brain cells. The treatment is just left and right exposure - 25 days of broad exposure and 5 days of 'coned down' or narrowed exposure. This gives the best dosage on the tumor with the minimal number of 'hot spots'. The chart they used to calculate dosage showed two small 'hot spots' - one in the right frontal lobe and one in the right rear. I had a question about the chart because it looked 'reversed', but

that was just because it was from the point of view of Virginia's feet looking up. The amount of damage that they try to limit themselves to in the brain is 5%.

The combination of talking about all of this with Lim and seeing her MRI again (which shows the large size of the remaining tumor) was very depressing. Then I tried to do some work at home and then went into the plant to do a transfer evaluation. Virginia was also developing some sort of rash - again. It just couldn't be

Virginia and I stayed home while Lee, Cindy and the kids went out shopping. This was nice, even though Virginia was a little depressed. I stayed up pretty late trying to get organized for a meeting I had on Friday. I actually made some good progress and started to feel better. The other aspect was that I had decided to take some time off and put an acting project team manager in place.

I got out early on Friday for my team meeting - which went very well. We made a lot of good progress. This meeting ended with us doing a general team meeting. In talking with my boss, Alan, on Thursday, he had made the suggestion that I let the team decide who should be acting PTM. This was an interesting approach and I gave it a shot. The team did a good job and ended up selecting the person I had thought of going with originally (Gary). After this meeting I tried to get Gary set up to take over. Later in the afternoon, there was a 5 year 'birthday party' for SoftBench. This would have been fun - but I wasn't really in the mood for celebration. I went over, but I didn't stay very long.

Virginia's rash had turned out to be yet another reaction to medication. So now we are trying the 4th anti-seizure medication. This was very frustrating to Virginia. She was very tired, and went to bed early. I am still feeling pretty good, because I will be taking this time off and will be able to really help Virginia and start focusing on doing a better job of research on diet and alternate treatments. I hope that she starts feeling better tomorrow (and the rash and swelling subside).

Sunday, June 26th

Virginia and I got up relatively late on Saturday morning. She took a shower. Part way through she had something happen. I'm not sure if it was a seizure or just a reaction to the hot water. She got very tired, but did not lose consciousness or have 'eye flutters'. After the shower, she did not seem tired. So, I don't know.

Rick and Joyce stopped by for a while around lunch time (I think). Rick was having some trouble with his Macintosh. He had called me earlier in the day. He borrowed some disks when they were by. She was pretty awake during most of the day. But she is pretty depressed because of the severity of the rash and the increase in the edema.

I went out and did some grocery shopping. I barbecued some pork chops and ground pork (with Cajun spices) which were very good. Later in the evening, I went up and tried to figure out how to connect my Macintosh to the Internet via a mechanism called SLIP. This was actually fun - I guess it was a type of release or escape.

On Sunday, we got up and Virginia took another shower, since she didn't finish the one yesterday. We took Lee to the airport. Virginia got emotional, but again, she is entitled. We went home and Virginia rested a bit. Rick and Joyce took the kids out to Horsetooth reservoir to do some boating. I fixed some lunch for Virginia, Cindy and I. After this, Virginia rested and I went out and did some shopping. I think I like shopping because it gets me out of the house and I'm doing something. In the car I heard a song that I really like (from the movie 'Reality Bites' - an appropriate title). One of the lines in the song was something like "some people are dying from the day they were born". This really strikes me as profound. I want to deal with this situation by "living all of my life". Maybe I am succumbing to pop-philosophy, but it helps me.

I went up and picked up the kids at the lake. We got home and I did some puttering and then fixed supper - catfish. I'm getting to be a pretty good cook. Virginia is looking and feeling much better tonight. She is getting over the drug reaction. Apparently, Mandy wants to talk to Scoot Crandel. She told Joyce this, but hasn't mentioned anything to Virginia or to me. She is spending the night at a friend's house tonight. Ben has been pretty helpful most of the day.

I wrote some letters to my Uncle Harvey and Aunt Ella (my mom's brother and sister). I had talked with Mildred (my mom's best friend) and told her about Virginia. Another friend, who knows Ella and heard from Mildred about Virginia, is going to visit Ella in Grand Island. So, I needed to write a letter to let Ella (and Harvey) know. The letter I wrote was:

Fort Collins
Sunday, June 26, 1994

Aunt Ella,

I haven't called or written for a while because of a family emergency here. I apologize for writing and not calling, I hope you'll understand. On May 13th, Virginia collapsed and I called for an ambulance to get her to the hospital. She had been tired for a few weeks, but had gone to the doctor and was being treated for a severe sinus infection. That day, it had not gotten better, and I took her to an allergist who found yeast in her sinuses. We thought that was it, but she collapsed later that night. I found out after a CAT scan at the hospital that Virginia had a brain tumor in her right parietal lobe. The doctor indicated that the prognosis was very bad. It was large, in a bad spot and was probably a 'high grade' tumor. She was hemorrhaging and I had to decide what to do pretty soon. He could operate, but she might not survive and if she did she would probably only live a year or so. She could be at a reduced mental capacity and have paralysis. There was some chance of recovery and a few hopeful signs, so I said to operate. The surgeon removed as

much of the tumor as he could and also removed some other brain tissue to allow for the swelling that would occur.

She came out of the surgery very well. She regained consciousness the next day and, thankfully, appears to have not been affected. (Virginia's dominant brain side is her left side.) She came out of ICU pretty quickly. There was left side paralysis (arm and leg). She stayed in the hospital until May 27th (actually, a pretty short stay). She has been here at home since then. I have taken off some time (obviously) and we have had many of Virginia's family out to help. Her sister lives in town and has moved in with us. Our friends here have been fantastic as well - very supportive and helpful.

She has been recovering very well. It has exceeded what my expectations were. Her left leg is coming back. She has slowly been regaining function. She now walks a bit with a 'hemi-walker', a sort of cane. Her arm has a little function, but it is not clear how much will come back. (But, for independence and quality of life, the leg is the better thing to have come back.) I think by the end of the summer, she should be walking pretty reasonably. Because of all this, we have moved to the main floor. The house has turned out to have converted to Virginia's needs very well. (It has also been helpful to have extra bedrooms for Virginia's family.)

There is still some tumor left (as we saw on an MRI scan late in the month). The doctor indicated after her good recovery that he felt we could have a few years. We have started on radiation (prognosis without was very bad) are about half way through.

Even though the doctors have been describing things this way, we are not just going to give up. They do not know everything. The approach we are taking is broader. The surgery and radiation are key parts that are very important. However, just as important are diet, general health, attitude, family support, exercise, and so on. There are some people in Fort Collins who have survived similar tumors (although in a different location) - one is at 5 years since the tumor was discovered. There are also some very promising research programs. I am hoping and working with Virginia towards the current efforts being enough, but if they aren't, there are others that offer hope.

One of the bigger challenges has been some of the medications. Virginia is on anti-seizure medicines. She has had a severe reaction to 3 different meds. She is on her fourth. This has slowed down her recovery and makes her very tired and frustrated. (Along with the fatigue that comes from the radiation.) But, I hope we will finally get over this hurdle (the most recent reaction was just this last Thursday).

The kids are doing okay. Ben is actually doing just fine and is mostly helpful. Amanda is struggling with all this. I think a big part of this is just being a 14-year old. I am trying to keep them involved and busy in general and also involved in helping Virginia.

So, even though this is terrible, we are moving ahead and are, in general, doing pretty well. We all get a little depressed at times, but I think something would be wrong if we didn't. I expect that we will get back to some semblance of a normal routing at the end of the summer. Things have turned out much better than I had expected them to at the start all this. Virginia is mentally intact - sense of humor, memory, mental skills and capacity, speech, etc. Her left leg is coming back and she will be able to have her independence. This is all great - and was expected.

I'm, again, sorry about letting you know in a letter. (I'm doing it on the computer, because it will be easier to read.) I hope you understand why I didn't let you know sooner. At the start, all of my attention was on Virginia and the kids. Recently, I was going to call, but it is getting hard on me re-telling the whole thing. I know that you will keep us in your prayers.

Tim

Tuesday, June 28th

Yesterday I went into work, but I intend to take off at least the next 4 weeks so that I can focus on Virginia and the kids. The day went pretty well, although Virginia's reaction is pretty bad still. Cindy took the day off and took Virginia to radiation and then to a dermatologist. She got some cremes and medication to help with the itching, but the doctor was not sure what was really causing it.

Something is bothering Mandy, but she really won't talk to me about it. She had a nice talk this evening with Virginia. After that, I talked with her and she said that there were some things bothering her. One of them was that she didn't feel important. There were other things, but she didn't know how to express them or didn't want to tell me.

Today, I took Virginia to her radiation. She is doing a lot better today. She did not take a nap all day long and her edema is finally going away or gone. She still has some swelling or something on her cheek bones (especially on her right side) that don't look quite right. I don't know if that is a result of the surgery, but I think that it might be related to the steroids that she is on.

I spent some time this afternoon trying to get some study material ready for Ben. I want to make sure that he starts 5th grade well. This includes reading, math, science and writing. Virginia and I haven't set up much for Mandy because of how well she did in school and the pressure she feels from this situation. We are trying to just let her relax. I need to remember not to let her sullen and nasty moods get to me. They may be directed at me or be because of me, but they may not be either. The best way I can help her is to maintain an even keel, emotionally.

I got pretty tired and grumpy this evening, but it was a good day - so I shouldn't have been. Mandy went out this evening with Joyce Turley to spend some 'girl time'. Ben, Virginia and I went to see the new Disney movie - The Lion King - at the drive in. I did not go into this with a good attitude, but it was fun and turned out well. Ben has finished up the day being very helpful. When we got home, Mandy still wasn't back. Around 11:30 PM, she came home and had had a good time. This all went very well until she checked her bag from the mall (a store called Vanity). There was a religious chain letter talking about bad luck and such if you didn't pass the letter on to 20 others. This totally traumatized Amanda. She thought that Virginia would die because of this chain letter. Virginia was livid about this and wants to go to Vanity tomorrow and get an apology or someone fired. I asked Mandy what she wanted to do (because I suspected what she was after). She wants to find out who did it, but she also wants to make the 20 copies. (I have to admit that I have gotten a little more superstitious of late myself. This really annoys me given my basic analytical and scientific nature. I know better, but it does catch you from time to time. After looking at the letter, I think that someone put one on my

desk at work - which I threw away. I think I may have seen it electronically at work as well.) So, I made 20 copies. My intention is to give them all back to the store. It is just unconscionable that someone would do this. I hope that Mandy is able to get over it. The chain letter talks about love, but it is just a hateful, scare tactic.

Wednesday, June 29th

I got up relatively early today. I tried to get Virginia moving so we didn't run too late, but I didn't succeed. She did get out of bed, into the wheel chair and into the bathroom with no help. She is doing very well at this. Because we are running late, I did most of the dressing (but yesterday she dressed herself). We got to radiation and did not use the wheel chair at all, but walked down the front steps. I asked about the bumps around Virginia's cheekbones. The nurse said that they were the result of the steroids and would subside. Her edema is essentially all gone. On the way out we use the steps again and this goes pretty well. Although another radiation patient's father came out and told us about the ramp on the other side. I thanked him but told him that we were practicing our steps. Today was the 16th session of radiation. This means we have passed the half-way point - which is good. On the way home we stop for our traditional McDonald's milkshake. (I got a raspberry shake, Virginia got the vanilla. Since we have been eating better, the processed foods taste bad to me - the raspberry shake was just awful.)

We got home and had a therapy session on Virginia's arm (with Elena - who I think is very good). On some of the exercises (with a vibrator), I feel a great deal of strength pulling the left arm in. This is very good.

Rick brings Ben back from piano and Mandy gets back from band. He offers to take them boating. Ben goes, but Mandy stays. Mandy, her friend Sarah and Virginia and I go to the mall later in the afternoon. (When Mandy is around Sarah, she is her normal self - which is very nice to see.) On the way, Virginia drives around the neighborhood just a little and does very well. We eat at the mall. After eating, Virginia and I go to Vanity to talk to a manager about the chain letter. (Mandy does not want to go near this discussion.) Virginia gets emotional part way through and I finish up part of the discussion. They are very apologetic. Virginia feels better having done this. We shopped a little while longer. We stopped at Radio Shack and I arranged to get the radio that I had asked for. After a while we went over to Target to pick up Mandy's pictures from Washington DC.

This evening Rick and Joyce and the kids came down. Rick and I went out to eat, just the two of us. Rick and Joyce are trying to give me some relaxation time. It is much appreciated. He encourages me to not try to do everything. (Sound, but difficult, advise.) After we ate, we shopped at an electronics store and then went to the Stone Lion book store.

I am in a bad mood tonight. Virginia has not done any additional therapy work (although the walking does help some) - on the arm or leg. She has struck me as being tired or that something is bothering her, but she says not. I tried to suggest doing some of the therapy, but she doesn't want to. This bothers me because I want her back as fast and as good - and I think the therapy helps. We talked about this a little before bed. Her rash is bothering her again as well. And we don't know what is causing it - according to the dermatologist, it may be residual from a previous reaction. I've left the wheelchair in the car. I want to try to go through tomorrow without it.

Thursday, June 30th

We got up pretty well today. Virginia got herself out of bed and into the bathroom very well (I didn't help much - just one bit of steadying). She got dressed well too. The only thing she just can't do yet is the button and zipper on her pants. We had breakfast together and are ready pretty much on time to get to the radiation treatment. However, Ben had a small mishap, which I helped him with. He didn't respond very well. He got very concerned about the time (he was running a little short on time - but still had enough). I said he had time and that I had to take Virginia now. He got pretty upset and said "Fine. Just leave me, then." This hurt a bit, because I'm really trying to give both the kids the attention that they deserve. I know he is just stressed because of his perception of the time constraint.

Radiation goes well. Virginia's pulse and blood pressure are down - which is good. They had been up because of the rash. Her rash is looking better and seems to be clearing up. After we get back, she uses the exercise bike - for about 25 minutes. Kathy Warden stopped over for lunch. While Kathy and Virginia eat, I took Ben with me to do grocery shopping (for the 4th of July weekend). Rick and Joyce are coming over for the 4th. I think Hoxmeier's are as well. Virginia got flowers from Ella today. So, I gather she is maybe only a little be upset. Anna Wenzel takes Ben to his art class (the last of this set).

In the afternoon, Virginia was walking around in the living room and she fell down. I was, of course, worried when I heard her fall. (I was in the kitchen.) But she was okay - no physical harm. The therapists told us that it would happen. So, I comforted her - she was pretty shaken. It really upset her and knocked her confidence for a loop. I actually had her get herself standing again. I would have helped, but she needs to be able to get up and have the confidence that she can. We sat down on the couch and watched TV for a while - she rested slightly. Mike, the physical therapist, came at 4PM and brought the new canes - a four poster and a regular cane. Virginia did very well with these. (Although she likes the 4 poster cane better - a confidence thing.) She did well on therapy.

Susan Ison brought supper. Virginia had rested until she came. Mandy was baby-sitting at LeBaron's so it was just Virginia, Ben, Susan and myself. After supper, Ben

cleaned up the dishes (a good job). Virginia and I watched TV (Thursday nights are our favorite - Mad About You, Wings, Seinfeld, Fraser) in bed.

After this, we did some arm and leg therapy and Virginia took a shower. This went really well. The upper arm is starting to come back. We have gone through the whole day without the wheel chair. Ben had Charlie Hoxmeier spend the night and I got a little testy with them. But it has been a really good day. Six weeks ago, I didn't know if Virginia was going to live. Five weeks ago, I wasn't sure if she would get any function in her left side. Four weeks ago, I wasn't sure if she would ever get out of a wheel chair. Three weeks ago, I didn't know if she would be able to be independent and walk. A week ago, I wasn't still wasn't sure if she would get any function in her left arm. Things, although hard, are improving. (And I need to remind myself and Virginia.)

July 1994

Friday, July 1st

Things went pretty well today. We got up and got going a little slow because Virginia is still very tired (from the anti-rash medicine). Virginia got herself dressed (except for her pants button). We had breakfast and then got off to radiation. We came in on the steps again. This must look pretty bizarre because each day someone came out and told us about the ramp (that we had been using). Today it was Dr. Lim - the radiation oncologist. There was an older woman (I think) on a gurney waiting (I think next after us) to go into one of the treatment rooms. It looked like she had no relatives and Dr. Lim was trying to explain something to her. She was bald (it looked like the result of chemotherapy). She looked very sad. Virginia and I talked about this and how sorry Virginia felt for the person. We also talked about how a lot of the people involved in this office have had some close family involvement with cancer. We headed home (with the obligatory stop for a McDonald's shake).

At home, Virginia did some of the thank you notes. Then we had Elena (an occupational therapist) and a field representative for the electrical stimulator in for therapy. We haven't been doing enough on this, but are starting to focus on it a bit more. It will help bring the arm back.

Virginia is very tired and doesn't want to go to the dermatologist (we had a 1PM appointment). I called and checked. As long as things are improving on her rash, it wasn't necessary. So, we didn't go in. A bit before and after lunch Virginia rested a great deal (on the living room couch). She started waking up around 5PM. We decided to go out to Olive Garden. Mandy brought her friend Brittany (who is a very nice girl) along with Virginia, Ben and myself. We had called Cindy, but she stayed at work a while longer. It took Virginia a long time to walk in (our table was clear in the back), but she did it well. I got a little worried about mental function when Virginia lost track of the courses. She thought that we were done, when we had only been through the salad and appetizers. I think this was primarily due to the fatigue and drugs. (I really do think that this is true, because many drugs have confusion as a side effect. But, I keep worrying.)

On the way home, I stopped and got video tapes for the kids to watch (the new 3 Musketeers and The Return of Jafar). We watch the 3 Musketeers and I do some electrical stimulation therapy with Virginia. She also did some exercise bicycle during the show. She is getting more alert as the evening goes on. So, it has been a good day. The rash seems to be subsiding and Virginia has not been in the wheel chair for over 2 days.

Saturday, July 2nd

Virginia slept in most of the morning. Ella called and had gotten my letter. She commented on what a good letter it was. She didn't seem upset or bothered - and said she understood. She had called Aunt Lil and told her about it. Ella seemed to take all of it pretty well, but got a little tearful at the end of the call. I finally got Virginia up around noon.

She took it somewhat easy during the day. Later on, we went out with Rick and Joyce. We were going to go to Boston Chicken, but it was closed (much to Virginia's chagrin). We ended up going to Chili's. We were going to see a movie, but there wasn't much around that Joyce was very interested in. Virginia did very well, but was walking relatively slowly.

Mandy had been somewhat upset during the day. She wanted to go with LeBaron's to Mount Rushmore. We said that she couldn't because she had already arranged to watch some neighbor's dogs. She was really bummed and appeared to be mad at us about it. She had gone roller-blading with a friend (who we didn't know). She wanted to spend the night there, but we said that she couldn't (because we didn't know them). She got even more pissed off at us. When she finally got home, she was very sullen. Virginia, finally forced her to lie down and talk a little. She didn't talk a lot, but did mention that she didn't like standing around when people were helping Virginia. I think that she did not feel useful.

Sunday, July 3rd

Today has been a good day. Virginia is getting over the rash finally - although she is still peeling a bit. Rick stopped by on his way back from a bicycle ride. He came in and talked with us for a while. Virginia asked him how CMS stock was doing during a discussion about some financial stuff. This was another memory thing - and my worries about it. CMS was bought by HP and never had stock. She remembered after we told her, but it still causes me some occasional worries.

Virginia, Cindy, Mandy and Elizabeth (a friend of Mandy's) go out to the outlet mall in Loveland in the afternoon. I put in a light in the utility room - getting ready to clean it up some since it is such a mess. After installing the light, Ben and I go shopping to Best Buy, the mall and to Steele's grocery store. I stopped at the mall to check to see if my radio is in (since I took the 2m rig back). It hasn't yet arrived. I stopped at Steele's primarily to get flowers for the Hoxmeier's. I wanted to say thank you in some fashion.

When we got back, I started preparing supper. I really like cooking (and cooking healthy). Virginia got back around 6:30PM. She had a very good time. She had walked in the stores, but had used the wheel chair between them. I fixed some

pork-kabobs with vegetables on the grill - they were very good. After supper, I pattered around trying to fix the air-conditioner - I think I got it.

Harvey called and had gotten my letter. He had sent copies on to his kids and on to Aunt Lil (my great aunt) and several other relatives. He had even talked with Ella. (This is pretty amazing since they haven't gotten along very well for quite a while.) He asked if it was okay to come out and just stop by on July 16th on their way to Olympia, Washington.

Virginia is feeling pretty good and did really well today.

Tuesday, July 5th

Virginia slept pretty late yesterday. The Turley's and Hoxmeier's came over later in the day for a barbecue and fireworks. Virginia didn't do any therapy and took it pretty easy. I was getting upset about this (not doing any therapy). But getting upset was sort of silly. I wanted to do some more therapy stuff, because I want her back as good and as soon as possible. But, she needs a break from time to time. We had a good time with all the folks over. I had made ice-cream earlier in the day, but Joyce brought most of the food and Cindy Hoxmeier brought the rest. Susan and India Ison brought some baklava (a middle-eastern dessert), but couldn't stay. The food was great and the day went well.

I got upset at the kids for various reasons again. I have been trying to do the reading stuff with Ben, but it is hard to keep up during the summer. Mandy hasn't really been around much and I don't think that she has been helping enough. So, I'm going to talk with her on Tuesday.

Tuesday has gone pretty well. Virginia is looking and feeling pretty good. We asked the doctor about reducing the Decadron (since it can cause confusion and muscle weakness). He thought this was a good idea. The physical therapist thought that Virginia would probably be able to start out-patient therapy (at the hospital). Art had called because Virginia had called Des Moines trying to get Chris and Julie's address and had left a message. Art called back because Virginia sounded so good, he wasn't sure that it was Virginia.

I am writing this in the afternoon, because I get so tired at night and I really want to exercise and not get to sleep too late. I am a little depressed, but not bad. All of this therapy and recovery takes such a long time - it wears me down. I also worry about what will happen long term - how much recovery, what will Virginia's attitude be, will the tumor come back, if it does - when, ... I get upset at myself because at times I find myself assuming that it will come back. I don't know that and I don't know what else we might be able to do. Virginia has made a fantastic recovery and whether we can beat the cancer or not, we can have a great life.

Wednesday, July 6th

Last night, before bed, I talked to Mandy about 'all of this'. I told her that I was worried about her and also that I wanted and needed her help. But, I didn't know what she would or could do. She had seemed pissed-off or upset when I have asked for help. So, I wanted to know what was bothering her and what she could do. She still wouldn't really talk to me about what was bothering her. I got a sense that there was some stuff she is conscious about and unwilling to tell me, but also that there is some stuff that she really doesn't understand herself. During this conversation, she was distracted because she wanted to call Sarah (her friend). I didn't know if she just wanted to end the discussion - but I suspected so. So, I went upstairs to help get Virginia ready for bed. When I came back down, she didn't really want to talk - I don't know what else to do. Mandy did say that she wanted to help - but not the hard therapy sorts of things (like electro-stimulation). She said that she would do the exercise bicycle. I asked her if she had been doing laundry - because I haven't seen that she did anything but start one or two loads. She said she had - but I guess I don't think she did. I told her that I wanted her to be responsible for her own laundry. Not mine or Ben's or Virginia's, but just hers.

A couple of days ago, Virginia was peeling badly because of the rash. One evening, I noticed Virginia pulling some of the skin off. Then I noticed that she was putting this in her mouth. I didn't mention it at the time. The next day, she did it again and I said - "Why are you eating your skin?". She was horrified. She didn't notice that she had done this. We talked about it and she thought it was because she didn't want to drop it on the floor.

Recently, Virginia has started talking to the tumor when she takes a shower. She tells it that it should leave, because she is going to kill it anyway. This is all another form of visualization. During the radiation therapy, she started out thinking about the X-ray radiation machine as a type of Ghostbusters proton pack. She changed over to a mental image of hot metal (I think) flowing over her brain and the tumor cells sparking and sizzling when touched by the hot metal. (I think this is all very good. Visualization has been shown to help enhance the body's immune system normal processes. When you think you are fighting things inside, the body's immune system is more active and effective. An example of a mind-body linkage.)

Wednesday was a good day. Radiation went well. The nurses and dietitian indicated that Virginia was doing very well. One of the nurses gave us the picture where I was wearing Virginia's wig. When we got back, Mandy was out taking care of some neighbor's animals. Max (her cat) had vomited in the living room last night. At the time she had picked up part of the mess and promised to clean up the rest in the morning before she went with a friend to Elitch's (a local amusement park). It was almost time for her to go and she hadn't cleaned it up. I told her I would fix her a bite to eat while she cleaned it up. She did part of the cleaning up (with a fair amount of help from me - she said she didn't know how to use a new wet-dry

vacuum I had bought for the kids to use on these messes). She finished eating and her friend came. When I walked out to the living room she had left the vacuum in the middle of the floor, plugged in, and hadn't cleaned it out like I had told her to do. I got very angry. The thing that bothered me the most was not her leaving it, but the fact that she wasn't even going to say anything - just waltz out the door for her fun day away from home. I told her, basically, that I was mad and why. She didn't say anything, and went off. I am disappointed in her because she is a good kid and could do so much to help - but doesn't. Virginia and I talk about this and Virginia points out that Mandy is now officially functioning as a teenager. I had hoped for a bit more from Mandy - but this is what things will be like and I will have to lower my expectations. She will grow out of it and be fine, but it will take time. One of the side-effects of this is that I will get more explicit about what I expect out of her and also that I will not just give her most of the things she asks for. Both the kids have been told and understand that when they are good kids - they can get just about anything; but when they are not, stuff doesn't always happen. In writing this, I noticed that part of my anger is in part that Mandy gets to 'escape'. Part of my anger might be that I am jealous and want a chance to occasionally escape myself - and that I don't feel that I can.

Virginia and I went out to eat at Blimpies (Joyce took Ben out to lunch). Afterward, we tried to go to Steele's Grocery. Virginia was getting tired (and it was hot). So she just sat down outside while I ran through. This bummed her a bit. When we got back, Virginia had both physical and occupational therapy sessions. She did really well. During OT, Sharon was back from vacation and brought Barry (who had been a therapist during Virginia's stay at the hospital). Virginia did really well (and Sharon is very positive - probably my favorite OT). She was able to move her fingers a little without anything but some tension. This was very encouraging and Sharon said that she thought Virginia would regain use of her hand. This is the first time that anyone has said this. The physical therapy went well and Barb said that we were ready to move to out-patient therapy. So, they are trying to set this up now.

In the last day or so, Virginia has talked about doing out-patient therapy and one class at CSU. This is very encouraging to me - her desire to get back to some of her goals. I was also happy last night when she started reading 'Disclosure'. She has not been reading books at all since the surgery. So, this reading is good. Even though bad things may still happen, I am getting more hopeful that we will get back to our good life. Even if it is not as long as I want it to be, I am going to do everything I can to make it as happy and full and long as I can.

Thursday, July 7th

Last night was very cool - which made it very pleasant sleeping. Virginia has tolerated the reduction of Decadron very well. She is feeling very good today. We got through radiation, went to McDonald's and came home. On the way home Virginia mentioned, again, that she wants to graduate from CSU next year - on the

anniversary of her tumor surgery. I think this would be really cool. When we got home, she spent a little time doing thank-you notes. Joyce took Ben up to her house after his piano lessons. Joyce has been incredibly helpful. Marty Osecky came over for lunch with her boys (Alex and Eric). We had lunch together (and Mandy when she got back from band practice).

After lunch I went to the garage and cleaned it up some. I find getting things in order therapeutic. This also let Virginia, Mandy and Marty talk. Susan Ison also stopped by. After they left, Virginia started cooking some chili herself. She is feeling very good and her leg feels stronger. The OT session went well and Virginia had some more movement in her hand and arm. Things have gotten set up for Virginia to go to out-patient therapy next week. We are both pretty excited about this. I also had to talk to the insurance carrier about aspects of therapy. They apparently only cover \$1000 of out-patient therapy and this will clearly take more than that. In general, the insurance company has been pretty good, but it can still be very confusing.

I notice that when I think and talk about all of this, I refer to 'we' a lot. 'We' got discharged. 'We' got scheduled for out-patient therapy. I think that this is, in part, a natural reaction to the situation. I think the other aspect of it is that Virginia and I are really more than two separate people - we are two halves of a whole. My love for Virginia is very, very deep.

During the course of the day, I do a whole bunch of laundry - trying to get it all caught up. I got this done and so now, I will have the kids start doing their own. Joyce came down and picked Mandy up to go to a brain tumor support group and a general cancer support group. Mandy tried to duck out of it, but Joyce got her to go. Joyce left her kids (and Ben) at our place until Rick gets off work. We got food from a neighbor, and we went ahead and fed the whole pile of kids. When Rick came, we got him to stay and eat as well. It turns out that Joyce had a small medical problem that has her concerned and is going to the doctor tomorrow. It is probably nothing, but it has Rick and Joyce and us worried. (This on top of Nate having some mild seizures.)

Ben is pretty tired and we have him go to bed early. Virginia and I watch TV (and I do some therapy on her arm). Mandy and Joyce got home fairly late (9:30PM). It has turned out to be very useful. The second of the sessions was very good and it gave Joyce and Mandy a chance to cry. Mandy was able to express her concerns and worries. I have not made an eye appointment for her yet and this turned out to be one of her big personal worries - she is having headaches and is having trouble reading things far away. I feel like I have been doing a bad job - I should have done this before. She came home in a good mood. Virginia wants all of us to get into some therapy or support group. I think this is fine, but I still don't want to do it myself. I suspect this comes from my up-bringing. I should be able to tough it out. This is silly, and I don't think less of people who get help like this, but I still don't

really want to go myself. I am really glad that Mandy was helped by the sessions. It was nice to see her act more normal.

Sunday, July 10th

It has been a busy couple of days. I am in a pretty poor mood. I've been in some sort of cleaning frenzy. I've cleaned out the garage on Friday, the furnace room on Friday and Saturday, the kid's toy closet on Thursday and Friday and Ben's room on Saturday and Sunday. I am not really sure about why - I think cleaning things up is a nice mindless activity where you can see progress. It also gives, at least, the illusion of things being in order and under control. (But, this is getting pretty deep....)

As of Friday, Virginia still seems to be tolerating the radiation pretty well. Her ears and side scalp are pretty dry. Eunice said to use the lotion they gave. Virginia did this later on and it made a big difference. Eunice also talked about how things went with Mandy at the support group. She was very impressed with Mandy. Most of the people there were older women (primary care-givers for sick husbands). Apparently, Mandy made a big impression. She cried and talked about various things. She mentioned her eyes and wanting an eye appointment. (Which I did make for Monday.) She also mentioned not having her name up on the calendar of events. Eunice commented on what a good job we had done on raising Mandy.

Kay Godowski and Kathy Warden took Virginia out to lunch. I took Amanda, Ben and Sarah Barnes out for pizza. Virginia had her two therapies which went well. She got some more activity out her hand. After this, we picked up Vickie and Angela. Virginia is pretty tired.

On Saturday, Angela and I woke up before the rest. She and I went to the grocery store. She has turned out to be a nice girl and has been very helpful with Virginia. Saturday is Virginia's rest day and we take it pretty easy. In the afternoon, we went to ShopKo. Virginia wanted to walk through the store and is very disappointed that she couldn't - she walked in from the car. It was very hot, and it was her rest day. That afternoon I went through the bills and files. I'm getting ready to really sit down and read the clinical trial information next week.

Saturday evening, Pat Turley (Rick's sister from Oregon) stopped by to visit. We've known her for a long time. While they were visiting (the Turley's), Joyce gave me a quick back rub. I am not used to getting them and tend to tense up. Rick watching didn't help much either. He didn't look very happy - I don't know if it was about the back rub or what. I went out Saturday night to old town with the Mandy, Ben and the Turley's for ice cream. Virginia, Vickie, Angela and Cindy stayed home. Cindy went home to her trailer for Saturday night.

Ben has driven me crazy this weekend. I have been trying to help - but he doesn't get his stuff done. I need to give him more structure. He did do his laundry pretty

well. I am hoping that with some more structure and his room starting out clean and organized differently, things will be a little better this week. Mandy has been very good this weekend - I think the support group helped.

On Sunday we (Virginia, Vickie, Angela, Ben and I) went to Boston Chicken and then to Target. Virginia walked through a good portion of Target. We really didn't do much today. In the late afternoon, we (Virginia, Vickie, Cindy and I) talked about religion a little. Vickie, as I understand, believes in God, but thinks churches get in the way. Virginia said that she does not believe in a fair, caring god. I said that I'm still agnostic - I'm not sure. Cindy said that she is closest to what I said. During the discussion, I got the impression that Virginia does believe in a god at some level.

Virginia ate supper pretty late. Around 9:00 PM we (Cindy, Virginia, Vickie and I) went out to old town and Virginia walked a little bit more. We were sitting outside of Coopersmith's - Cindy and Vickie had gone inside. While it was just the two of us, Virginia started crying a little. She wanted to get back to normal - to walk around with her family - simple things. I tried to encourage her a bit, but she needed a little 'pity party'. About this time, Vickie and Cindy came out. After Virginia got through this, Cindy wanted to start talking about the night the whole thing started. This doesn't bother Virginia at all. Cindy asked Virginia if it bothered her to talk about it. Virginia said that it didn't. However, I have been through it enough times - I really don't want to rehash it. I made some comment about 'what about me'. Cindy apologized, but didn't really pick up my cue that I didn't want to talk about it. I need to get more direct and express my feelings more clearly.

Virginia has been pretty frustrated today (Sunday) because her leg and arm feel sluggish. We have not been very aggressive in the last several days on therapy. We did end up doing one ankle and one arm electrical stimulation. This seemed to help the ankle wake up a bit. I also think that the radiation fatigue is taking its toll. I hope that she really progresses the week or two after radiation is over. I still have some concerns about Virginia's short term memory, but she does do better about days of the week.

Monday, July 11th

Today has gone pretty well. Vickie took Virginia to radiation. Dr. Lim said that she could go down to 1 Decadron (anti-seizure pills - two 1/2 tablets) per day. I am hoping that this will help some of the left side recovery. I took Ben to his art class. Then Mandy, Angela and I stopped at Stone Lion (a bookstore) until it was time for Mandy's eye appointment. Virginia and Vickie met up with us there. The eye doctor (Dr. Sibelrud) asked what had happened - and Virginia told him. After Mandy's appointment (she needs glasses and wants contact lenses), Sibelrud talked to us about some holistic or alternative cancer treatments - especially one called Hansi. Our immediate reaction is skepticism, but I am leaving all avenues open right now.

In the afternoon, I read a bunch of the cancer articles that Joyce and Vickie have been collecting for me. This is very depressing because the numbers don't look good. There are some encouraging things, but most of the statistics are against a long survival or cure for brain cancers (of the glioblastoma multiforme or GBM). It looks to me like around 20% chance of survival for 3 years. But, I have to remind myself that these are statistics, based on clinical information. They do not talk about other supporting aspects (diet, health, support, attitude, etc.) which I think are critical parts of the overall process of fighting the cancer. Again, most of us do not know when we are going to die. For Virginia and I, we still don't know. (I could die before her. Although this is a more unsettling thought at this point, I need to consider that option and make sure that I have things legally set up - for Virginia and for the kids.) Even though this is depressing reading, I need to finish it so I can understand the options better. I am not going to finish it tonight, but will tomorrow. Virginia and I talked about this a bit after supper and she got a bit irate about some of the low survival rate statistics (there are actually several different numbers). She seemed pretty happy about the 20% number. The kids have been pretty good today.

Thursday, July 14th

On Tuesday we got an early phone call from the radiation office - the radiation machine was not working. So, we had the 'day off'. So, Virginia was able to sleep a little later. We had the last of the home therapy sessions. Barb was at 11 and Sharon and Barry were in the afternoon. I had bought a cake and we celebrated with them. During Sharon's session (the OT - occupational therapist), Virginia had some voluntary thumb, arm and hand movement. Sharon got very excited. I'm going to miss Sharon - she was a very affirming person and her outlook and enthusiasm were great. I am going to write a letter commenting on Sharon, Barb and Elena - how good they were.

At lunch time, I think both Vickie and I gave Virginia her lunch medicine - i.e. a double dose. So, we need to start putting our initials down as soon as we do it.

Virginia and Vickie went to Bunko on Tuesday night. (Bunko is a ladies group where they get together and play some type of dice game - I think.) Apparently Virginia did pretty well. However, Vickie mentioned that Cindy Hoxmeier thought Virginia was getting a bit confused by the end of the evening. While Virginia and Vickie went to Bunko, I took the kids (Angela, Ben and Mandy) to a movie. Ben was an absolute pain tonight and seemed to complain about everything. (The stress of the summer is probably getting to him.) We saw Maverick (we had all seen it except for Angela - but went because there wasn't really anything else they all wanted to see).

When Virginia was getting ready for bed, she was talking about wanting to do light dose chemotherapy as the next step. I said that we should wait and see what the second opinion clinic had to say.

On Wednesday the machine was working again and Vickie took Virginia. I dropped the kids off at their stuff (art class for Ben and band practice for Mandy). Before I picked Mandy up, I went looking for a hand-rail for the upstairs. I also called the second opinion clinic. They said that we were doing the right thing - radiation first. They suggested having an MRI a week after the end of radiation - as a base line. Then, come in with the MRI film as well as the pathology slides (not just the reports). The nurse indicated that they tended to go towards chemotherapy as the next treatment and then experimental after that. We talked briefly about the herpes therapy. She said it was still very early and unclear about the effectiveness on people.

In the afternoon, I took Virginia to her first outpatient therapy sessions (OT and PT). This went okay. It was mostly an assessment. I hope Friday's session is more useful (in doing something). The therapists seem good, but it is still early to tell. Part way through, Cindy (Heckle) came to the session.

Virginia was very, very tired at the end of the day. We had planned on going out with Heckendorn's, but I canceled. Virginia perked up after 9:30.

On Thursday, I took the kids around again (band and art). Angela has been going with Vickie and Virginia to the radiation sessions. I am very impressed with how Angela has been this trip - she has matured a lot. I need to remember with Ben that he is still pretty young. I went into work in the afternoon for a little bit. Alan Arnette, my boss, has been very supportive. I am very happy with HP right now. I had been unhappy, but the people and the company have been great during all of this.

Virginia has had a good day. She is pretty awake. She went to Target in the afternoon and walked quite a bit. She also did the exercise bike in the evening while we were watching TV. She seems to have more self-confidence and stamina. Cindy has not been spending the night the last couple nights so that she can get her trailer cleaned up before Art and Lee get here.

I am doing okay, but still pretty stressed and at loose ends. I have had some moments over the last couple of days of depression about what might happen. I hear a song on the radio and I think about funeral arrangements. This makes me mad and pissed off at myself. I am looking forward to the second opinion clinic because it is a proactive response to this situation. We will be doing something.

Saturday, July 16th

Friday was Virginia's first day of the 'coned-down' radiation. The first 25 days were the large area radiation - 2 centimeters outside of the area where the tumor is located. The research has apparently shown that brain tumors recur within 2

centimeters of the original sites. The last 5 days are focused on the tumor site itself (including the tendrils). This is the 'coned-down' portion - which is apparently at the same dosage level. Again, Vickie and Angela took Virginia while I went to get Ben (who stayed at a friend's house) and take him to his last art class. Virginia got home and I took off with Mandy (and picked up one of her friends) and took them downtown for an outdoor concert. Virginia, Vickie and Angela came down later. Ben came out and watched the concert (because his art class was right next door to the concert). Mandy did very well - the band sounded very good. She is a first chair flute (and I am very proud of her). After the concert all of us, but Ben, went to have lunch at a nearby restaurant. After that, I took Virginia to out-patient therapy. She was very tired, but did well. Afterwards, we came home and Virginia rested. Susan Ison and her daughter India came up. I made home-made pizza dough and we all (except for Mandy) made home-made pizza. Mandy fixed fettucini alfredo a couple of hours later.

On Saturday, Virginia slept very late - until around noon. I spent the morning doing some landscaping - fabric and rock in the back corner. Ben helped a little. Harvey and Laverne showed up about the same time Virginia woke up. I asked them not to do any sort of prayer thing with her. (They are very religious.) They took the request very well and didn't do anything funky. While Virginia was getting dressed, we talked and I gave Laverne a tour of the house (since she had not been out before). She really liked all the things that Virginia had done with decorating. They stayed about an hour and a half.

After they left, Virginia mentioned the prayer plant they left. It closes up at night - 'like it is praying'. She was appreciative of their not going overboard with her about religion. While I talked with her, she was talking about how she doesn't have as much of a problem with 'Him' (i.e. God, but she never mentioned that term) as with churches and how people build up stuff around God. This was the first time I had heard her talk in terms of some belief. It was very interesting - I think that all of us have been reexamining our beliefs as well as our priorities in life.

We took off to the mall in the afternoon. While we were at the mall, we ran into some other parents (of Mandy's first boy-friend, Ruben). They asked how it was going and Virginia didn't say what had happened. I mentioned to the father about the brain tumor. After they left (and we were eating) Virginia asked Mandy what she would like us to do? Did she want us to tell people what was really going on. Mandy made Virginia very proud when she said "It's up to you. You can because I'm really proud of you and how you are doing." This made Virginia feel really good. After the mall we adults (Virginia, Vickie, Cindy and I) went to Virginia's favorite Mexican restaurant - Rio Grande. We were going to go to a movie, but we got out of the restaurant too late.

Lee had called today about arrangements for Sunday - with Vickie and Angela leaving and Art and Lee coming in. While Lee talked with Vickie, she mentioned that she had called the new Des Moines cancer clinic where they are doing trials with the

herpes treatment. Lee had talked to them and with the new broader study they have gone from 8 patients in the first trial to 30 in the second (with one patient already started). Lee described Virginia's information and she is apparently a candidate for treatment and is currently on the list. Even if she does not get on this trial, this gives me a great deal of hope because she might be able to get on the one of the subsequent trials. This is good news.

Tuesday, July 19th

On Sunday, we took Vickie and Angela to the Marriott to catch their bus for the airport. We went home again. I worked on the rock for the back yard for a couple of hours. Virginia was puttering around a bit and seemed to feel pretty good - if a little fatigued. We finally went up to the Marriott to get Art and Lee - but they didn't come in on the bus from the airport that we thought. We went over to the mall since everybody was pretty hungry. After we got settled, I went back over to the hotel and Art and Lee were there.

In talking with Lee, it turns out that we are on the Des Moines clinic list for information - not on their list for being considered for the trial. In reality, we do need to wait until we go through the second opinion clinic. I know that this is the way it works, but I am disappointed.

On Monday, I took Virginia to radiation and asked about some short term memory concerns that I had. Dr. Lim indicated that what I was seeing is fatigue. The area being radiated shouldn't have that effect and if it did, it would take 6 months or more to become apparent. In the afternoon, I worked on handrails so that Virginia can get around more easily.

I took Ben out to get his model and we stopped for DQ ice-cream afterwards. This was nice. He and I had gotten upset when I had wanted him to clean some stuff up before we went. Monday evening, Hoxmeier's took him up to their cabin for a couple of days. He was starting to bug me again - by not cleaning up some stuff that I had asked. He needs a break from me for a few days. I hope he has a good time.

On Tuesday, I went into work. There is a two day management off-site meeting. I went to the morning session and met the new general manager. He seems pretty good. I left after lunch because they were doing a bunch of 'team-building' activities and I wasn't in a 'party' mood. I went to the plant and checked in. It was sort of nice getting to work. But, I am a little depressed this afternoon. I think this is in part because I talked to some folks at work that didn't know what was going on or wanted to know how things were going. I want everything to work out and I know that we have a long way to go, whatever happens. I am also a little tired of being a mature, responsible adult - trying to make the best of the situation. At times I want to shout, at times I want to run away (just for a while). But, I can't because how I

react impacts greatly how things turn out with Virginia and with how the kids end up having dealt with this situation.

Thursday, July 21st

On Wednesday I went to the second day of the management off-site. On the way there, I dropped Art off at a car rental company so that he could go down to Denver and do some work - the company he works for has a warehouse in Denver. By doing this one day of work, he got his company to pay for both his and Lee's airfare. The management off-site was okay, and I got into things part way through the day. I talked briefly with the new general manager. He is very blunt and opinionated. It will be interesting working with him. I think he will be good for the division - even though many of us may not like the changes.

I cooked supper and we had a pretty relaxed evening. Virginia and I watched TV alone for a little while! (Ben is gone, Mandy was baby-sitting and Art, Lee and Cindy went looking at trailers.) Art has been spending a lot of time trying to help Cindy. She has gotten herself into a bit of bind because her trailer needs some work and she has no money. It is very tough on Art because Cindy isn't proactive about keeping it up or about getting into a better job that will allow her to have a better home. The same thing is going on with her car right now as well.

Thursday morning we found out that Josie - the house-cleaner - is going to be moving, probably by the end of August or early September. Virginia said that she would look into replacements. It is too bad, I thought she was good.

On Thursday, Art, Lee, Mandy, Virginia and I went to Virginia's last radiation treatment. I have mixed emotions. It is good to be done, but I am worried about Virginia getting depressed. They had a small cake for her last day (something they do for their patients). Virginia and I got hugs from the technicians. Virginia can go down on the anti-swelling medication another notch and then will probably be off of it next week - which means that she can stop the stomach medicine (Zantac) within a few days of this. She is tired but is doing very well. She did not get her vanilla shake on the way home today.

When we got home she did a whole bunch of her arm and leg therapies. We had cake and ice-cream for our celebration at home. A little before 1PM, we (Mandy, Art, Lee, Virginia and I) went to Rio and met Cindy up there. This was the 'celebration' meal for getting done with radiation. Virginia was lamenting that this was the second time she had been to the Rio without drinking - and was getting tired of it. We were all full, but on the way home, Virginia wanted to stop and get a vanilla shake at McDonald's (I guess to make up for not getting one this morning). Virginia rested while I did some paperwork and balanced the checkbook. During the Oprah show on TV, I came down and we (Art, Lee, Virginia and I) talked a little. Art wondered if Virginia had thought about writing her experiences and thoughts down.

She and Lee had already talked about it. She already has a title in mind - "Betty and a cake". During the night when she had the surgery, she didn't have a 'go to the light' experience, but she saw everybody around her bed. This included her folks, Tootsie (her grandmother - who has passed away), Aaron (her great-uncle - who has also passed away) and a whole bunch of other people. At the end of the line was Betty and Armond DeFino (Vickie's in-laws and parents of Virginia's best high-school friend Karen). Betty always bakes a cake for every event - good and bad. So Virginia thought that this would be a good title. My suggestion was "The Tumors of Madison County" - a take-off of "The Bridges of Madison County". Virginia suggested the variation "The Tumor of Larimer County".

We really didn't do much else today. Ben got back from his trip with Hoxmeier's up to their cabin. We had supper and Virginia watched some TV. I ran Mandy over to and then very quickly back from a cancer support group. She does seem to be getting some value from this. She is at a point where she knows that Virginia is not going to die - she mentioned that everyone else in the group is dealing with the upcoming death of a loved-one. I did not talk to her about the possibility of her being in the same situation.

I am actually doing pretty good today. I am going to be doing everything I can to help Virginia beat the cancer or at least have the best and longest life in spite of it. My sense of priorities is very different. I want to do interesting stuff professionally, but it is a clear second. Having a stable job is more important - because it is an enabler for helping Virginia and the kids. I listened to a tape on various aspects of diet on dealing with cancer tonight. I have the potential of getting into a more natural and healthy diet. I suspect that Virginia will start worrying about me going off the deep end. (I'm thinking about getting a grain grinder of some sort.)

Friday, July 22nd

Today was the first day after radiation. Virginia has decided that sleeping late doesn't make her feel any better. She wants to wake up around 8:30AM - which she did this morning. She got up and took it somewhat easy, but she did do her various therapies. I went out and finished moving the remaining rock in the drive way. We were going to go shopping for a bit, but ran out of time. So I took Virginia to physical therapy. She did well and went on a treadmill for 5 minutes (which she had done on Wednesday). This was very impressive. Then I took her to an appointment with Dr. McIntosh. I think he is a pretty good doctor, but his bed-side manner is very stiff. Today, I think he was trying to be humorous, but it didn't work with Virginia at all. When we got in, he said something like "nice haircut" - referring to the radiation hair loss. Then later on, he said that she would be able to get off the steroids (anti-swelling) pretty easily - and that she would lose some weight and have her complexion clear up. Later on in the day, Virginia recounted (somewhat differently than what I remembered) this stuff and was somewhat pissed off about it. In some ways this is a good sign because she is getting ornery again.

After the doctor visit, we went downtown and picked up Lee and Ben and Mandy. After some running around and a vanilla shake for Virginia, we went home. Virginia was pretty tired. We got home and she rested a little. I took the kids and myself to the beauty shop for haircuts. On the way there I had a discussion with Ben - he had left some batteries on the floor in the kitchen area. They were not in the middle of the floor, but could have easily gotten out there and Virginia could be hurt. I've talked to him before about this. I was trying to be reasonable and understanding. I didn't punish him, I told him that I would warn him one more time and then I would take his TV away for 2 days. (Actually, I would leave it in the room, but I would disconnect the cable feed.) He got very, very upset about this - that it wouldn't make him very happy. I tried to make him understand that I would only do this if he left stuff on the floor 2 more times. I also tried to make him understand that this could seriously hurt Virginia. I don't think he gets that this is important and serious and that I need his help. During this discussion, Mandy put her fingers in her ears and moved to the very back of the mini-van. Ben was very sullen and upset for about an hour. But, I need to get through to him on this stuff.

When we got back, I helped Virginia get dressed for going out. We went out with Heckendorn's (Robert and Marilyn) to Young's (a Vietnamese restaurant). Virginia was rather tired, but did pretty well. We were going to go out to see a movie "True Lies", but Virginia got too tired. So, we went back home. Even though she is tired, I think she has done well today - it was pretty busy.

Late in the evening I got a small hive on my upper lip. I usually get hives for just a small amount of time (like a half hour) when I am nervous or stressed. This is the first hive I have gotten for a while. I don't think there was any specific event that caused it. I don't know.

Wednesday, July 27th

On Saturday, I got over to the CSU auction with Ben. We had a good time. He was able to buy a couple of hundred test tubes for 50 cents from a fellow who had bought an entire pallet of them. We (Art, Lee, Cindy, Virginia, Ben, Mandy and I) all went out to the Egg and I restaurant for lunch. After that we took Art & Lee to the hotel to catch the airport shuttle. Cindy was around all day, but seemed to be in a bad mood. Chris and Julie were supposed to come in Saturday night, but they had car trouble. A bearing in the alternator gave out in Lincoln late in the afternoon. They weren't able to get a room because of a Jehovah's Witness convention in town. They were able to drive back to Omaha.

On Sunday, everybody slept in but me. I did some major straightening and clean up in some cabinets in the kitchen, laundry room and spare bedroom. We went to the mall with Cindy. We shopped and had lunch. Chris and Julie were able to get in to a gas station with a garage early on Sunday and got a good start. They got in around

6:30PM. We had supper (from Boston Chicken). We stayed up late and played Trivial Pursuits. Virginia did really well - especially considering that we stayed up until around 11:30PM.

On Monday, again most everybody slept late. I was up first and then Julie. I have been waking up around 7:30 to 8:00AM. I had a bunch of home related stuff to do: I ordered Mandy's contacts and looked at furniture with Ben for his room. In the afternoon, while Julie took Virginia to therapy, Chris, Mandy and I went to look at frames for Mandy's glasses, to Finest (to look at used CDs) and also to look at furniture a little more. Ben spent the afternoon at a friend's house. He was asked to spend the night, but didn't want to because the friend's older brother was too weird for his tastes. Cindy spent Sunday night at her trailer and she didn't stop over at all on Monday.

On Tuesday, we got up late again and went up to the mall for lunch. I went off to do some errands (get some grab bars and drop off Virginia's AFO) while they shopped for my birthday presents. In the afternoon, Chris and I installed the grab bars. They seem to work pretty well and are not too intrusive. One of the therapists had mentioned how nobody says they want or need them, but once they are up people use them all the time. I have noticed that myself. I use the extra stair handrails all of the time now.

Cindy came over around supper time. After supper we went out to see True Lies. We had tried to see this a couple of times over the last week. But Virginia got tired or we ran late. We were going to see it on my birthday, but I suspected that after therapy and dinner out Virginia would get too tired. So, we did Tuesday. We were going to be running late again and I was pushing folks to get ready. Virginia thought I was upset at her and how long everything takes (she told me as we were walking into the movie). She was afraid that I had hit my limit of dealing with all this. I was a little frustrated at how long things can take, but not really directed at Virginia. I think the frustration comes from a combination of how late everybody sleeps and the surrealistic feel of the summer and time right now (not to mention the cancer). Cindy didn't go with us to the movie. It was a great movie. It amazes me how much background comments there are about cancer and death in movies and television shows. (There were a couple of things in the movie.)

On Wednesday, people got a late start again. I got up and read the paper and then did this diary entry. I also wrote a letter about the home therapists to their bosses. They did a good job:

Date: July 27th, 1994
From: Tim Mikkelsen 4316 Picadilly Drive Fort Collins, CO 80526
To: Georgia Layton

Dr. Gerald McIntosh

Ms. Layton and Dr. McIntosh,

I wanted to write both of you and comment on the excellent quality of care my wife Virginia received during the in-home therapy portion of her recovery. In particular, I wanted to comment on three of the therapists.

I feel one of the best was Sharon Houkstra (an occupational therapist). She was very helpful and supportive. She provided a very holistic view of her therapy in Virginia's overall recovery. Her enthusiasm, enthusiasm and caring attitude were wonderful. She was a joy to work with.

Also excellent were Barb Philips and Elena (whose last name I have forgotten) as Virginia's physical therapists. They did an excellent job. Virginia really looked forward to their visits - in part because of the therapy sessions they provided. She also looked forward to their visits because of their general approach with her.

I feel that all three of these therapists are excellent representatives of the PVH Home Care department. I feel they embodied the professional, caring and quality image that I suspect that you want to represent.

Thank you for the excellent care that you provided.

Regards,
Tim Mikkelsen

Thursday, July 28th

Yesterday afternoon, I ran out with Mandy and Ben and ordered Mandy's glasses. In the afternoon, my brother called and wished me a happy birthday. We talked about Virginia a bit and also about his wife - Mary Lee. She had a large melanoma removed last year. I didn't realize how serious it was (class 3 and an area about 3" by 3" was removed). She seems to be clean now, but is worried. But, she is continuing to smoke and lay out in the sun a lot. Both Virginia and I don't get this and are a little angry. She has things to do to stop hers from recurring, and she hasn't changed her life style.

Virginia had the toilet overflow on her in the afternoon. She called out for help, but nobody heard her. She was able to get the lid off and stop it from running and got towels down on the floor. (I think she did very well with that.) After that, I took Virginia to therapy while Chris and Julie took the kids swimming. Virginia was very tired, but did okay. I've been a little worried this week about her hitting a plateau since she has not shown a lot of progress. However, I think (and hope) that she is just dealing with the physical and emotional aspects of being done with therapy and coming off some more of the drugs.

After therapy, we got home and Virginia laid down and had a nap (from around 5:30 until 7:00PM). I went downstairs and pattered with some computer stuff. It was

nice (and relaxing) for a change. When she got up we (Mandy, Ben, Cindy, Chris, Julie, Virginia and I) got ready to go to Bisetti's for my birthday dinner and got there a little before 8:00PM. Dinner was nice, but the kids were a little 'owly' (tired and hungry). Ben was babbling a bit and they were bugging each other - but they did fine. I was a little depressed. It didn't feel much like a birthday to me. The food was great. Virginia and I split a meal - like we normally intend to do but usually don't. Chris ended up paying for the meal. This was very nice of him. He and Julie are a very nice couple and fun to have around. When we got home, Mandy went down to take care of some neighbor's animals. We waited a while to open my presents, but went ahead after around 30 minutes. She came back part way through. I got some clothes, a neat Mac game (Myst), a CD, a Star Trek trivia book, a stuffed Marvin the Martian and a Lion King mug. It was nice stuff.

This evening (Wednesday) Virginia and I moved back upstairs. She was very tired, but got upstairs well. She was able to get into and out of bed very well. She was very depressed and distressed with her lack of progress. She said she wanted so much more for my birthday. She also said that she wanted to be able to get away from all of this (the cancer). She wanted to escape. I really understood. At one point, she said she wanted it to go away. I said okay and made a 'poof' sound and motion. She started crying (I think because it won't go away). I felt like a real jerk. I was trying to lighten things up, but it didn't work. I would really like to get our normal life back - I would like to wake up, but this is real life.

She also said that she wanted to delay the MRI that was scheduled for Thursday. I said I would, but waited until Thursday morning to see how she felt. On Thursday morning, she got up a little earlier than normal. I was reminded how noisy our bedroom is - facing a street. I ran out and got a smaller shower seat for Virginia and she took a shower. She looks like she is feeling better. I did go ahead and reschedule the MRI and a doctor's visit. We are planning on going up to Estes Park today for some fun. I really hope that she starts getting over the fatigue that she is feeling right now.

A couple of weeks ago I had a thought about a science fiction story. The basic idea was that a fellow went through all this stuff that is happening to us right now. But in the story, it turns out that he is being artificially stimulated to see his response. He wakes up or figures it out, but he continues to feel that it is hanging over his head even after it is 'over'. I understand this is my imagination's way of trying to let me escape from this.

Friday, July 29th

Virginia had a pretty good day yesterday. We (Chris, Julie, Ben, Mandy, Virginia and I) did go up to Estes park. We got started around lunch time. Estes was pretty crowded and it was hard to find a parking place. One handicapped spot was taken by what looked to be just a normal out-of-state car. I have gotten pretty intolerant

of that sort of stuff happening. We used the wheel chair to get her around, but she did walk in some of the stores. She enjoyed shopping and getting out of town and I think she especially enjoyed not having the cancer or recovery be the center of attention. It was probably good not to do the MRI. Because we got a late start the kids got pretty hungry and as a result they got nasty towards each other. We went into a bar/pizza place and got some food (which was surprisingly good). Our timing was perfect because it started to rain very heavily while we were there and then it stopped right before we left. We shopped a fair amount and then headed back a little after 5:30PM. We played a game going up and down the canyon that Chris introduced us to. A person thinks of a movie and the next person in order has to come up with another movie that starts with the last letter in the previous movie title (Like "Robocop" => "Pinocchio".) This was fun. Everybody was pretty tired on the way back and rested when we got home. I took Mandy to her cancer support group while everybody else rested up. I came back home for a about a half an hour and went back to get her. Julie cooked supper (hamburgers on the grill) and they ate while I was gone. Mandy and I had some when we got home.

I am really anxious to get back on a regular schedule of some form. This indeterminate twilight mode that we are in is incredibly frustrating to me. I am really hoping that Virginia starts to feel better and have more energy and that we get back on a normal tact. I was hoping to get back to work this week a little and mostly full time next week. But, I don't feel comfortable with that yet. I also think I will go for a staff job at work. I think that this will increase my flexibility in terms of helping Virginia and the kids.

On Friday, we got up sort of mid-morning-ish. Chris and I tore down Ben's bed. I had Ben start cleaning stuff up. Then Chris, Ben and I went out and got some of Ben's new furniture. We started putting it together and because it took a while, Julie took Virginia to her therapy session. On a trip out to pick up a bed frame, I talked with Chris about the general prognosis. He knew some, but didn't know that there had been tumor tissue left after the surgery. I also asked how everybody was doing back in Iowa about all this. Apparently Vickie cycles really high and then really low depending on progress and news from here. Art deals with it pragmatically. The one person he hasn't been able to get a read on is his mom, Lee. She keeps her emotions bottled up - at least in front of the family.

After Julie and Virginia got back and Virginia had a little nap (maybe a half hour). After that we went out to the Rio for supper. Cindy met us there. I made some snide comment to Cindy about 'now we can really get our name in'. It wasn't really necessary, but she has been getting on my nerves a bit. She got snippy in response and so we sort of ignored each other all night. It took a long time for us to get a table. While we were waiting, Cindy showed Chris and Julie her Star Trek convention pictures. She has, over the last year gotten really fixated on Patrick Stewart. We ran into Susan Halter from work and talked with her for a few minutes. We finally got a table - and it was the farthest away it could be. (The good thing was that it was right near the rear exit and I brought the car around when we were

done.) I paid for supper for all of us. Chris and Julie wanted to pay their share, but I said it was okay. Cindy did not make an attempt to pay or even ask. I don't think she even said thank you. (I was talking to Chris after this and he mentioned that at dinner on my birthday he went 'fishing' for a thank you for his paying for dinner from Cindy that he never got.)

We went over to get tickets for a movie (The Mask) which Ben has been dying to see. We then went and got some frozen yogurt. We then went back for the movie - the timing worked out pretty well - we got into the movie just right. Cindy had been waiting there for us. I came in after I parked the car, but Cindy apparently had been waiting for us to show up and I think to buy tickets. The movie was pretty good - much better than I expected. Virginia did well and enjoyed it. We got home and Virginia got ready for bed - it was pretty late. Cindy stayed for a while talking to Chris and Julie about her Stepperette days (a drum and bugle marching group from high school).

Saturday, July 30th

Chris and Julie left this morning. Virginia got a little emotional again - but not bad. We (Virginia and I) spent most of the day cleaning up and arranging Ben's bedroom. It was a mess, but we got through it. Ben was not a lot of help. At one point, Virginia said something like "I don't want to spend what's left of my life doing this". This really caught me because we haven't really talked directly about the 'down-side' probabilities of our situation with the tumor. I didn't like it - I guess I would like to be in denial in at least an external sense. I finally took both the kids to the swimming pool and Virginia and I finished cleaning up the room ourselves. Virginia helped a lot and it was nice because it was a normal sort of activity.

Cindy came over late in the day, but we didn't do a whole lot with her. Vickie also called. Apparently she has been calling the immuno-therapy clinic like every day back in Des Moines. Virginia and I got cleaned up and we went out to Pizza Hut for a late supper (around 8:30PM) and then went to the drive in theater to see 'The Client'. It was a nice pleasant evening - and mostly normal. I can tell she is feeling better and stronger. We talked a little about the second opinion clinic and the MRI. She would like to focus on the left side and getting functionality back - she recognizes that she wants to be in denial. We will probably put off the second opinion clinic but still do the MRI. It depends on how she feels. It was nice having a more normal day - not tons of people around.

Through all of this, the mind/brain characteristics have become more clear to me. There is a definite separation - the brain is the mechanism for the mind. Even though Virginia has had appreciable portions of her brain removed and damaged, her mind is intact. It is pretty phenomenal. I feel that you could do other mechanisms to support minds (i.e. artificial intelligence - actually non-biological sentience - artificial sentience). It seems like it should be possible to transfer (or

duplicate?) a mind from a brain into another mechanism. There are some serious big problems in doing this: One would be the necessity of understanding the various levels of mind structures and how they map onto the brain itself. Another would be the volume of mind information that would have to be transferred. Another is the ethical aspects of research in this area - you would probably be playing with life - albeit mechanical. This all sounds very Frankenstein-ish in some ways. Part of this is my mind thinking about ways to beat this current situation and part of it is me worrying about my own mortality. Part of it is escapism.

Sunday, July 31st

We got a moderate start today. I was up around 9:00AM and Virginia woke up around 10:30. The kids got up pretty well and we went to the mall around 1:30PM. We ate and shopped a little. We got back around 4:30PM and I ran out to the grocery store. Tom and Mel Huibregtse stopped over around 5:30. I fixed some grilled chicken (with zucchini, onion, bell peppers, apples and Cajun spices) that turned out to be very good. I am really enjoying cooking and trying new things. I think I have a bit of flair for it. After eating we watched 'Robin Hood: Men in Tights'. It was a nice relaxed evening. No big deal. Virginia was a little tired today and is worried about getting another drug reaction - but there are a couple of explanations for a slight coloration on her cheek. She said tonight that she does want to go ahead with the MRI this week.

Susan Ison had called again about Virginia going out later in August with her to San Francisco. Virginia decided she didn't want to go - which is fine. I hope that she will be able to do things like that by the end of August, but we don't know yet. I actually feel a little guilty because I wanted Virginia to go - so that I could get a little time off myself. Part of me feels bad for thinking this, but I recognize that I could flame out on being the primary care provider. I've got to learn to let Virginia start picking up more of her normal house-hold chores.

Mandy is spending the night at Larissa's and Ben has his friend Ben Keiser staying here. I feel I need to go into work tomorrow. I got upset at Mandy about this. I asked Mandy to have Larissa stay here and she didn't want to. So, I asked her if she could come back early in the morning. She said she would. When I checked with her about being back at 8:30AM, she got quiet and sullen about this and said that was really early. This really bugged me and makes me feel like I can't depend on her.

I talked with a friend - Dennis Vetter. He called to ask if I had any luck finding a doctor who was more of a 'program manager' - a more holistic approach. I said that I didn't. He was asking because his wife Kathy was not doing well. They have been battling cancer for over two years (I think). Apparently she is getting fluid around her heart. This is not good. I hope that they can work this out. The one possible

lead I had was the second opinion clinic in Boulder - but they specialize in brain tumors.

August 1994

Monday, August 1st

Today went pretty well. I went into work from around 11:00AM to 3:00PM. Virginia was on her own with the kids at home. She got up and around and did a bunch of puttering. She liked being more in control and on her own. Work went okay. I need to figure out what I want to do for a job. My boss and I talked about a couple options - management and architect roles. I need to figure this out within the next month. I also handed out a bunch of salary increase slips to several people on my project team. (One of the better aspects of being a manager.) I tried to stop by Tom Huibregtse's desk and pick up a pager that he said I could have (it belongs to HP, but he hasn't used it in a long time). He wasn't there. I called after I got home, and he had just given it to Larry Rupp. This rather annoyed me because he had offered it Sunday night and I said that I wanted it. Sometimes I don't understand how Tom's mind works.

An acquaintance called late in the afternoon. She had heard about our situation from Roger and offered to help. Her help was focused on helping more with things associated with Virginia dying. (Things like helping Virginia write down her memoirs or things for the kids.) I was talking to her near the kids in the garage and went outside to talk with her. I explained that we were fighting this and not approaching it as a death sentence. This lady is nice and means well, but has a lot of personal problems. And even though there is a lot of potential for things to go bad, I am hopeful for either beating this or having quality time. After the phone call, Mandy and I talked for a few minutes. She wants things to get back to normal. She commented on how Virginia was acting 'child-like' or some such term while I was at work. I suspect it was Virginia just acting silly and getting back in the swing of things. She also wanted me to do something - just her and I. I had told both the kids that I wanted to do that this week. It is stupid on my part, but I was still upset at Mandy about having her come back at a decent time this morning and her not really wanting to. So, when she asked about doing something, I told her that yes we could, but I wasn't sure when. She even asked about scheduling it. I feel really badly about this, but I wanted to keep her hanging about this. This is pretty childish on my part.

Virginia cleaned up after supper. She got very tired after that and we watched TV after supper for a while. Ben was bugging me a lot to work on some electronics stuff. I was planning on doing this, but he kept checking every 5 minutes or so. We finally went down and did this. While I was doing this, Cindy had stopped by and was with Virginia for a while. Mel Huibregtse stopped by with a friend. I gave them a tour of the house. Mandy spent the night at another friend's house (Britanny). Virginia and I are getting a little worried about this - if she is trying to escape again. (Doing it some is fine, but we are still a little concerned.)

All in all, it was a good day. It isn't normal yet, but I can see some semblance of normal from here. I think things will get a lot better by the end of August - a combination of reduced fatigue and improvement. Virginia also does better when people aren't helping her much.

Tuesday, August 2nd

It was a pretty sedate day today. Virginia got up rather late. Ben and I put together a small oscillator to see if I could get something useable for Virginia for a type of metronome. I got one working pretty well. We got out around 1:00PM and I had Virginia drive around the neighborhood. We went to therapy. Ben stayed with us. Mandy was still at Brittany's from last night. Virginia did well in therapy, but things still are going very slow. She is up from .5 mph to .8 mph on the treadmill. This is very good.

Marilyn Heckendorn brought supper - a cold cream-cheese pizza that was surprisingly good. Ben and I went out together to see the Mask again. I forgot my billfold and didn't discover it until we got there. I was upset at myself, but Ben didn't seem bugged at all. We drove home and got back to the theater. It turned out that they had trouble with the projector and we didn't miss anything. Good timing. We stopped at Dairy Queen after the movie and then got home. Mandy had gone down to Brittany's again and Virginia was home alone. This really doesn't worry me and I am getting comfortable with her being independent. I am going to start back to work next week. This whole experience has been so surreal and strange. I think I have some understanding of how a retired couple might be with one of them suffering from an illness. (Not a complete understanding, but our experience has been sort of close to this during the summer.) I do worry about work stresses on top of stuff here at home. I am anxious about what the MRI and the visit with Dr. Lim will bring up.

Wednesday, August 3rd

We had a pretty good day today. We got up around 9:00AMish and I did some electro-stimulation. Although, I did not get much wrist or ankle activity from it. I did a little on myself to see about placement and how it felt - and it is very strange stuff. Virginia took a shower. I got everybody moving and we got out of the door around noon to head up to Rocky Mountain National Park. When we got into Estes it started to rain. We bought some deli sandwiches in Estes Park and got to a parking area part way towards Bear Lake. It stopped raining and we got out for lunch. Virginia got around on the uneven surface very well (I was surprised and impressed). The kids were out wandering around and a ranger came up and started chatting (and pointed out a nice trail). Ranger Bob (his name was Bob Cook) asked Virginia what had happened and she told him about the inoperable, malignant brain tumor. He pulled off his hat and showed us a scar very similar to Virginia's. He said

he had a similar operation 26 years ago. He was a sort of a weird guy, and was very religious. He gave Virginia and I a hug and he talked about a couple other people who he had run into. It was very strange to have this happen. In some ways it was sort of good. It was at least interesting. When we talked about it later, I think Virginia was bothered by the religious aspects of what he had to say. We drove on to Bear Lake, but it started to rain again.

On the way back down, it stopped and I let the kids out to take some pictures at a couple of spots. Ben fell down at one - this scared me a bit. I don't want anything else bad to happen to us. Virginia got out of the car and was starting to come into the woods. Fortunately, everything was okay - Ben had just slipped and scraped his knee. We got home and Virginia rested for a little bit.

Later on, we headed up to Rick and Joyce's and had supper up there. Their kids (although I love them all) were very obnoxious and driving Rick and Joyce crazy. It made me realize that Ben and Mandy are really very good most of the time. We just sat and talked. Virginia had gotten up and down the stairs at their house very well. She is moving much better. But at the end of the day, I am a little depressed again - I just wish it just hadn't happened or that Virginia would improve very quickly. That's not what is going on and I have to do what I can to help Virginia. When we got home, Cindy had been by and left a note that Vickie had called. We called Vickie, and Virginia talked to her for quite a while.

Friday, August 5th

It has been a strange couple of days. On Thursday, Virginia got up - again sort of late. Josie (the cleaning lady) called early to say she needed to come on Friday instead of Thursday. We (Mandy, Virginia and I) ran out for lunch at the mall before Virginia's therapies. Ben stayed home and played Myst. We actually got to the mall and to therapy pretty well - Virginia moved pretty well. Mandy didn't want to stick around so I took her home while Virginia was in therapy. I came back with Ben. Therapy went well and we headed home. That evening, we all went to Olive Garden for supper. Virginia drove several times today and did well. On the way to the restaurant, we saw a horse trailer with two large pretty draft horses that was pushed off the road into a deep ditch. The two horses both had injured legs. Thursday evening, Mandy and I went out together. We went to Alpine Autobahn. We did 2 rounds of go-karts, 1 round of bumper cars and 1 round of miniature golf. Afterward, we went to Dairy Queen. I had a lot of fun.

On Friday, I tried to get Virginia up a little earlier without a whole lot of success. Josie came and did the house cleaning. It looks like she might not be leaving. Susan Ison came over during lunch time. I went out with Mandy and got her glasses. She looks so much older with them on - like she is in college. It is very strange. She is very, very pretty. I worry about this sometimes. In the early afternoon, Virginia and I went to Alfalfa's (a natural foods grocery store). Virginia walked around the store

with me - pushing the cart. She did pretty well. When we got home, I unloaded the groceries and we went right to the hospital for the follow-up MRI. They were running a little late. The MRI took about an hour. I didn't see much, but the two slices I did, looked okay. In particular, the ventricles in the middle of the brain looked to be in the middle - which was not the case at the end of May. Right after the MRI, I felt pretty good and hopeful about it. We got home and while Virginia rested, Ben and I went to Target, Best Buy and Steele's grocery. When we got back (which was late - around 8:00PM), I fixed supper (pork kabobs). Ben was getting on my nerves, but I think it was because we were both hungry and tired. Virginia talked to Vickie and her folks about the MRI and said that she felt good - and mentioned that I said it looked good. (I kept stressing that I don't know this stuff and only saw 2 views.) Virginia and I sat outside on the back deck after supper. It was a gorgeous evening - nice temperature and a beautiful sunset. We saw the stars come out. It was very nice and relaxing. After this, Virginia went to bed early (around 10:00PM) because she is very tired.

I am worried about how tired Virginia was tonight. I think she is doing good, but at times I have a tough time telling (comparing to the last days or weeks). I also worry about her appetite - it seems to be much less than during radiation. I also got to thinking about the MRI - what if it shows bad things (the tumor coming back or back quickly). I linked the potential for bad news with Virginia's being tired. I got to the point of worrying about Virginia dying in her sleep tonight. I think I have worked through this, but the emotions are hard to deal with at times. In many ways the last couple of days have nice - more normal in that it has just been us (Virginia, Ben, Mandy and I). And we have been doing some normal things. I know that I am going to be on an emotional roller-coaster no matter how things turn out. I have to solid and stable and not flame out for all of our sakes.

Saturday, August 6th

We got up relatively early today. Virginia was downstairs by around 10:30 or 11:00AM. I made some button-hooks for Virginia (to help with one handed use of buttons) based on the one we borrowed from Joan (the OT). I made two sizes. The smaller one seems to work better. The kids did their chores this morning. This went okay, but Ben really hit the wall when he had to clean up some cat vomit. I think it was a combination of normal kid stuff, the stress of this summer and being hungry. I finished it up for him while he ate something. We went out to downtown so that Virginia could do some shopping for Susan Ison (who turned 50) and Joyce (who is in her mid 30s). Mandy brought her friend Brittany. I tried to get one of Ben's friends along, but it didn't work out. Virginia found the stuff she wanted and we went to eat at Coopersmith's. I mostly rolled Virginia in her wheelchair, but she walked in Still Magnolias - the store where she bought the presents.

When we got back, Virginia rested for a while. I mucked around with Mosaic on the computer for a while. Then we got ready to go to Bill and Marilyn Follis's for dinner

with them and Roger and Susan Ison. This went well and Virginia had a good time. She likes getting out with friends and talking. I think it engages her mind better than something like just watching a movie or television. She was very tired when we got home and so she went to bed. Ben had his friend Charlie come over and spend the night. I worried a bit today because I only gave her one of her anti-seizure pills. She says that she took the other two, but I worry because of memory problems. She has seemed very tired this weekend and I have worried about that. In the middle of the night she got up to use the commode and she fell down. This scared me a lot. In a lot of ways the last week or two have been some of the most stressful recently.

Sunday, August 7th

We had an okay day today. Virginia got up okay but has been very tired today. We did a little electrical stimulation. The shoulder was working okay, but we didn't get much of anything from the biceps or from the hand or the ankle. We have not been doing this very much and Virginia is pretty fatigued. Rick and his brother Jim and his wife Lillian stopped by on their way to the airport. We went out to lunch to Deli-Works with all of them. Rick and Joyce's kids have gotten pretty obnoxious this summer - talking back to Rick and Joyce. Even our kids have commented on this. Rick and Joyce stopped by after lunch and Joyce opened her birthday presents at our house. Ben went up with them to play at Rick and Joyce's house. After this, Virginia rested for a while. After she got some rest, we went up to get Ben and then went out to pick up Boston Chicken for supper. Mandy is having Brittany spend the night.

Ben put a large speaker magnet on his color TV. It affected the screen and it has a color problem now. I looked up in its manual and it didn't say anything about magnets (which surprised me). It is looking a little better - so I am hoping there is a built in degaussing coil on the picture tube. If not, I'll need to build one or take the TV back. I can't really get too upset at Ben - I did the same thing when I was a kid.

We haven't seen Cindy this weekend. I suspect she will start to show up again the middle of the week before her folks get here. I wonder if somebody back in Iowa talked to her about her being around or if she took the cues from Virginia about a week ago. Chris called and left a message tonight and Virginia called him back.

I am not looking forward to going back to work. So much stuff is still up in the air. I just can't get very enthused yet. Maybe tomorrow will be better. I am also still very worried about Virginia being at home. Her fatigue worries me a lot. She has had some confusion and short term memory problems - I hope they are just fatigue. This weekend she made a comment about something for Vickie - about how she was coming out again (which she isn't). I hope this gets better.

I wonder sometimes (not often, but occasionally) if I made the right decision that first night in the hospital. Even though this is all very hard, we are still together.

She is still here mentally - if very frustrated at times. We still love each other. I actually feel the best when we are sitting next to each other or cuddling. I particularly like sitting outside and watching the stars together. Virginia commented that mornings are the worst for her and in the evening she is very glad she is still here. It varies, but I often have a similar sense of emotions. In some ways, I might be better off once I start back to work. It would be nice if I didn't have to worry about the financial aspects of all this - insurance, possible treatment costs, college for the kids, normal bills, etc. In spite of my worries, we are orders of magnitude better than most people. I have a good job at a good company with good insurance.

Monday, August 8th

I went into work today. I woke up about an hour before the alarm went off and it seemed to take forever for 7:30 to roll around (since I stayed in bed until then). I got up and got Virginia up. I made sure she had her first Depakote (an anti-seizure medication) and some breakfast. I also made sure that Ben was ready to do his reading and math (I'm trying to ease him back into school mode). I finally got out around 10:00AM.

Work was okay. I got through some mail. My boss Alan had his normal staff meeting. It went okay, but I felt like a spectator. I did some reading and touched bases with a few folks. I talked to Gretchen Tobin (Dennis Vetter's boss) about Dennis. It doesn't sound good for his wife. It wasn't fluid around the heart - it was in the lungs. There are also a lot of tumors in the lungs and in her body cavity. It sounds like it is a matter of a few months before she dies. As I said to Alan or Gretchen - I have much more understanding and empathy for Dennis than I ever wanted. I also found out that Tim Tillson's son has a cyst on his medulla. Also that an acquaintance, Mike Radisich, who I liked, died of a heart attack at age 50. It has been a pretty bad summer all the way around. The one bit of good news is that a lady that had breast cancer and the same treatments as Kathy Fromme (a friend who died) is doing well and has been cancer free for almost four years now. She had a good family support and a good attitude. (I think it is really important.)

On the way home, I bought a metronome to help Virginia's walking gate. I got home and took Mandy to her contact fitting. Mandy did great and was very quick on learning how to do the contacts. We got supper from a neighbor - a large sandwich sort of thing. It was pretty good, but Virginia's taste sense is different and it didn't taste good to her so I fixed some vegetarian kebobs on the grill. Her appetite is still pretty low. She said that the confusion, lack of energy and appetite were all symptoms of damage to her thyroid gland. I hope this is true, because that is an easy thing to correct with medication. We watched a little TV (although one of the programs had a mother giving her daughter burial plots as a present). Cindy stopped by. Around 8:30PM we drove to Dairy Queen. Mandy didn't want to go, but

we asked her to come along and she agreed (if in somewhat of a sullen mood). Virginia drove part way, but I drove most of the way. She is doing fine with driving.

I talked with Mandy late in the evening and on the way for her contacts. She feels bugged by Virginia - like Virginia doesn't trust her. We have felt she was trying to escape and get away from us. She said that she just wanted to have some fun - it is summer after all. She said that this summer really sucks. She and Virginia got into it a bit in the afternoon and Mandy came back with some comment like "well, I'd like to have some sort life". The summer has been hard on everyone.

Tuesday, August 9th

It has been a very long day. I went into work again. Joyce stopped by to take Virginia to her therapy sessions. Joan, the OT, made a hand splint to keep Virginia's hand from 'clawing' up. I don't think this has been much of a problem, but it is done now. Joan strikes me as more of a compensation/gadget therapist. She hasn't really done much to work on bringing the hand back. I don't know how much is just my frustration.

Work was very hard in the sense of waiting. I went through my files and cleaned up my desk. What I really wanted to do was to find out about the MRI results. I came home around 1:30-2:00PM. Virginia was resting. Ben was home and Mandy was at a friend's. We went to see Dr. Lim - the radiation oncologist. The results were better than I expected, but much less than I hoped. There was still some tumor mass, but it was much smaller in size. This is not terrible - the radiation is a cumulative effect therapy. It damages the DNA and makes (most of) the cancer cells unable to effectively reproduce. Normal tissue can repair itself better and easier than cancer. Actual neurons don't reproduce and so are not as susceptible. I was worried about the tumor having increased in size. I suspected it might be only slightly smaller in size - but it was probably a quarter to a third of its previous size. Virginia was initially depressed - she wanted it all gone. After we talked, she was in much better spirits. The other effects (fatigue, appetite) are common for radiation patients. The fatigue may last on the order of another two weeks. I hope her appetite does pick up - she needs her strength.

Cindy was over for a while. Virginia called Art and Lee, Chris and Julie and Vickie. She also talked to Joyce Turley and Susan Ison.

I heard that the acquaintance, Mike Radisich, didn't die of a heart attack. He committed suicide - he shot himself. This made me angry at him. Virginia (and others) are fighting for their life with all they have and others just throw their life away. It upsets me - I think it is senseless. He apparently was very depressed. I don't feel this upset about all suicide. I feel that terminally ill people and some elderly people are justified in making this choice. I guess, in thinking about it, that everyone is entitled to have the choice available. But, in some cases, I think the

choice is dumb. (This entire experience has turned me into quite the philosopher and commentator on the human condition. This is my sarcasm in case you couldn't tell.)

Wednesday, August 10th

It has been another strange day. I got Virginia up and tried to get her moving. I wanted to do some therapy before I went into work. I was getting (internally) impatient trying to get Virginia moving. I did do the electro-stimulation with her. Not much activity on her biceps or ankle, but I found the right spot on her hand and got a lot of response out of all of the fingers and wrist. I need to be more consistent about this. Peggy Seidl, a friend, stopped by right as I was leaving. Peggy has had breast cancer and has gone through three different chemotherapy rounds and surgery. She is now doing very well. It is good to have cancer survivors around. Virginia had wanted to drive on her own today, but I am making sure she doesn't do that yet. I won't be ready until her fatigue is reduced and her short term memory effects get a little better (which I think relate to the fatigue).

I got into work around 10:00AM. It went okay and I am starting to get back into things. But, it is hard to care a lot. I am leaning toward a non-management job for a while. I came home around 4:30PM. A pretty long day when you have been away from it. Work is in its normal turmoil - big possible shake-ups at the sector level (CSO - the big piece of the company that I work in) and at the divisional (SESD) level as well. I had thought about going to the memorial for Radisich, but I decided not to.

When I got home, Virginia looked like she was doing pretty well. Tired, but not too bad. We talked about her desire to change neurologists. She is not happy with McIntosh. I think this is great because it shows she is getting back into control of her life. We will probably check out the other neurologist in town. She and Ben seemed to have a good day together. She did some therapy on her own. This is all good. I am still concerned about her diet and lack of appetite. The thing that really worried me was that she took Depakote after I left, at lunch and right before Oprah. She needs to take them first thing in the morning, at Oprah and right before bed. This worries me a lot - she could overdose herself and I would not know. I gave her a different way to remember - take them during Regis & Kathy Lee, Oprah and David Letterman. I will be reminding her and checking again over the next couple of days. Virginia has been feeling hurt that Mandy is spending so much time away from home. Virginia thinks Mandy is looking to her friends' mothers as a replacement for her. She talked to Mandy about this briefly. Mandy said that this wasn't true. But Mandy does spend a lot of time away from the house, even though she calls home to check on Virginia a lot.

We went out to Pizza Hut for supper. Virginia drove. I am in somewhat of a bad mood - Virginia and the kids notice. Everything takes forever - like we are stuck in slow motion. I know this is my response to the slowness of recovery again. We

stopped off at Wal-Mart for a little bit on the way home. At home, we watched TV. I asked Ben to go down and read after he was ready for bed. I went down to check on him. He was in bed with the lights off - he couldn't find his book. I told him that I was serious about his reading a half hour every day before school started in a couple of weeks. Ben started complaining about how the summer 'sucked'. This really triggered me - I've listened to both the kids complain about this. I haven't had a great summer either. I would love to have some fun - or even some time off. So I unloaded on Ben. I left him crying - which made me feel like a really bad parent. I went down later and snuggled with him. We both love each other - we just push each others buttons pretty easily.

Recently, I've been thinking a lot about a poem that I always really liked. I first saw it in "National Lampoon's Comics" - an anthology of comics from the magazine during my college days. The poem was:

*When my hair shall shade the snow-
drift
and mine eyes shall dimmer grow,
I would lean upon some loved one,
through the valley as I go.*

*I would claim of you a promise,
worth to me a world of gold;
It is only this, my darling,
that you'll love me when I'm old.*

*Life's morn will soon be waning,
and its evening bells be tolled,
but my heart shall know no sadness,
if you'll love me when I'm old.*

This poem has always meant a lot to me. It epitomized what I felt and wanted with Virginia. I would really like to know who wrote it - I assume it is a classic poem. I just don't know where. I tried to look it up in Bartlett's Famous Quotations book and in a Great Literature CD ROM. Since the tumor, I have often felt cheated that I won't have this chance - to grow old together. As the kids have said - IT ISN'T FAIR! When I get philosophical about this, I think that in some ways, I am having this 'opportunity'. Virginia is dealing with a potentially (probably) terminal illness and has many characteristics of old age - the stroke-like symptoms, fatigue, slowness, memory problems, taking pills and so on. I have the chance to show her how much I love her - as if we were old. Except for the occasional bout with self-pity, I think I'm

doing pretty good. I still love her as much now as ever - if not more. I do occasionally forget that any time we have together is precious. Just like I forget the same thing with the kids.

Friday, August 12th

It has been a long couple of days. On Thursday, I went into work again. I had some trouble getting Virginia up and moving. We did get through the electro-stimulation. It was good because the left hand was showing response to the stimulation (fingers and wrist). Susan Ison came up and took Virginia out to the outlet mall. Susan then dropped her off at therapy. Cindy Hoxmeier picked her up and brought her home. I got home sort of late (a little after 5:30PM). Work went okay, I did some work on an evaluation and did some reading. I am almost caught up on some of the miscellaneous stuff. But it is hard to care a lot. On the way out I talked with the new general manager - Jim Davis. He asked how it was going and I told him. On the way home I picked up some chocolate milk - since that is one of the things that Virginia will eat - it doesn't taste funny to her. We had chicken salad brought over by Peggy Seidl. I spent the evening cleaning up Ben's room, doing the kids laundry and pricing stuff for the garage sale. (Donna Uhlrich is letting us put stuff into hers.) Cindy stopped over. Virginia and Cindy were in the basement while I did the pricing. (Virginia helped with some pricing suggestions. Cindy helped a little too.) Ben did not. I asked him to clean up some more cat vomit - and he went ballistic. I am really tired of this - so I just went ahead and did it myself. Both the kids try to do nice stuff for me, but what I really want is for them to do the simple chores without exploding and not to bug each other.

On Friday morning, I finished up the laundry. One of the cats had vomited on the upstairs couch. I cleaned this up too. I didn't want to have it wait until that evening and have to bug the kids about it. I am really tired of their slowness and complaining about this stuff. So, from now on the cats are limited to the basement at night. If things get bad down there, they will get put in the downstairs bathroom. I got Virginia up and did the stimulation. I actually got to work a little before 9:00AM (in time for a meeting). I had a couple of meetings. The division is about ready to re-organize. I am nervous about what sort of job I might end up with (especially since I haven't been very productive recently). I came home and took Virginia to therapy and then came home to load up the garage sale stuff. An old neighbor and friend, Deb Keegan, stopped in for the weekend to visit. It was nice to see her.

I was pretty fried and tired and had a headache. Virginia was pretty tired from her day (the therapy and having done a bunch of straightening - getting ready for Deb). Deb and Cindy came over. Virginia ordered food from Young's, the three of them and Mandy went to get it. It turned out that Virginia had only ordered 2 meals and 1 appetizer - not enough for 5 people. I threw some stuff together and we had enough. That evening, while the Deb and Virginia were talking, I did some insurance

paperwork. (I have had a couple of problems with the insurance and doctors. It is a real pain and very stressful. One of the things is an appeal to get insurance to pay for some stuff they think is too expensive.)

Virginia went to bed early. I finished up the insurance stuff and talked with Deb for a while. Before bedtime, I went out and looked at the stars. I was looking for and saw a meteorite. It was a very pretty evening. Even though I am tired, it has been an okay day. I just want Virginia's fatigue to get over.

Sunday, August 14th

Saturday, I got up very early and went over to Uhlrich's to help set up the garage sale stuff. Virginia got up fairly late. She went out with Cindy and Deb to the Silver Grill cafe. The food tasted funny to her again. She came home and rested before they all went out to Kathy Warden's for one of Kathy's margarita parties. Virginia apparently did pretty well at this.

While Virginia was doing all of this, I did some laundry and straightening up the house. Ben actually did his chores reasonably well. Mandy was asked by LeBaron's to go up to Steamboat - to stay overnight. I said that it was okay - she needs a break from this as much as I do. Cindy LeBaron called a little after Mandy had left. It turns out they were going to go out on the 4 wheel ATVs. Mandy forgot to mention this to me. I am a little upset about finding out second-hand after the fact, but I let her go anyway. Ben and I ran out together and got some lunch and did some shopping. We had a nice time. We found out later in the afternoon that most of our garage sale stuff sold - Ben got around \$30, I think. With the money that he has save, what we owe him for allowance and the garage sale he has on the order of \$62. This is just about enough to get a small color LCD portable TV (2.2") at Target. He had seen it earlier in the summer (for \$100). I tried to work out a deal where he could read during the summer to get it - but he didn't. But I kept an eye out for it getting cheaper. I told Ben about this and he had a hard time deciding what to do. He finally decided that he wanted the TV. We went over to look at it. There was now one good one left (unopened). He wanted it right away. After going through a lot of turmoil he finally asked if I would buy it for him. I said I wasn't sure. After we walked around for a bit he said that he would promise not to complain about chores (Saturday, cat vomit, putting away his clothes, cleaning up his room). He came up with this on his own. He also said that if he didn't, I should take away the LCD TV and his regular TV for 3 months. I appreciated his desire, but I didn't think it would work out. He was very earnest and I said that I would trust him on this and bought the TV.

That evening, we were going to go over to Hoxmeier's for dinner - late. But Virginia was very tired and she slept most of the evening. She felt very cold and wanted a blanket. I was very warm and would liked to have had the air conditioning on. I am still incredibly worried about fatigue and appetite. Later on (around 8:30PM) she

woke up. I had been fixing myself a chicken pot pie in the oven. She said she was hungry for Chick-Filet mashed potatoes (she meant Boston Chicken). I ran out and got this - and another pot pie since I figured she or Ben would eat it. She ate some, but still not a lot. She went to bed around 11PM.

A couple of days ago, while we were driving, she wondered if things wouldn't have been better if things had worked out the 'other way'. This meant her having died that night in May. Although I do wonder the same thing, I am still glad she is her. I tried to let her know this. She is getting very worried about the arm - it feels less responsive and less a part of her. I think this is a combination of the change in therapists, fatigue and the lack of some of the therapy stuff we used to do. I don't know what to do about this.

We had also recently talked about physical intimacy. I told her that I am still interested and attracted to her (which I am). She said that she was scared to try yet. I told her that I don't want to pressure her. I think she is concerned about it causing a seizure and she is also concerned that things "won't work".

On Sunday, she slept pretty late again. I tried to sleep late, but had a hard time doing it - I slept fitfully. I got up and did some more housework. I fixed Virginia a late brunch and she ate pretty well. Deb came over after this and they have been talking. Ben has not done very well on his not getting upset at me. He recognizes this, but has done it a couple of times already.

Going downstairs, I stopped and looked at a family picture and got sad. It was the 4 of us up in Keystone (Chris had taken the picture last year when they were out I think). We all looked tan and happy. I want that back so badly. It was rather eerie, when Virginia came downstairs shortly after this, she did a very similar thing. She was looking at a picture of her and Amanda and got very sad. Through most of our lives together, we have had some sense of connection. We will have similar thoughts or instincts to do various things. In some ways, this bizarre event with the pictures made me feel better - because we still had that sense of being connected.

Virginia was pretty tired through most of the day. She talked with Deb in the middle of the afternoon for a while. Then she rested during the late afternoon. Turley's stopped by for a little while. They took Ben so he could spend the night. I barbecued some pork, pineapple and vegetables for dinner around 7:30PM. These tasted good to her and she ate quite a bit. During the evening she was feeling better than she has for a while. I am hopeful that she is starting to come out of the fatigue. That would be great. Mandy did not get home until later, but had a good time.

Tuesday, August 16th

This week, I am going into work again. It is getting easier, but it is still taking some getting used to. I got Virginia up and did electro-stimulation. Deb left Monday

morning after I had gone to work. Cindy Hoxmeier stopped by, as did Katie Kiefer (Tim Tillson's wife). Carolyn Porter is driving Virginia to therapy this week. It really helps having people do this, but it still feels funny. I came home after a pretty full day. Some other old neighbors - Bruce and Chris Johnson - stopped by. They live in Minneapolis. Mandy and their daughter Courtney are very good friends. Mandy went off to spend the night with them at their hotel. Virginia ate pretty well and did okay on Monday.

On Tuesday, I had an early meeting. I got Virginia up early and did another electro-stimulation. This went pretty well (with new electrodes). I went out for lunch with Robert Heckendorn. There was a scrap parts auction in the afternoon. It was long, things were expensive and wasn't a whole lot of fun. I left early, but asked Tom Huibregtse to bid on some stuff (and I got a CD-ROM drive). Rick Turley and I went out and played racquetball and then went out for supper. It was a nice evening. I got home around 9:00PM. Virginia is doing okay, but looks pretty tired. She did seem to eat pretty good today. Mandy is spending the night at another friend's house - Sarah Barnes. She had an opportunity to go to California with the Turley's next week (as a travel-along baby-sitter), but decided not to go.

Thursday, August 18th

I am slowly getting back into work, but I still feel at loose ends. The division is about to have some changes, and I'm not sure how it will affect me. I don't really want to keep on in my current position (I don't think I do anyway).

Virginia has still been very tired with a poor appetite. I posted a note to alt.cancer.support (an internet notes group) asking about fatigue, radiation and appetite. I got two responses, but they were of limited value. I also called Dr. Lim's office and talked to Eunice. She got one of the other doctors on the phone (a lady named Simmons I think). She was helpful (more so than Lim). Even though they like to see improvement within 2 weeks, it is not uncommon for fatigue and appetite effects to go on for 4-6 weeks.

On Wednesday evening, Virginia ate a reasonable amount. She has been drinking chocolate milk and eating plain chicken, prunes and apples. Joyce stopped by and dropped off some apple bars and made some warm apple crisp stuff. On Wednesday night I had a talk with Ben in the evening. He had not been very helpful. I asked him what he had done during the day - he had been to the beach. I had asked him to take some clothes out of the dryer and to read for 30 minutes. He hadn't done either. I then told him what I had done - done laundry, gotten Virginia up, done therapy with Virginia, gone to work, come home, finished laundry, then out to do grocery shopping, fixed supper, cleaned up the kitchen, sat with Virginia for about an hour and watched TV and then picked up Ben's room. I told Ben that I don't expect him to do very much. I actually told him that in most cases I don't really care if he does what I ask. Most of all, I just want him to not blow up and get upset when I ask him

to do one of the few chores that I want him to do. I told him it hurts my feelings - because I'm working very hard at all this doing all the stuff for Virginia and to take over for Virginia. This is especially true when he promised not to get upset after I bought him the LCD TV early. This all made him very upset - of course. But, both the kids get upset and whine about how hard things are for them. I want them to know at least part of what I'm dealing with. I don't know if it was a good idea to talk to him about this, but I did express my feelings.

On Thursday, Virginia seemed to be doing better. I made a point of getting her breakfast in the morning - apples, chocolate milk, prunes and an apple bar. After she got dressed, she did some reading upstairs. I actually think this is good. I have been worried - she used to read all the time, but she hadn't been. Joyce stopped by in the afternoon and they went out to ShopKo. Virginia pushed the cart all through the store - no wheelchair. This is very good. I got home and finished cooking (grilling) a meal that Donna Uhrich made for us. Virginia ate quite a bit - chicken, rice, fruit, apple crisp with ice cream and then part of a fruit shake I made after supper. This is very good. She said things are still a little funny tasting, but I see more energy and appetite.

Mandy left for a slumber party and has another one on Saturday. After supper, Ben, Virginia and I were watching TV. On one of Virginia's and my favorite show (Mad About You) was an episode on virtual reality. Ben talked about what he would like to do with a VR system. It made me proud and happy when he said he would like to meet Grandpa Mike. I thought that this was pretty cool. Cindy stopped over. I have been asking her the last couple of times for her to bring back a book that I want Virginia to read (Learned Optimism). She had just taken it a while ago - without checking. I thought I had lost it. The last two times she has been over, she has complained about the book. And she still isn't done with it.

Friday, August 19th

I went to work a little late this morning so that I could get Virginia up and get her some breakfast. She ate pretty well. I am mostly back into work now, but I still feel a bit disconnected. I know that I can't because I need the job for the family responsibilities (income and insurance). After work, Virginia and I took the kids to a party at Fort Ram. While they were there, Virginia and I went to BeauJo's pizza for supper. This was nice. It was good to get out, just the two of us. Virginia's appetite is pretty good, but things still taste funny. I asked the waitress if they had any plain crust since Virginia's pizza tasted funny to her. The waitress was very nice and had a basket of pizza crust made up for us. While we were there, we saw Elizabeth and Claude Ross (acquaintances from Loveland). Virginia has done pretty well today.

We talked today about what she is going to be doing this fall. It looks like she wants to still take one class this semester. I've told her transportation won't be a problem (between myself and friends and taxi cabs). She is also thinking about continuing

education as a way to get the class (probably an art class). Her attitude is very good and she is feeling better. Her arm still bothers her (not working), but we both still hope it will come back at least somewhat.

Tonight, I was a little tired and stressed. It has been a long week - trying to work and (to be accurate) be a mother and a father (the easier of the two). Mandy got on my nerves a little because she has been complaining about being bored. She wanted to go to Target and get some supplies and shop a little. Even though she is bored, she has been very busy. I asked her when we could get to the store (between parties and sleep-overs at friends houses). She got snippy at me when I tried to find out when I could take her shopping. This did bother me a little (not the situation per se, but her getting snippy about me asking). She is spending the night with Courtney at their hotel.

Later, I was asking Ben to do some things (put his dirty clothes in the clothes hamper - not right next to it - and to pay me back for the LCD-TV that I had bought for him last week). During one of these things (I don't remember exactly which one - I think the TV), Ben made a 'face'. This was sort of like what Chevy Chase would do to Joan Curtin on Saturday Night Live. He rocked his head, crossed his eyes and stuck out his tongue. This just absolutely drove me nuts - I was incensed. I got very upset and told him he was in big trouble. Later on, he asked why this was such a big deal. I explained to him that it showed me that he didn't respect me. And that after this summer and all the things I've been trying to do, that it really, really hurt me. I realize (on talking with Virginia and writing this) how important it is that my children respect me. I want them to look up to me and admire me. Their opinion is very important to me.

Some time during the evening, Virginia and I were talking about lots of things. She said something to the effect of 'If I get through this, our lives are going to be so incredible'. I am not sure if she said 'if' or 'when'. I agree with her. This has had a fundamental impact on how we both look at things.

Monday, August 22nd

I had gotten confused and thought that Virginia's folks came in on Sunday. They came in on Saturday. Before they got here, we just puttered around home - weekend chores and laundry. Ben got into a very bad mood because he couldn't go swimming in the afternoon - because his chores were not done. Art and Lee got in later in the day (around 7:00PM). Virginia and I went to pick them up. Saturday was their 43rd wedding anniversary. We ended up eating at home rather late. Courtney stayed over with Mandy since she was leaving the next day.

On Sunday, we got a slow start again. Mandy went swimming with Courtney. While they were out, we went to downtown Fort Collins and wandered around the New West Fest. This went okay. I baked a bunch of French bread during the day and

experimented with whole wheat French bread (which came out like concrete). We got home and Virginia rested for a while. We went out very late (around 8:00PM) for supper at Bisetti's to celebrate Art and Lee's anniversary. I was in a weird mood - I think I was hungry and tired. I picked up the check for dinner. Cindy did not offer to pay (but never does), but she also didn't even say thank you. During the day, Art and I had been talking about how he might do her outside steps at her trailer. During this discussion, Cindy didn't even offer to help - and there are things she could do. Oh well, I'm letter her nature bug me and it is the way she is. I am not going to be able to change it. During the night, Ben threw up and came upstairs and slept with us. I ended up not getting a lot of sleep.

On Monday, I went to work again. Art dropped me off and kept my Probe so that he could get things for Cindy's trailer. Work was okay but went very slowly. Virginia seemed to have a good day, but is still dissatisfied with her occupational therapist (the person who works on the hand). I got some e-mail at work from a fellow whose fiancee has a similar tumor and prognosis. It was good to exchange e-mail with someone who has similar problems. The evening was pretty laid back. Mandy is getting upset at Virginia because she is telling Mandy to go to bed early. Mandy feels that Virginia is treating her like a child. I've tried to explain to Mandy, that this is just Virginia trying to regain control. I worked out a more equitable bed time for Mandy. This seemed to help a little.

In bed on Monday, Virginia and I started talking about the prognosis. She says that she is bothered mostly by the left side (and especially her arm). She says that she is not spending a lot of time worrying about the cancer. However, she said recently to the kids that next summer, we would have fun and go do things. It turns out that she has been wondering if she was going to be around next summer. So, we talked about the prognosis - 2 to 3 years is what the doctors here said. We had talked about this stuff before - in the hospital, but she apparently doesn't remember it. I pointed out all the normal things about attitude, diet, support, immune system and visualization being important. I also pointed out that the yeast infection thing messed up her immune system. I think this all helped. She mentioned that 3 years is too soon to die - Mandy at 17 and Ben at 13. This is all very hard stuff.

Thursday, August 25th

Tuesday night, Virginia and I went out with Cindy and Butch Hoxmeier. We went to Chili's. Virginia got a tuna steak and fries. She ate almost all of it. On the way in, we ran into Turley's. (We had been there earlier in the summer.) In comparison, Virginia was moving much faster and better.

On Wednesday I got going on trying to work out the insurance problems. Virginia had said she would do it, but wasn't able to get around to it. It is very annoying. I think I have the stuff worked out, but is hard to say. You end up being at the mercy of clerks inside large bureaucracy. At work I was doing developmental things with

some of the people in my project team. This feels good - helping people getting engaged. I also did some brainstorming on one of the projects in my team with one of the engineers. This also felt really good - being creative. This was one of the reasons that I liked engineering and software development.

I haven't had my car - the Probe - this week. Art has been dropping me off and using the car. Lee picks me up at the end of the day. Art has spent the week getting Cindy's trailer fixed. This involved the trailer deck, fixing the wiring where the siding guy hammered into wiring and working on a temporary fix for her toilet (which was apparently listing).

On Thursday, Joan (the occupational therapist) did things on Virginia's arm. This was good because she was getting very upset about the lack of effort on bringing back the arm. She was using a 'skateboard' for her arm and had some movement in arm - some of it new! She could move her arm in toward her body, but the new movement involved moving her arm forward and backward pretty well.

Work felt very strange today. I felt disconnected. I talked with briefly with Dennis Vetter, and things don't look good for his wife. It looks like she has maybe two months left. She is very thin, emaciated. In some ways I feel much luckier than Dennis (we have a chance to beat this). But in some ways I think he might be luckier - his situation will probably be resolved soon. I feel very badly for feeling that way.

I took Mandy to the eye doctor for her final check on her contacts. She is doing very well with contacts - she just took to them. I got Visual Basic and Visual C++ in the mail at home today. I am trying to rebuild technical skills since I am rusty. I want to make sure that I will be able to retain my job - I have to. In the evening, the lady who was going to bring the meal didn't - it wasn't clear if she forgot or didn't know. It was no big deal. I went out for Boston Chicken. Virginia continues to eat pretty well. Virginia went driving in the evening with Lee and I along. While we were driving (up in West Ridge) I pointed out Suzanne and Bill Pherigo's house (Suzanne works for me). Lee really liked it - it is a stucco southwestern style house. It also had a house number of 5005. It turns out that was their house number in Des Moines for years. (5005 keeps coming up for them. Just as streets like Lee Lane or Virginia Place.) Mandy is spending the night at Brittany's. Virginia is still fatigued, but seems to be eating much better.

Friday, August 26th

Art took me in to work again. It was a pretty good day at work. I talked with the new division manager (for my one on one). Not everybody in the division will be happy with the eventual outcome with him, but I think he will be good for the division. He will make decisions and move us ahead - what we have needed for a long time. He has started to make some changes - he replaced his secretary and Lee Huffman and Jim Borchert are no longer managers.

After work, I took the kids up to an ice-cream social at McGraw (Ben's school). Virginia did not come - she didn't want to have to rehash stuff with all the people she would run into. I met Ben's teacher - he seems okay. I hope the year goes well for Ben. Afterwards, we went home and ordered pizza. Virginia and her dad went out to drive for a while. I think that Virginia is disappointed that Art has spent so much time dealing with Cindy. She wants more of his time. We didn't do much - just watched TV most of the evening. At bedtime, I asked the Virginia about school and transportation. She started crying. She doesn't want to drop out of the system, but doesn't feel up to going to class. She is confused and can't decide. She said she remembers being on campus and able to get around and she says she can't now. I have seen that she is really thinking about what she has lost and feeling embarrassed. I started to try to talk about things, but I recognize that I am trying to push her. I think it is important, but she has to want to go back and overcome this - I can't push her into it. (Well, I could, but I don't think that will be very effective in the long haul.) This conversation makes me rather sad and gives me concern for how things may go over the next few years. Part of this is that I want Virginia to push and fight and not give up. This is for Virginia's sake - she will have a better life (whether we beat the cancer or not). This is also for the kids - I want Virginia to set a strong example. This is also for me - her fighting will make me feel that I made the right decision back on May 13th. I have to prepare myself that she may not get back into school this semester.

Sunday, August 28th

On Saturday, we got up moderately early. We went out to a brunch/lunch at the Marriott. This worked out well since that is where the bus picks people up for the airport shuttle. Virginia ate pretty well - some things still taste funny, but she ate a fair amount. As we were leaving, the lady at the cash register asked what happened to Virginia. Virginia told her. This always really catches people off guard - they expect some sort of car or sports accident. Nobody expects someone to say - oh gosh, I had this pesky brain tumor.

We came home and I had the kids do their chores. After this, I went shopping with Mandy at Target. Virginia was downstairs most of the afternoon. She rested for part of it, but really liked being in the basement - it is very pleasant. Virginia said that her left arm reacted to a voluntary commands. So Virginia is more interested in the electrical stimulation. In the evening we (Virginia, Lee, Ben and I) went to Roger & Susan Ison's for supper. Mandy was baby-sitting. Bill and Marilyn Follis were there. Elizabeth and Claude Ross and their kids came over for just desert. Virginia ate very well again.

On Sunday, we got up moderately late. It was a pretty low key day. I did a bunch of chores. The biggest one was getting the windows in the basement re-painted. There was some peeling paint along the bottom of the windows - where it gets wet (from

the sprinklers?). Over the last two days I've been playing with Visual Basic (probably a total of a couple of hours). This has been fun. It is a very nice programming environment for a pretty broad range of applications.

In the late afternoon, we took the kids out to Chuckie Cheese for pizza to celebrate school starting again. (Sort of to start off the year on a positive note.) Mandy was able to find a friend (Sarah Barnes) to come along. Ben wasn't able to. Lee didn't come along because she had to go over and help Cindy pick out paint. When we got back, I got upset at Ben. I had asked him to get his garbage out. He got a snippy tone and I got upset. I unloaded on him about this getting him in trouble. I also unloaded on him about my working hard all summer and wanting him to do his few chores without getting upset. He asked if I thought he was spoiled - and I said yes, he acts spoiled some of the time.

Cindy is really getting on both Virginia's and my nerves. Virginia is a little hurt that Art spent almost all his time with Cindy on this visit. She understands it, but still is a little hurt. She recognizes that she is less needy, even with the tumor, than Cindy. I do get upset at how much of Art and Lee's time Cindy takes. I want them to focus on Virginia. It also bothers me how Cindy 'helps' Virginia - mostly not that much help. She also just assumes that she can breeze in and do anything in the house without checking - using cars, phones, food. I wouldn't mind so much, but she doesn't say thanks. (That coupled with getting snotty with Virginia at times - about various things - like the kids.)

Tonight, I've tried to find out if Virginia is going to go to her CSU art class. She can't decide. I think she might continue in her indecision and eventually drop out. I guess that I am disappointed in this - the indecision. In so many things, she seems so normal, but in some things, I get really worried that she is very changed. This is one of those things. I would prefer for her to go, but mostly I guess I just want to get on and know what's happening.

Wednesday, August 31st

On Monday, it was the first day of school. I am really ready for this. I have been, in some sense, the 'mother' during the summer and in this role, I am ready for them to have school. It will keep them busy and they won't be bored. Mandy rode her bike with some of her friends. She had arranged for Virginia and Lee to come up and drop off all of their backpacks. I had tried to make sure Virginia was going in plenty of time. But, she got side tracked looking for Ben's bus schedule information. I told her I would take care of it, but she kept looking. I told her again and she finally got out the door. (I did take care of finding out Ben's bus time.) Virginia got up there somewhat late - but it wasn't that late for the first day of class. Buses were still arriving. The problem was that all of Mandy's 'friends' had gone on to class and left her to take care of the back packs. This was apparently Lisa Bogard's idea. She has been a friend of Mandy's, but is now mostly an annoyance - a very snotty teenage

girl. Mandy was pretty bummed about this, I think. So, Mandy had a marginal day on her first day. Fortunately, Ben had a great day and really liked his teacher. I had an all day staff meeting at work and so I was pretty tired when I got home. One of the neighbors had cooked supper.

In the middle of the night, Ben had a 'fecal' explosion. He soiled his sheets, underpants, mattress, several towels, the toilet rug, the shower and the toilet. I was very tired and not very comforting - which I am sorry about. I got him set up in his old bedroom. I did the laundry from this and ran it through 2 cycles to make sure it was sanitary. I also needed to open the windows for the smell. It was a pretty big mess. I am not sure what happened - it might have been left-over nerves from the first day of class.

On Tuesday, Mandy had a better day. She actually seemed to like some of her teachers. I had a pretty good day at work. I met with a 3rd party who we are thinking of working with for one of my projects. I am getting into work again and it feels okay. I talked with Dennis Vetter about his wife. It is not looking very good. She is down to 86 pounds and is very weak. I did some math with Ben in the evening. He got very upset, but was doing very well with it. He has some deep feelings left over from his teacher last year. He gets very upset when he is wrong and gets overwrought. I am trying to spend a lot of time and energy encouraging him and letting him know that he is smart and how proud I am of him. Cindy came over and was annoying Virginia a lot. Virginia still is not making any decision about school. I really want to know what she is going to do. She is eating better, but is still fatigued a lot of the time.

On Wednesday, Mandy wanted me to take her to school. So I got up early, but she changed her mind. I don't mind doing this, but I guess I would have liked to sleep in. Virginia has been getting up pretty early (around 7:00AM) pretty consistently and having pretty full days. (She does take naps or rest in the afternoon.) I had a very busy day at work - there is some reorganization stuff going on. So, I got home sort of late. I was tired and hungry. It was unclear what everybody wanted to do. I was pretty snippy and got almost angry - I just wanted to figure out what we were going to do. So, we went to the mall for dinner. It turned out that most everybody had already eaten - which was why they were not in a big hurry to figure all this out.

Interlude

It has been such an incredibly long, stressful and bizarre summer. As I said at the outset of this diary - my life has been turned upside down. After the last 3 and a half months, I know the main reason I'm writing this is to serve as a release for my emotions and stress. I have spent a fair amount of time writing it. At times I have struggled with what I should say. I expect that Ben and Mandy will read it some day. I hope that they understand that I am very proud of them and some of the things that I have said in here were how I felt at the time. It has been very stressful. Some of my friends have tried to be there to help - but they don't really understand and have a hard time dealing with this. They mean well, but lots of times, they are working out their own fears and emotions - not helping with mine. The one person I have talked to who I can really share the deep emotions with is Dennis Vetter. I think I am doing okay under the stress, but it is not getting easier. I hope that I can provide the support and love that Virginia and the kids need.

Virginia has definitely improved over the summer. At times it is very hard to remember how much progress she has made because I am around it all the time. The doctor set my expectations pretty low - on return of her physical and mental functions. Her leg has come back very well - surprisingly well. Her arm has come back some, but it still is not really functional at all. We still hope it will come back. Mentally she is doing well, but I think I have sensed some changes in the last month (since the radiation). This might be more related to the fatigue and the overall emotional stress on her of the situation.

We are still struggling with the long term possibilities - even though we don't really talk about them. We will be going in for another MRI scan later in the fall. I hope things look good then, but I am trying to balance optimism and pragmatism - it is very hard. I hope that the fatigue goes away soon, but I am expecting more of a slow recovery. I hope that the arm comes back, but I don't expect it to (at least not much). I hope that Virginia does return to school, but I expect that she'll just let it go. She seems to have much less drive and is very much at loose ends. I suspect that she is waiting to hear what is going on with the tumor. Again, I hope for long term recovery but I am trying to be ready for having a few good years. I still love Virginia very much and am trying hard to do everything I can for her and for the two of us (as a couple) and for four of us (as a family). I still struggle with the decision I made - to proceed with the surgery. But I shouldn't. Even if things go badly, I believe that we will have several good years. One thing that I am very sorry about is the stress that this places on the kids. I am trying to do my best with them, but I know that I cause a lot of stress for them. I do love them and I am very proud of how they have dealt with this entire adversity.

Tim Mikkelsen
September 1, 1994

September 1994

Thursday, September 1st

Virginia is still getting up pretty well. The kids are able to get up and off to school well. I think that things will go pretty well when Lee leaves this weekend - in terms of all of us being able to cover the basics of getting off to school. I am worried about Virginia getting bored or depressed if she doesn't go to CSU (and it is getting pretty late). Today was a pretty busy day at work. I had another 3rd party in for some business opportunity discussions. I think I was pretty useful today - it felt good. I got home sort of late (almost 6:00PM). We had catfish. Virginia had done a fair amount of the cooking. The kids had gotten their homework done before I got home and were getting along well. Virginia had also talked to Joan (the OT) about getting more focused on bring the arm back - not on compensation techniques. After supper, we (Virginia, Lee, Mandy and I) went to the outlet mall in Loveland. I was tired, but got feeling better part way through the evening. After we got back, I did some multiplication work with Ben. Virginia has been bothered because it seems that we are upset at each other a lot. I am going to work on improving this. Late in the evening, I spent a fair amount of time cleaning up the diary entries from May through August and printing them out. I have just exercised on the Nordic Track - I've been very consistent on keeping up on this. Although, I only did 10 minutes instead of my usual 20 minutes. I did this because it got late because I accidentally overwrote the May through August diary file and I had to find a tool to recover the information. I guess this tells me that this diary is pretty important to me.

Sunday, September 4th

Friday was a pretty long day. I got into work at a good time. I went out for lunch with a bunch of people for a thing called RRR - Roaming to Random Restaurants. It is an engineer thing that several people started up (originally down in Colorado Springs). I am the only manager that is 'invited' along on these. On the way there, someone asked how Virginia was doing. This is always pretty strange. I tell them how things are, but I try not to go into a lot of detail. I get the sense that people want to know, but don't really want to ask and end up unsure if they wanted to know. At the end of the day, I met Virginia, Lee and Ben at BeauJo's pizza in old-town. This was very nice. It was a gorgeous evening - perfect weather - and we sat outside on the patio. Mandy didn't come along because she went off with LeBaron's to the mountains for the weekend. Cindy came over later - after we had gotten home.

I was supposed to play racquet ball with Dennis Vetter. He didn't call so I left a message on his home answering machine. He called back late on Friday night. He was at the hospital with his wife - she was having trouble breathing. Things are not

looking good for them. He was hoping that she would be able to get out of the hospital in a few days.

On Saturday, I got up pretty early and did recycling and got the oil changed in the Probe with Ben. When we got back, cleaned the garage a bit. Then it was time to take Lee to her bus to the airport. Cindy came over and was along. This was another fairly emotional goodbye. Virginia has really enjoyed having her mom out for the last two weeks. Cindy stayed around and helped Virginia with her therapy. I went shopping with Ben briefly. When went to a hobby store for Ben and a record store and an electronics store for me. Ben wanted to go to the hobby store to look for canvas - he is interested in my Mom's oil paints. Ben, Virginia and I went to Heckendorn's for dinner & movie (we watched Emerald Forest). Ben wasn't up for this sort of stuff so we got him Robot Wars (which he has seen several times).

Virginia has been having a headache off and on. This has really got me worried. I worry that it might be the tumor coming back fast. Virginia has promised me that she is okay and it won't come back. I hope she is right. I am upset with myself because I have been expecting all this to turn out badly. This may or may not be true - I don't know yet and it doesn't help me or Virginia or the kids to expect the worst. I have been thinking about this a lot and if I were in Virginia's place I would want to have the chance even though the odds were not very good. I think that what bothers me the most is that I suspect that a lot of my emotions have to do with how hard this is on me.

On Sunday, we had a pretty quiet day. We got up around 9:00AM. I did the electro-stimulation and was able to get Virginia's ankle to fire a bit (which I hadn't been able to do for a while). I also got her biceps to feel like they were trying to fire. I started a crock pot with some home-made soup (I was experimenting). We finally got out of the house around 1:30PM and got out for some lunch. We picked up sandwiches and ate the park near Lopez school. This was pretty nice. After this, we went to Sam's (discount store) and picked up a bunch of different stuff. Virginia walked a bit at the park and at the store. Ben has been pretty pleasant today. When we got home, Virginia rested while I made some French bread and did laundry and some gardening (weeds and cutting down some aspens). Food was tasting funny to Virginia tonight. She ate a bit, but not as much as I would like. We talked about what trips we would be doing. We expect that her family won't be able to stay away until we see them at Christmas. I guess that they will make it out here for Thanksgiving if not earlier. Virginia was very tired at the end of the day (she had also done her home therapy). But, as she was getting ready for bed, her left arm tried to grab for her sling as it was falling off. It looks like her arm is trying to come back. This would be so neat. We also watched TV for a bit. A favorite book - Interview with a Vampire - is coming out as a movie. All in all, it was a pretty nice day.

Later on in the evening, Virginia got out of bed before I got into bed. I was on the computer for a bit. She got to the bathroom (which was good). Usually, she just

uses the commode chair in the bedroom. I went in and talked to her. She and I talked for a bit about all of this. She said again that she was really glad to still be here. I told her how much I loved her. She was worried about all the trouble. Even though it is hard, I am still glad she is here.

Wednesday, September 7th

Monday, we got up reasonably early for a holiday (labor day). We did the stimulation for Virginia's arm and leg. I was able to get positioning to work and get the ankle to start firing. I did some baking (muffins). We went up to Turley's for supper (a barbecue) which was nice. Rick's folks were there. His dad is very quiet (he was before, but has had some heart trouble besides). We vented about Cindy and Rick's folks vented about their daughter Pat. After we got home, Mandy got back from her trip to the mountains. She had a good time, but got very sunburn and scraped her knee. Ben has been very good this weekend - it seems to help when they (the kids) are not around each other. Late Monday evening, Virginia and I were talking. It turns out she is still upset about the DNR (do not resuscitate) note. I explained why I had it done - it was because things looked very precarious. It was unclear how things would go or if Virginia would regain consciousness. If something bad happened that required resuscitation, it would probably be due to swelling. If this happened, there would have been even more serious brain damage. I think that she understood why after this discussion.

Tuesday was the first day of school with no family here. We got up well (and the kids get up very well - I am very proud). We did stimulation. The kids got off to school just fine. After I went to work, Joyce Turley stopped by. Then Peggy Seidl and Kathy Warden were by. Virginia was alone all of a few minutes.

Work is going okay, but there are changes coming. The solutions core team had a celebration lunch for completing their customer research. This turned into a venting session about not being allowed to follow through with the proposal that they made. I let them vent for a while, but I think I got through to them and got them thinking about how to be effective at trying to make solutions fit in. Sometimes, they are more like kids than professionals. During all of this, I mentioned my concern about my risking too much - I am getting timid about my job. I felt that I couldn't afford to risk pushing on the solutions proposal. This really bothers me to think about this. I won't be effective if I am timid.

On the way home, I got some groceries. At home, Virginia was sleeping. I fixed supper. After they were in bed, I cuddled with kids, which was very nice. I did some laundry and watched a little TV with Virginia. At the end of the day, I was absolutely zoned. Kathleen Vetter died over the weekend. This is very sad, but at least it is resolved for Dennis and Kathleen. The memorial service is on Saturday.

On Wednesday, the day went pretty well. Everybody got up well, and we did the stimulation. Work was very busy. It looks like there are several different types of jobs that could work out (all the way from coding to managing to acquisitions work). Before all this happened, I would be excited or stressed out, but it is just sort of interesting. I went out with a bunch of folks for Don Watt's going away lunch (a manager who's going to a start-up). I have a trip to Washington DC on next Monday and Tuesday. I should go and probably will, but I don't like leaving Virginia. My main concern is during the night - and help for Virginia going to the bathroom. I am checking with Cindy about staying Monday. Virginia is a little skittish about this trip as well. I am not thrilled about asking Cindy, but I don't see many other convenient alternatives. I think I need to lighten up on Cindy a bit. (But at times it is hard.) Virginia cooked supper tonight and did a good job. Mandy and I ran out to Target after supper. It was a pretty good day, but I'm getting very tired.

Saturday, September 10th

Thursday was a busy day for me, I had all day meetings on the directions we are trying to go in the division. It ended with the business team (Alan's) and the general manager (Jim Davis) going to a meeting with another organization (the workstations people). This was very strange. We are trying to meet their needs, but we aren't funded adequately. It was also strange because they are in a business that feels like the old desktop computer division that I was in 10 years ago (same customers, same attitudes, etc.). Virginia had a pretty good day. At therapy, she was doing some arm therapy and wasn't thinking about what she was doing and apparently was using her left arm. This is pretty neat. I went out to play racquetball with Rick and then out for a quick bite to eat. While Rick was showering at the health club, I played one pick up game with a man named Terry. He was very, very good. The thing that amazed me was that I was still able to get 3 points on him during the game. (I wasn't as bad as I thought.) It was a heck of a work-out. Virginia had supper with Joyce and kids. This works out okay, but it can make her tired. I am also very tired tonight.

On Friday, we saw Dr. Lim. This went okay. Virginia's headaches and the swelling are a normal reaction. He indicated that he would not do an MRI at this point. So, I am guess I am leaving it more up to Virginia as to when she wants to go find out what is going on.

I had another busy day at work with some month end reviews with my project team and a project meeting on what to do with a third party we have been having trouble with. I am not going to DC next week, which is okay by me. I checked with my boss, Alan, about how I'm doing. He said that he noticed, I wasn't very engaged at the start of August, but that I am doing fine. He said he was impressed that I was able to do what I was doing. This was a conscious thing - to ask how I was doing. I have been worried about how engaged I am, but I especially want to make sure that I keep on top of any problems from my boss. I can't afford to get in trouble with my job (for income, family stability and insurance). I got home somewhat late (after a

late meeting and stopping for chocolate milk). Virginia and I were going to go out, but Mandy went to a football game. So, we stayed home and had pizza with Ben. Virginia was hungry for something sweet so we went to the mall and got some cookies. Later I played racquet ball with Ben. Virginia said he had been a real mess that evening.

On Saturday, I went to Kathleen Vetter's memorial with Tim Tillson. There were a lot of old familiar faces that I hadn't seen in a while. The service was okay. I didn't let it get to me. I used some normal 'tricks' like thinking about other things and detaching myself from the event. But it was sort of hard. Part of me was thinking about the service (e.g. if I needed to plan something like this). This was my pragmatic side planning ahead for the entire range of possibilities. At times this annoys me, but it is an aspect of my nature. After the service, Virginia and I went out for lunch to Boston Chicken. Then we went downtown and got her mom some big candle holders she really wanted when she was out. I am still worried about Virginia's headaches and swelling. It is going through both our minds (even though we don't talk about it much) that this might be the tumor coming back - even though Lim said the symptoms were normal. On the way back home from down town, we had a discussion about the survival value of intelligence. This was triggered by a bunch of people who were crossing the street (rather stupidly by just sort of running out into traffic). I made a comment (that I use sometimes) about how intelligence has never been proven to be a survival trait. Virginia said that intelligence isn't the key survival trait, but that adaptability and flexibility is more important. This is a very profound comment - and I think very true. I see it in work situations. She said she has developed this opinion over the series of courses that she has taken. I really was excited about this conversation - and very happy. It reinforced that Virginia's mind was really clicking still. (It meant to me that I had, indeed, made the right decision in May.) We went out for a late supper and a movie. All in all it has been a pretty good week.

Tuesday, September 13th

On Sunday, we pattered around in the morning. I did some insurance and other paperwork. We all went down to the Denver art museum with Roger and Susan. We had a late supper at home (after having fed the kids on the way back from Denver). I fixed French toast. Virginia is very tired tonight. Ben has been getting on my nerves a bit - we've explained to him that when he makes us happy, he gets most of what he wants. But, he will argue with us and get a tone in his voice and not help. It drives me crazy.

On Monday, I had a very busy day at work. It was entirely spent in a staff meeting trying to work out the new organization and strategy for the business team that I am in. When I got home, Virginia wanted to cook. She did okay, but it was obvious that she was tired. She made a grilled turkey for Mandy and a grilled cheese for me. She hadn't checked if we wanted them - she just did it. She also fixed the kids' lunches,

but forgot parts of the meals. I am somewhat worried about this. I hope it is just the fatigue that will pass. In the evening, I made multiplication flash cards for Ben and we used them right before bed time. I'm very tired tonight. Ben is upset because of the multiplication stuff. Mandy is upset because Ben and I were upset. And Virginia seemed upset because Ben and I get into these emotional spats.

On Tuesday I noticed that there was hair coming in very well on Virginia's incision. There had been a 1/4-1/3 inch gap, but this is mostly filled in now. Cindy Hoxmeier stopped by while I was at work. Peggy drove Virginia to therapy. Virginia said it went well again today (although better with Jean than Joan). My work went okay. It seems my job is safe and stable. However, it sounds like downsizing and VSI might be coming and some people are at risk. I got chicken on the way home because we had a back to school night at Ben's school. We went to that and got there late. Mr. Backes, Ben's teacher, seems good and had positive things to say about Ben. I asked if there was anything to do to work on at home. He said that Ben was doing fine. When we got home, I worked on multiplication with Ben again. It started badly - Ben felt he was stupid and was getting very upset. I worked at not over-reacting. I explained again that he wasn't and again went through what I was going to do. This didn't seem to help much so I tried a different approach. Rather than sitting across from him, I got him to sit in my lap and I hugged him and told him how proud I was of him (which I am). After he calmed down, I switched positions and sat next to him (shifting from face-to-face to a side-by-side position). This really seemed to help. After a couple of problems, he stopped and said that he was calculating on a particular problem. I put the cards down and he started to get upset until he realized that I was praising and rewarding him (I gave him some candy). I reminded him that we were trying to memorize multiplication, not how to calculate and so his recognition of calculating was good. Things went very well after that and he actually seemed to enjoy it. This made me feel very good. I made some chocolate custard (an experiment), but it turned out well. Virginia liked it. Virginia is tired tonight. She got a bit confused about what day it is (and thought it was Wednesday). I'm worried about the continuing fatigue. Part of me is very rational about it - it will pass, but another part of me wants to panic and thinks it is the tumor growing.

Friday, August 16th

On Wednesday, Virginia fell in the morning trying to get to the commode chair to go to the bathroom. I had been in the shower. She wasn't hurt, but upset about falling. This makes me very worried - it gets me thinking about the tumor coming back. A very scary prospect. I went into work and had a very long day. I had meetings all day long - literally. I am thinking about co-authoring a book with Suzanne Pherigo on configuration management. I do worry about taking on an additional load like this, but it would be neat to get published. I got home late - at 6:30 PM. I thought I was cooking but Virginia cooked again. I worked with Ben on his multiplication tables. He is much improved, and had many more correct answers. Cindy stopped

over and Virginia said she wanted Cindy to come along to Elitch's (an amusement park) on Saturday. Previously, Virginia had said that she didn't want Cindy along.

On Thursday, I cooked a big breakfast (cream of wheat, custard, toasted English muffin, chocolate milk and prunes) for Virginia because I am so worried about her diet and appetite. She ate essentially all of it. This is really good. Virginia went down to Cherry Creek (a shopping mall in Denver) with Susan Ison and Elizabeth Ross. I had another busy day at work. I had a real scare at work. I was paged at work around 12:30. My heart sank when I heard the page. It turned out to be Cindy Hoxmeier calling. She had found the house open - the front door was wide open and the garage was open. I guessed that the cleaning lady didn't lock up the house and the wind blew the front door open. Other than this, I had a pretty good day at work doing development feedback for engineers in my team and working on a software process assessment with an outside consultant. I got home around 5:30 PM. Virginia didn't call and so I went ahead and cooked and fed the kids. Rick stopped by to get Jeff but took me up to drop off the mini-van to work on the starter. Virginia got home around 8:30 PM. She bought me a CD with Gregorian chants. This sort of surprised me since I don't like them that much, but she had said that she did. It was a nice thought so it is not that big of a deal to me. Virginia tried grading a few quizzes from Ben's teacher - trying to help out. But, she was too tired and made a few mistakes and decided to wait until Friday to finish them. I am very tired and have been a little pensive during the evening.

On Friday, I cooked another big breakfast. I think it is helping with Virginia's energy level. I had another busy day at work with a 3rd party in for a visit. At the end of the day, Alan called a meeting (at 5:00 PM). The new GM is driving us to really manage the business tightly. This is mostly good. The bad side is that we need to reduce division headcount by 6 people and so we have to manage performance (a euphemism for firing people). There are several people who are clear candidates, but this is a fundamental shift and it will be hard. Because of this meeting, I got home late - at 6:30 PM. I am worried about my long days - I want to be around in the morning and late afternoon. Virginia seemed to have a good day. I ordered pizza. Before it got delivered, Virginia and I ran up to get the mini-van. It wasn't fixed, but they had ordered the part (a starter). While we were there, Virginia said it would have been easier if she hadn't made it (i.e. died). I did my best to assure her that this was not true. She drove home and did very well. Charlie Hoxmeier ate with us. Mandy was out doing community service - serving dinner to National Guard service men as part of a class requirement. It has been a very long week.

Monday, September 19th

Saturday was a pretty good day. We got up and did various chores. Around 1:00PM, we went to Elitch's (an amusement park in Denver). Virginia, Cindy, Mandy, one of her friends (Holly), Ben, Charlie Hoxmeier (one of his friends) and I all went. It was pretty nice. I wish Virginia had been able to ride some of the rides. This is its last

season at this location. The new location does not have wooden roller-coasters (which we both really like). I continue to be very worried about Virginia not eating enough. Both of the kid's friends spent the night.

This seems a bit sappy, but I've thinking about beauty - internal and external beauty. A lot of times people use flowers as an analogy for beauty - when the flower fades or the bloom falls. It strikes me that a better way to think about this is more explicit about internal and external beauty. I think that a fire is a better way to think about this. External beauty is like the flame. It is bright and draws attention, but over time the flame fades. But, the flame leaves an ember - the inner beauty. That continues on and is, in fact, the important part during most of the fire. Like I said, sappy. This struck me as I was thinking about Virginia and the sort of person she is - both outside and inside.

On Sunday, we had a pretty slow day. We cleaned up around the house. In the afternoon, Burhl and Lou Gilpin (Burhl is my cousin) stopped by for a little bit. We had a nice visit with them - they were here for about an hour or so.

Monday was a busy day - back in the grind. (But they all seem to be busy days to me anymore.) We didn't do the electro-stimulation on Monday because Virginia wanted to take a shower before we went to Dr. Macintosh for a check up. I fixed breakfast and did multiplication with Ben. He did very, very well - and only got 3 problems wrong out of the full stack (nearly a hundred problems). He had been getting upset, but I pointed this out to him and it made a bit difference. We got to the doctor's office on time. Unfortunately, he did not - he showed up about a 1/2 hour late and we got in an hour late. The visit went okay up to the point where he asked about our game plan about the cancer. It was not an unreasonable question, but he has a marginal bedside manner and Virginia just doesn't like him. We scheduled another MRI for late October. She was okay during the visit, but started crying when we got out to the car. I thought she was aware of what was going on, but this showed that she had put it out of her mind and was in denial at some level. I drove her home - we talked about this all a little. It seemed to be a major revelation that she could really die from this. This all sort of surprised me a bit. We got home and talked a little more. I ended up going into work, but wasn't sure what I should do. I didn't know if she needed time to work through this or needed me with her. Joyce stopped by after I left - which seemed to help.

Work was pretty hard - trying to figure out how to manage low performers (and possibly fire them). It is tough to figure out what exactly the objectives are for the organization. I also worry about my ability to be effective with all the stresses that I am under. (But then I think that I am just wimping out.) I called Virginia's mom and warned her about the doctor's visit (since I didn't know she was feeling better). I did this because Virginia said she would call her mom tonight. Her mom got a little sniffly during the conversation - apparently she was in some state of denial as well. Virginia seemed okay when I got home. We had supper and I helped Ben with some

homework. (Virginia didn't call her mom.) Later in the evening, I needed to do some staffing work - preparing for the re-organization.

Wednesday, September 21st

On Tuesday, Virginia had therapy. Cindy Hoxmeier drove her there again. It went pretty well. Again, Jean (the PT) was useful, but Joan was apparently marginal. Virginia thinks that Joan will write up discharge papers. I am still not thrilled about the OT work at therapy. I worked late and got home around 6-6:30PM. It has been very busy at work. I had a 3rd party in today that part of my team is looking at for a business relationship. Dennis Vetter came in to work (his wife died of cancer about 2 weeks ago). He seemed to be doing pretty well. Virginia called and asked me to pick up some groceries for supper. When I got home, Virginia had been cooking. She had cooked what I thought was a lot of food (chicken and pork). She was cooking it in the oven since she could not figure out how to get the grill turned on (the tank valve was turned off). After a while, I put the food on the grill because it was not done. We finally ate around 7:30PM. Virginia ate really well, things seemed to taste good to her. She also had a fair amount of energy. This was very impressive and made me feel pretty good. Later on, Ben and I worked on the multiplication tables. He got all of problems right - his first time. I am very proud of him doing this. Mandy had been out with Holli's family for supper - and they had watched a tape at Holli's house.

On Wednesday, Virginia went grocery shopping with Joyce. This apparently went pretty well - Virginia went through the whole store. She cooked chili for supper. I got home very, very late (around 7:00PM). I think things will ease up and I will start coming home at a better time - I hope so. Ben was in a really touchy mood - I think he was hungry and tired. Mandy was with Brittany for some sports event and supper. Virginia did a good job on the chili. She seems to be doing pretty good again today. I hope that the fatigue and appetite problems are behind us. Ben got through the multiplication problems with no wrong answers. He is doing very well. But he did get really upset while he was reading. Cindy stopped by. Vickie and Julie had called today as well.

Saturday, September 24th

Thursday was another busy day. (But they all seem to be busy days anymore.) I spent most of the day working with a few other managers about re-organization stuff. One of the people who works for me, Gary Thalman, had a family emergency. His son was in a serious car accident - it looks like he will be okay (a broken collar-bone and facial lacerations). He was hit head on by another car. The other driver (also an older teenager), was killed.

My mouth has been bothering me and I called the dentist - and got in for him (Dr. Mangle) to look it. It turns out I have a cracked tooth. I'll go in next week for the preparation, but I won't get the crown I need until early October. Virginia said that therapy went really well. The OT ran some tests and Virginia has more sensation in her hand and arm. I made myself supper since everybody else had eaten. I went to 'back to school night' at Mandy's school. This went pretty well, but it was strange being there without Virginia. Virginia has been thinking about the prognosis - now that she has been reminded of this.

Friday was another busy day. All week long we have been doing pretty well keeping up with the electrical stimulation. At work, my boss announced the new organizational structure. This went pretty well - and for the most part I'm happy with my new team. Virginia was reading up about her type of brain tumor and has gotten pretty depressed (but not as bad as she could have gotten). I found this out when I called her in the middle of the day. I have tried to remind her that statistics are not the same as what will happen to individuals. I go through the discussion about taking a big picture, holistic view of what is going on. This seems to help.

At the end of the day, I have a pretty solid headache. That evening, we all go up to Estes Park. It takes us a long time to get moving and I'm very tired. We brought along one of Mandy's friends (Sarah Barnes) and she also spent the night. Once we got up there, it was dark, but we heard the elk bugling (their mating call). This was pretty neat. The kids fell asleep on the way back. When we got home, Virginia and I watched 'The Princess Bride'. This was very nice. Virginia asked about a problem Ben had been having with urinating - it was stinging. I didn't realize that Ben had been having a couple of problems. I think he needs to drink more water. Virginia said she would get him to the doctor. I said I would do it and we got upset over this. I was upset because I think I need to do all this. She was upset because she is trying to help, and I won't let her. I need to relax about a lot this and let her help.

On Saturday, I did a bunch of chores, laundry and shopping. Mandy went to a CSU football game with a friend (and had a good time). Virginia seems to be much more aware and is eating much better. She ate some of the muffins that I fixed this morning and her tastes problems seem to be easing up. She is still a bit depressed about the prognosis - which is more than understandable. She is struggling with coming to grips with it.

We went out to a restaurant in the foothills with the Turley's. Actually, they were already there when we finally got up there. At first we thought it would just be Rick and Joyce and Virginia and I, but we found out they were bringing their kids. So, we decided to bring ours, but drop them off after supper and go out to a movie later. But Mandy got a call from a friend to go out to a movie - and we let her. The restaurant was good, but a little slow. We sat outside next to the live entertainment - a lady playing acoustic guitar. We were also close to an outside fireplace. This was very nice. Virginia ate really well (and had some sort of lemon chicken pasta). The biggest problem she had was walking in and out of the restaurant (steps and gravel).

She was tired when we got done so we just went home. She has a bit of a headache on her left side (behind the eye and near the back of her head), and is worried about it. I don't know what, if anything, it means.

While I was sleeping, I had a very odd dream. I dreamt I was at some technical conference or trade show. When I was leaving I ended up riding with the musician Billy Joel. He told me that he had invested in Roger Ison's company. I told him that I would like to do something like that (start a company), but I mentioned Virginia's tumor. He dropped me off at an airport and I went flying with Ben in small airplane. All in all, a very strange dream. I'm sure that part of it relates to some suppressed feelings of being unable to try new things in my career. As difficult and constraining as this may be, I would not want to be without Virginia. And most constraints are internal not external - I still have many options and they are under my control.

Wednesday, September 28th

On Sunday, we went to the neighborhood picnic. Virginia had a good time and we stayed quite a while. Ben and I played with a CD-ROM we borrowed from Rick - Isaac Asimov's Robots. Ben really liked this. Virginia was in my room watching us do this. She really liked seeing Ben and I having fun together.

On Monday, I worked at home most of the day trying to catch up on things. This was nice (more relaxing) and did help a little bit. Virginia and I went out for a late lunch at The Egg and I. On the way back, we dropped van off. Virginia did a good job driving. Virginia and I talked about her going back to CSU. She said that she isn't sure if she only has a year left that she wants to do this. In some ways this was a good discussion because it means that she is realistic about what might happen. On the other hand, her spirits are good in general and she does want to fight it. She is eating pretty well again - her taste is coming back. Ben was a mess early in the evening but he snapped out of it and got better. My fingers on my left hand are bothering me. I looked up some possible causes in a CD-ROM and it appears to be carpal-tunnel syndrome. I think I should get a new keyboard and change some of my habits (gripping too hard on the Nordic Trac). I suspect doing more (most) of the household chores and the stress contribute as well. I also bought a used Mac for the kids over the network.

Tuesday morning, I went to the dentist for my cracked tooth. This went better than I thought, but my tooth still seems a bit sensitive. My group (or most of it) took me out to lunch - a "Tim's not our boss" lunch. They were going to pay, but I paid to thank them for keeping on task during the course of the summer. Later in the day I took the kids to get their hair cut. I stopped off after this to pick up supper and Virginia's pills. I also did a bunch of work at home - a very busy day.

On Wednesday, I had another very busy day at work. After work, I went out to one of the 'Tuesday night movies' with my friends. We went to see Timecop. It was

okay, dinner at a local Mexican hole in the wall was great. Rick came along and stopped by briefly afterwards. I had ordered a new ergonomic keyboard yesterday and it got here today. It is pretty strange looking. I'll see if it helps. I also called Art and Lee to help them with some problems with their computer.

Friday, September 30th

Thursday, I took Ben out to lunch to Godfather's pizza. That evening, Virginia and I picked up the van. She is driving pretty well these days. Before we got the van, we dropped Ben off at 'Fit For Fun' - a playground like place at one of the small malls. Mandy was out with her friend Holli. I have been very busy and am rather worried about the level of work coming up (managing a diverse team of 14-15 people).

On Friday, I took Mandy out to breakfast at the Marriott. I am trying very hard to keep doing my once a month meals with the kids - so that they get some no-pressure one-on-one time with me. Friday was another busy day at work. At the end of the day, I took off a bit early to take the kids to the dentist - for a cleaning. I got home a little late, and couldn't find Ben. I was worried. Virginia didn't know where he was, she had seen kids from his bus, but he hadn't made it home. I called the school, but there was no answer. I also check my messages at work. About this time he called from a friend's house. He had gotten in to a small altercation with a girl. I was pretty upset - partially about running late, but mostly about being worried. The checkups went fine. Virginia and I went out and got Young's Vietnamese carry-out. Even though Virginia's meal tasted a bit funny to her, she was able to eat it.

October 1994

Saturday, October 1st

On Saturday, I did the normal round of a lot of chores (laundry, picking up, shopping). A little after noon, we all went out to go shopping at the mall. We were there for around 3 hours or a little more. Virginia was in the wheelchair most of the time, but did really well. She drove to and from the mall. I got a little testy while she was parking, but that was mostly because I didn't think she was listening to me. That evening, we went out to eat (just the two of us) to Pelican Fish. Virginia is eating pretty well. After that we had several hours and went to Target. Virginia walked all the way through the store - which is very good (especially considering it was almost 9:00PM). After this we went to see 'Clear and Present Danger'. The movie was okay - not great. We ran into Dan and Marty Osecky - some friends - and sat with them. We got home around 12:30PM and didn't get to bed until 2:00AM. Virginia has done really well today. Almost normal.

Wednesday, October 5th

Sunday was a pretty slow day. Virginia slept late. I made scalloped potatoes and ham early in the day so that it would be well cooked at supper time. I got very upset at Ben in the evening. His room was very messy - even though he had cleaned it up on Saturday. I have warned him that if things are messy, I will clean them up - 'my way'. So, in the process of cleaning up, I found two open bags of chips under his bed. I have previously told him no food - because if you leave it on the floor, it will attract bugs. I also found a used bottle of super glue - he had glued one of his toys. He had asked about doing this on Saturday, but I told him I wanted him to only do this with me. He had messed up big time. I got very upset - he was sobbing and very upset as well. This showed me that I couldn't always trust him. I disconnected his TV antenna. Mandy does not like it when Ben and I get into arguments or angry at each other. She will go away or close the door. (She does not like conflict in general.) Later, I was talking with her in her bed. She told me about two of her recurring dreams. One dream takes place the night that the tumor hemorrhaged and in this dream, Virginia dies. The other dream takes place at Mandy's school and in this dream a teacher comes in and tells Mandy that her mom has died. I wanted to help Mandy with these, but I have learned that sometimes, people just want to talk - not get help. I asked Mandy what she wanted - for me to listen or for me to help. She said she wasn't sure. I didn't push it, but told her that I was there for her - whatever she wants or needs. I wasn't sure if this was Mandy's way of asking for more time with a therapist.

On Monday, I meant to get up early and get some work done that I needed to do. But I didn't get up. I had a very busy day at work. I met up with Virginia at Ben's school for his conference (with his teacher - Mr. Backes). I was very impressed with

Virginia driving up on her own. Ben's conference went very well. He is doing B/C work and is at grade level on reading. This is very good - especially compared with last year. I am very pleased with his progress.

On Tuesday, I gave quite a few interviews for some new positions in the business team. Virginia drove Ben to school in the morning (for a field trip) and again did very well. Tuesday evening, she was complaining of nausea and headaches. This worries me a great deal. Ben had a great day and has been pretty good.

Wednesday has been an okay day. Virginia's sense of taste is messed up a bit again and hasn't been feeling very good. I am, again, pretty worried. But, I don't know if this is just more after-effects or if there is something else going on. (Or if the tumor is coming back.) I don't like it, but I think it will all turn out okay. At work, I stopped in at the nurse to have her check my hand. She doesn't think that it is carpal-tunnel syndrome.

Thursday was very busy, and I am getting really tired. There is too much going on. I wanted to take Friday off, but it looks like I've got too much work and I haven't done any at home. Virginia drove Mandy up to Target and then dropped her off at school. I think she is doing really well with driving. She is confident and feeling good about it. This helps me a lot and I know it helps her with her attitude. She is still not eating well enough.

I had a very strange dream during the night, Thursday. I was at my mother's funeral. It was here in Colorado. My brother Tom was here for it, but Virginia and the kids were not around. It had been raining and we took some sort of truck to the cemetery and it was sloppy and muddy. There didn't seem to be anybody else around at the cemetery. There was a hole underneath some sort of building or cover. Mom's body was dropped out of the coffin (which had a flag over it) and it fell a long ways into the ground before it hit. It was a very bizarre dream. I'm sure there are all sorts of psychological aspects to this - but I just found it very strange. Maybe it is my way of think about death without getting it too close (and so Virginia and the kids were not associated with it at all).

Monday, August 10th

Friday and the weekend were very busy. I was hoping to take Friday off and relax a little, but I had too much work and some meetings. I did take Virginia to her therapy on Friday. She drove over to therapy and did well. I went back to work after this and worked pretty late so we ate pretty late. I mucked around with the new Macintosh downstairs and got software set up on it. We (Ben, Virginia and I) watched Jurassic Park on tape in the basement. Part way through, we got a strange call from the Sheriff's Department. They wanted to know about some fight down the street. I went out to look for this, but didn't see much - it was down the street too

far to see well. This worried Virginia, because Mandy was at a friends and was due to come home - so I went to pick them up.

I worked a good chunk of Saturday (until around 3:00). In many ways, it was really nice. It was quiet in at work and I got a lot done - not enough, but a lot. I met Virginia and the kids at the mall where we had a bite to eat and did some shopping. Virginia pushed her wheelchair, but walked quite a bit. Virginia and I went out with Roger, Susan and India for supper to Bisetti's. This was fun, but we were all pretty subdued. Roger has had some sort of upset stomach - possibly an ulcer.

I worked some more on Sunday. But I fixed a casserole - scalloped potatoes and ham. I'm getting to be a pretty accomplished cook and primary care-giver. It's a lot with work and the kids, but I wouldn't want it the other way. Virginia, the kids and I went to Target later in the day. Virginia drove and walked all the way through the store. She is pretty tired, but has done well. I played a game (7th Guest) on the PC with Ben. We had a good time. It makes Virginia very happy when we get along.

On Monday, the kids were home from school. I would liked to have had the day off, but didn't. Virginia drove Mandy up to the mall and walked in. I think she is doing very well. But I do worry about her not eating, funny tastes (metallic), and so on. I still worry frequently about her dying. I am anxious and nervous about the upcoming MRI. But, I can't do anything about it and I don't see the benefit in moving the date up. Virginia took Mandy into Dr. Merkel (and drove). Apparently, things were a little tense with Merkel - this is the first time since the tumor hemorrhaged that she has seen him. He tried to make everything light and humorous. I gather Virginia wasn't really ready for this. Virginia also tried to talk with Mandy on the way back about the tumor and the entire situation. Mandy did not want to talk and would not respond. In the evening, Ben and I did some math and then played a little more of 7th Guest.

Saturday, October 22nd

I've been very busy over the last couple of weeks. A week and a half ago - Tuesday - I got to a Loveland scrap parts auction. This was okay, but I didn't get much. Virginia went to Bunko that night and apparently did very well - not getting too tired. The next night, Suzanne Pherigo came over to the house in the evening. She used to work for me (up until a few weeks ago). We are thinking about writing a book - on configuration management. A week ago Friday, Ben and Virginia and I went out to Perkins for supper. Virginia ate really well. Mandy was gone to a church thing in Denver with one of her friends (the church thing was through her friend's church). When we got back from Perkins, we watched Groundhog Day on television.

A week ago (on Saturday), I went to the CSU auction with Ben. This was sort of fun, but it was raining very hard. There were some things I was interested in, but they

went too fast because of the rain. Because I didn't want to waste the entire day there, we came back home for a little bit so I could get some other stuff done. When we got back, the other things we were interested in were gone. Mandy got home late. Virginia was talking with her about finding religion. It sounds to me like Virginia is more religious than I thought she was before all of this. (Not a big surprise.) Virginia and I were talking about coming to terms with God - she is feeling more lucky - she is alive and things could have been much, much worse.

On Sunday, I fixed breakfast with Ben for he and I. Later in the day, we all went shopping. Ben and I got mad at each other. I don't remember now exactly why, but I think it was something to do with money and chores. On the way to the mall, I got very nervous about Virginia driving. This was not because she was driving badly, I get twitchy when there are people behind us (in this case at the mini-bank) and Virginia is moving very slow.

Monday, Virginia went down to boulder with Elizabeth Ross and Susan Ison. She stayed late, and had a good time. On Tuesday, Virginia was very tired. She had nearly fallen on the treadmill at therapy. This really shook her. She also double dosed herself in the afternoon on her anti-seizure medication. I think that this is primarily due to the busy shopping day, the day before. Art and Lee called during the evening. Art is getting his early retirement. (His company had been bought - and he had been hoping and waiting for this news for quite a while.) So this is great news. The other 'good' news for them is that his mom (Virginia is her real name - we all call her 'new-grandma' because that is what Mandy called her years ago) is going into a nursing home. She really is incapable of taking care of herself. Lee had been going over twice a day to make sure that she was eating.

Wednesday, Ben stayed home sick. I don't think he was sick, but he and Virginia had a nice day together. They had lunch together at McDonald's. Mandy has been very quiet recently. She doesn't really talk with either Virginia or I. Ben has been very good the last couple of days. Thursday, Ben wanted to stay home again. We said no. Mandy did stay home - her throat has been bothering her.

On Friday, I worked at home in the morning so that I would be in better shape for the MRI in the afternoon. Virginia and I went out for lunch to the Egg and I pretty late and then went over to the hospital for the MRI. It went okay and we got out pretty fast (we got there about 3:00 and were done around 4:00). When we got done, Virginia started crying in the car. I tried to see what was on the screens, but they don't allow family member around to see what is going on. I made an appointment with Dr. Lim's office for Tuesday. It will be a long couple of days.

Saturday, the kids were getting on my nerves - big time. I was very busy with stuff around the house. Rick and Joyce stopped by for a few minutes. That evening, we went out to a play at the Boulder Dinner Theatre (A Chorus Line) with Roger and Susan. This was fun. A friend of Susan's daughter is in the play - he was very good.

Roger and Susan and Rick and Joyce all have asked me if I was able to see anything on the scans. We are all worried and anxious about the results. During the night I had a bad dream - with Virginia in the hospital.

I haven't been exercising and have been very busy and stressed. My fingers on my left hand are a little better, but not much. I am very worried about Virginia's lack of appetite and metallic taste - is the tumor back? It is a little better now than about a week ago, but it varies. I am also worried about the spot on her back. We need to ask Dr. Lim. I am trying to get through all of this as best I can being a good husband, father, provider, manager and so on. It is a real challenge and I am getting very tired. I hope and need for the MRI results to be good. But, if they are not, I will carry on and do the best that I can.

Monday, October 24th

Sunday was pretty good. Virginia was a bit depressed, but I got her out (late in the afternoon) for lunch and then to Target. This helped a lot. Even though she had been pretty inactive during the weekend, she got around Target really well. It was a pretty nice day. I exercised late and then took a bath. Even though I would like to have gotten more sleep, it felt good.

Monday was okay. I got Virginia up early and got her moving. This helps a lot. I have been thinking about the doctor's appointment on Tuesday. It is really strange, but Virginia's life and mine really hinges on what the MRI shows us. I am pretty hopeful, but trying not to get my hopes up too much. The things I suspect will be on the MRI are either a pretty large decrease in size or a moderate decrease in size of the tumor mass. Either of these are okay - it shows the right progress and will give some reasonable hope. I really would like to see an almost total reduction in tumor mass - but again I don't want to get too hopeful. There is some chance for tumor growth or stable size. I think that these are unlikely because of the radiation treatments and Virginia's general health. I am very anxious to find out. It feels like a giant weight hanging over all of our heads. I try to keep a good attitude and not let my concern show through too much.

Tuesday, October 25th

I got Virginia up at a good time. Susan Ison was over in the morning for a little bit. Mandy stayed home and Virginia drove her to Dr. Merkel's for an appointment. She has some asthma effects. She got an inhaler. The three of us (Mandy, Virginia and I) met for lunch at Blimpies.

We went to Lim's office in the afternoon for the MRI results - which were pretty good. The radiologist's notes indicated a noticeable reduction in the tumor and a reduction in mass effects (the rest of the brain is getting back to normal shape).

Unfortunately, Dr. Lim didn't have the previous MRI films - only Friday's. My impression (trying to remember back) is that the tumor area is approximately half the size it was back in August. Cindy came to the office and was with us when we saw Lim. This was the first time she had seen the films. Virginia seemed pretty relieved. Both she and I have been suppressing the stress of waiting for the results. We both have guarded optimism about the results. I would like more, but this is pretty good. Virginia called her mom right away when we got home. Lee broke out into tears - she has been worried all day about this - apparently. We will need to go back in 2-3 months for another MRI to check the progress. As long as things keep shrinking or stable, things will be okay. I think now Virginia will be able to start thinking about the future (school, etc.) and also starting to work harder on her stamina and pace.

Saturday, October 29th

The last couple of days have been strange. I think that both Virginia and I were expecting bad news and were getting ready for that. But the news was good and it took a while to figure out what it means.

Wednesday night we went to a release dinner at HP for the SoftBench 4.0 release. Virginia did very well, although she did move slowly. Many people commented to me later how good it was to see her and how good she looked. Thursday night was Mandy's concert. Virginia wanted to go, but was very tired. She stayed home with Ben (who was very far behind in his homework). Mandy's band sounded great (much better than the orchestra or the choir). After the concert, I took her to Swensen's so she could meet and have ice cream with a friend. I got gas in the car, but came back and sat down with Mandy, her friend and her friend's mom. I suspected that Virginia would do this, and she did display some 'mock' concern over me being 'out with another woman'.

Friday was a pretty good day. I actually got some work done, but I am still very far behind. I got a strange call late in the day. A woman that we know from HP (Caroline Koff) called and asked if I had time for a personal call. She was calling because she has had 2 MRIs this week and there is a right side glial lesion. The doctors haven't said much and she is going to see Dr. Turner early next week. She has had some odd symptoms like left hand spasms - which is why she went in to her doctor. (My snide side comment is that her doctor was more proactive than ours.) She hadn't realized how serious Virginia's stuff was. She might come out of this okay, but she is scared. It seems very strange that someone else that we know would have something very similar. Apparently, I gave her more information than her doctors have been giving her.

Virginia got out to Target all on her own - driving and everything. This is very good - another sign of things getting more normal. Virginia and I went out to see 'Love

Affair' - a remake of 'An Affair to Remember'. We had a good time. Ben spent the night at Charlie Hoxmeier's - for a birthday party.

On Saturday, we all went out to eat lunch at the Egg and I. I dropped Ben and Virginia off at home so that Ben could get some rest before he went to Jeff Turley's birthday party. While Ben was out, Mandy had a baby-sitting job. While they were gone, we went out for supper.

Virginia still gets very tired, but is doing more and has more stamina. I still worry about her appetite. She hasn't used the wheel chair in a week or two. And she hasn't used the 4-prong cane in a long time. I continue to be hopeful. But, I am also very tired. I think about trying to down-shift into a staff or non-managerial position.

Monday, October 31st

The kids had the day off from school - which did not strike me as particularly good planning (in terms of potential for vandalism). The kids and Virginia came out to HP for 'trick or treating'. I have arranged for the kids in our division to do this for the last 4-5 years. Mandy did Ben's make-up - it looked like a pencil jammed through his cheek. She did a great job. It scared one little kid at HP pretty well. All the adults thought it was a great job. When we got home, I fixed supper while Virginia worked the candy at the door.

November 1994

Saturday, November 5th

On Tuesday, Virginia drove herself to therapy - this was a first. She did really well. She went out to dinner with her friends (Cindy Hoxmeier, Kay Godowski, Kathy Warden, Sylvia Thomas). They went to Young's and Virginia was able to eat quite a bit. So her sense of taste seems to be pretty good right now.

Virginia drove to the grocery store on Wednesday with the kids after school. I went out to a movie (The Puppet Masters) with my friends. Caroline Koff may not have a tumor after all - there is a 90% chance it is a malformed capillary. (Apparently Turner might have misdiagnosed.) I called Lee asking about ideas for Virginia's and my anniversary presents. I have been very busy, there is too much work going on and I am not doing the things that I want for the people, the projects and myself.

Thursday, I took the kids out to get all of our haircuts. The weather was pretty. After that, Virginia and I went out to dinner (Olive Garden) before Mandy's conferences. We went there without the wheelchair and Virginia did really well. The thing was pretty disorganized and we only saw 2 teachers in a little over an hour and a half. Mandy is doing great. During one of the waits, I ran in and talked to Grant Pahlau - he was Mandy's technology teacher last year and her physical education teacher this year. He has been trying to talk to Mandy and indicated that she feels unable to talk to me (or intimidated by me). So, I need to try some more to get her to open up. Also, some boys have been harassing her a bit in a couple of the classes.

Friday was another very busy day (we've been in the middle of ranking the engineers). Virginia went up to the mountains with her friends this evening. I think this is a good thing and have been encouraging her. This is mostly a good thing for her - so that she knows she can do it. However, I feel a little guilty about this because I am looking forward to a night or two 'off duty'. Even when people have been around - I am responsible. I have been getting up early and trying to get things done for almost six months. I believe that it is very similar to the stresses that mothers of young children must feel. Things are going well with Virginia, but I have gotten pretty worn down. After Virginia took off, I took the kids out to a movie (The Puppet Masters again). They both really liked it a lot - I was shocked I could find something they both liked. Afterwards, we went to Perkins since I had not eaten yet. They both had some more supper. Ben was totally beat by the end of the evening.

Saturday has gone okay. I slept late (9:30ish). There were the classic issues with chores and getting some lunch in them. We went out to the mall and then we went

to Young's for dinner. I got very upset at Ben in the evening because he left his reading book at school again (and he is about 10 days late already in getting done with it). So the new rule is that if he forgets his homework, he can't watch any television until he brings home the homework. If that is over the weekend, no TV for the weekend.

Virginia had a great time with her friends up in the mountains. They shopped and ate. Virginia walked most of the time. According to Virginia, she got up fairly early most of the time.

Sunday, November 13th

It has been 6 months now since this all started. The week has been busy, as always. On Tuesday, we went out to vote together around 9AM. The lines were not very long at that time - it worked out pretty well. We went out to eat at the Egg and I.

On Thursday, Virginia missed therapy - she got confused on the times. But she did get out to Target and grocery shopping - on her own. I think she is doing pretty well. For the most part, she is very much the same. However, she does seem a bit different. I think part of this might be fear or timidity. She had always felt lucky and that is clearly gone. I don't know if the surgery, radiation or medicine is having part of this effect, but there are some of these subtle differences. But she is getting better and more normal. She showed me some biceps control on the left side today. She has been able to move her left arm back and forth, but it sort of 'drug' as she did it. She can now hold her forearm up as she is doing this.

On Friday she went out to a crafts fair and Christmas tree display at the Lincoln center with Susan, Elizabeth and Susan's mom. She has been doing a lot of walking this week. Her stamina is clearly better. She was pretty tired in the evening. Mandy went out to a movie (Stargate) with some friends. Ben and I went out together to see the late show of this same movie. We all liked it, it was a good B-grade sci-fi movie. Ben and I had a good time going out to the movie.

On Saturday, Virginia and I went out to see 'Interview with the Vampire' with Heckendorn's and one of their friends. Although it was a bit dark, it was faithful to the book and we liked it. Virginia was tired and did not want to go out to eat so we went home early (by 7:30PM). I was in a bad mood. I think mostly because the kids had left a bit of a mess in the kitchen and haven't been helping as much as I would like. I think the other part of the bad mood was because I wanted to be out with our friends and didn't want to have to hassle with making supper for Virginia and myself. Many times on a weekend (and this one as well) Virginia will say "take the weekend off". This is starting to annoy me a little because I can't. If I don't keep moving on things, Virginia and the kids won't eat well on the weekend. Also, laundry, automotive and household things need to get done and this is the only time to do them. It doesn't seem there is ever any 'time off'.

I also think I have a bit of cold - I've had a headache and haven't been feeling well. Things have been very busy at work. I've been involved in ranking and mid-point project checkpoints. I feel bad about the ranking. A few people (two) in my previous team have dropped in rank (because of the new ranking process populating the complete distribution). I don't like this because, in general, these people have been doing their job adequately (not perfect, but an okay job) and they kept on going while I was out during the summer. But, they are also fairly ranked (in order) and I know that the lower ranked people can do better. It is going to be hard telling them.

On Sunday, Rick and Joyce stopped by. They are helping plan our 20th wedding anniversary. Mandy is in a very foul mood - she doesn't think she looks good (and she does). I don't know what I can do - talking to her just seems to annoy her so I just leave her alone. But I don't like doing that either. Virginia and I went out to Target for a while - which was pretty much a normal feeling trip. She didn't use the wheel chair. It seemed to help parking on the side (not in front) because she wasn't nervous about walking in. Walking across the front drive at Target is stressful for her because of the cars going by. I fixed supper without much of any help from the kids. This annoyed me since Mandy then asked about going to a movie that I had talked about with her. Ben was a mess because he didn't have all his chores done and wanted to go. I said no to Ben - he and I had been out on Friday together. Mandy and I did go to the movie - an animation festival. We had a good time. It had a Gahan Wilson cartoon and a long Will Vinton claymation segment - which we both really liked.

Monday, November 21st

It has been a very 'zooney' week. I've been trying to get caught up with work. I've gotten started on three evaluations for people from my previous team. Two of these people are having a rank drop - which is a challenge. I'm trying to use this to help clarify what they need to do to do better. Work is getting to be very hard and I am not enjoying it all that much. I hope that when things settle down (both at work and at home), I will starting enjoying it a little more. The parts of work that I like are when I mentor or help people with their development. The project work doesn't hold as much interest any more and most of the technologies are also of little interest. The one fun or interesting technical aspect (at work) is Mosaic, the WWW (world wide web) and the Internet. This is pretty neat stuff.

On Thursday, my boss Alan had a team formation off-site at his house. This was pretty interesting getting to know some of the other people on the team a little better. We went through a discussion of our personality traits and then tried to figure out how to make our business team a fun place to work. The session lasted all day (8:30AM to around 8:30PM).

On Friday, I had a packed day including some more project reviews and decisions and ranking. At the end of the day, the division had a celebration at Coopersmith's in old town. I drove one of the other managers, but stopped off to get Virginia. I was a bit rushed with Virginia. I think part of this comes from the big context switch from a busy work-day and a slow-paced home life. It is hard at times. Late Friday, I took Ben to the new Star Trek movie - Generations. We met up with a friend - Richard Artz. The movie was good and we liked it. Richard had brought an Apple Newton for me to play with for a week. This has been an interesting 'toy' to play with.

Saturday was a normal chores day with all of its attendant problems. I did some work at home (because I've been so far behind). Virginia and I were going to go out, but she got involved in cleaning Ben's room and got tired so we stayed home.

On Sunday, I went into work in the morning and got a fair amount done - voice mail and some evaluations work. I met up with Virginia and the kids at the Egg and I for lunch and then we went to the mall. That evening, I went through a bunch of e-mail and paper mail and reading. I got done about 3:00AM in the morning.

Monday morning, I slept a bit late - 9:00AMish. The kids got themselves off to school very well. They are good kids. I got Virginia some breakfast and we did some electro stimulation. (We do this Monday through Friday, but not on the weekend.) I ran into work and finished up a few minor things. I have gotten down to an empty e-mail in-box and sorted through all of my papers. I am actually in pretty good shape - all things considered. I got Virginia and we went out to Boston Chicken for lunch. After that, we went shopping for her anniversary present. She is interested in some rings. She seems to be liking larger jewelry these days. She found one she really liked at Best - but it cost \$9000! The clerk told us it would be on sale for around \$6200 in a few weeks. I would really like to be able to get her this sort of thing without thinking, but it is a lot of money. I think I screwed up because I think she would have gotten over wanting it - when practical matters came back into focus for her. But, I got worried about money instead of letting her go with it. In reality, we could buy it. I think that we have enough money between the profit-sharing, the money in the check-book and some money in my checking account. But, we have not been putting money into the kids college accounts and so I don't feel good about this. (I also worry at a deeper level about potential medical costs if we have to do anything in a cancer treatment sense. I hope that is not the case, but I have to worry about this - I am now the primary decision maker on these things.) So, things got a little tense between Virginia and I during all this. I was expecting to spend between \$1000 and \$2000 for her present. But now she wants to reset her grandmother's ring and maybe another small ring. I want to get her more than that, but it has all gotten a bit out of hand. I hope that things will get straightened out tomorrow. I want to get her something nice.

Sunday, November 27th

It has been a pretty long week. I was hoping that I would be able to relax and have some fun, but it didn't really work out that way. Tuesday, I spent some time getting stuff ready for everybody coming in. We also went to the mall for a bit. We dropped off Virginia's grandmother's ring (Tootsie) at a jeweler's to have it fixed and replace the diamonds with cubic zirconia (Virginia had the big diamond taken out a while back and put into a different setting). On Wednesday, Virginia's family got here - Art and Lee; Vickie, Nick and Angela; Chris, but not Julie - she had to stay in Des Moines. It was really nice to see everyone. We went out to Bisetti's for our anniversary dinner (since Wednesday was the official anniversary). Virginia is able to eat more different things and her tastes seem pretty much back to normal. My biggest concern about this is her level of appetite - she just doesn't eat enough.

We had thanksgiving dinner at home - with food from Steele's grocery store. It was very good. I pattered a bit during the day in my work-room and got things a little better organized and cleaned up. Ben was not feeling very good and was getting a little grumpy. So, Ben and I disassembled a CD-ROM drive - he really liked doing that. We were going to all go out to a movie, but Virginia didn't feel up to the crowds. So, I offered and took the kids (Mandy, Ben and Angela) to 'The Santa Clause'. It was a cute movie.

On Friday, we got up sort of late and went out shopping - ShopKo and Best. Virginia showed everybody the ring she wants now - it will be on sale for \$3150. This is okay, but I think she wants me to just go out and buy it. But I want to make sure she wants it. I still think it is a bit much with all the financial concerns I have. We are going to take the picture of the ring to the jeweler who is doing the work on Virginia's ring and see if he has anything similar - and how much it might be. He seems to be much less expensive than the other stores.

During the day, I got a call from a head-hunter - a person who does job recruiting for big firms. The job she was calling about was at Texas Instruments on the IEF product line. I asked some good questions - why are they going outside, what are the key challenges, etc. They are looking for a person to be a change agent. Someone with technical background, to help clean up their development processes and bridge the issues between R&D and marketing. I think I would be a good candidate - it is the type of thing I was studying for in my MOT degree. I was open with the recruiter about my concerns: insurance (because of Virginia's pre-existing cancer condition) and the loss of our support network of friends (at least for a little while longer). The recruiter wanted to keep my name in contention and was going to talk to the vice-president about me.

Friday night, we went up to Rick and Joyce's for the anniversary party that was thrown for us. Art and Lee were the official hosts. They had arranged for snacks from Bisetti's and a cake and a bunch of other snacks. It was a nice party. All of Virginia's family was there. Our old crowd of friends from our early days at HP: Rick and Joyce, Roger and Susan Ison, Dan and Marty Osecky, Tim and Kate Tillson.

There were also some of our newer friends: Anna Walicki (Wenzel), Robert and Marilyn Heckendorn. Kay Godowski from the neighborhood was also there. It was a nice crowd. Mandy looked very pretty and grown up. Lee had put together a picture board that included a picture of me in 8th grade (I think) and my fiber optics science fair project. Ben looks very much like I did - it was sort of spooky. Virginia had a little sip of champagne at the party.

Virginia's family took off on Saturday morning. Art got very emotional and wasn't able to talk to me when he shook my hand. Lee told me to take care of myself - still easier said than done. After they left, Cindy stayed around through most of the day. I did a whole bunch of laundry including the sheets from the guest rooms. We had talked about going out to dinner and a movie, but Virginia was too tired. I fixed home-made pizza crusts for Cindy and the kids. I went out later and picked up some Vietnamese for Virginia and I. Again, her taste is coming back, but the concern is how much she eats - I don't think it is enough. Virginia was very, very tired all day long she just sat around. It makes me worry about the tumor. It might also be a busy week catching up with her.

On Sunday, I got up and fixed a big breakfast for all of us. We got out around 2:00PM to the mall for a little bit of shopping. Virginia seems to be doing a little better today, but she is still pretty tired. She hasn't had a Depakote today and I think she only had one yesterday. We both want to get together with a neurologist and get her off of this type of medication - if possible. I have been in a bit of a bad mood towards the end of the day here. I think it is a combination of a long week and getting back to work tomorrow - I'm not looking forward to getting back. At times I feel very trapped. Later, I was trying to help Virginia get up on the exercise bike - I had put on a toe clip so that her left leg and foot would work better. She was rather unsteady and got very scared. Because of my bad mood, she started crying and it all went down hill from there. As I was helping her into the bathroom - still crying - she asked me "don't leave me". This really hurt me. I was very surprised at the depth of my reaction to this. I have been working myself into a weary mess, but holding up well (considering the circumstances). I have been keeping Virginia, the kids and home together. I am in this for the whole deal. So it hurt. She was very sorry she said it. It's been a long week.

Wednesday, November 30th

After a pretty long day on Monday, I came out and found the left front tire on the Probe was flat. I got it fixed the next day. These last couple of days have been even more busy than usual. The evenings have been very busy as well. On Wednesday, I finally got my permanent crown put on one of my teeth. This seems to have helped - but it is still a bit sensitive. I also had another development planning session with my boss - these are pretty useful. This is the first time in years that anyone has done this with me (I think that this is really unconscionable).

I have been doing several transfer evaluations. Some of them have been going okay, while one is pretty tough. The person is not taking the feedback particularly well. I know I am being more blunt than usual, but I still think the key points are correct. I also went through the process for exiting an employee. I think that I have only done this one other time. The engineer's name was Jafar (yes, like the evil sorcerer in the Disney movie Aladdin).

December 1994

Sunday, December 4th

It has been a pretty long week and weekend. I got the kids in for haircuts on Thursday. I also had my project team month-ends on Thursday and Friday. On Friday, I went out with several other folks for Lee Huffman's going away lunch. He mentioned to me that during his exit interview that our personnel representative asked who he thought would make a good business team manager. (I am a product team manager and report into a BTM.) He said that he thought I would. This was very nice of him to say. It makes me wonder about the other BTM (not my current boss). It would be interesting if I was offered one of these jobs. I am not sure that I would take it - because of the possible load on the family. Although it might be less in some senses with project managers to do much of the detail work. So, I probably would take it if offered. The head-hunter called back and arranged for me to talk with her vice-president. I was pretty open with them, and apparently they would like to check me out a bit more.

I got home very late Friday night. Virginia and I went out to eat - at Pulcinella's pizza. We did a little shopping before we went to see the new Star Trek movie Generations. This was what I saw with Ben last week. She liked it. Saturday I got the external Christmas lights up and a bunch of chores done. Ben had his friend Charlie spend the night.

On Sunday, I fixed breakfast for everybody. I got a bit upset at Virginia. I had tried to get her down - giving her advanced warning - for breakfast. But she got down about 40 minutes after it was ready. I was overly upset about this. Just because I want everybody to get moving doesn't make it happen. If I want her down when the food is ready, I need to tell her before I start anything. Sunday afternoon, Virginia and Mandy went to the mall and Ben and I went out to the outlet mall. I had a good time with Ben. When we got back, things went downhill because Ben had a ton of homework. He got a fair amount done, but this didn't go well. I also did a bunch of work today. I am getting very tired of the work load.

I was hoping to get Virginia on the exercise bike this weekend, and I haven't been able to. I think she is nervous and worried. Her left foot was bothering her earlier in the week. I suggested trying to not use any support - AFO or neoprene wrap. This seems to have helped a bit.

Monday, December 12th

I've been doing okay this week. Virginia has been 'plateaued' a bit over the last week or so. She seems to get very tired. Work has been going okay. Last Monday

we had an all day staff meeting covering a variety of things. As part of another discussion on other people's ranks, my boss told me about my moving up from a 63 to a 64 rate range (sort of a promotion, but not really). Even though I am now a first level supervisor, my rate range is for a second level person (although this is very arbitrary). He also told me - generally - about my rank and salary plan. It appears that I might actually get a raise in February. This will be the first time in a couple of years (a legacy of my previous supervisor and school). I really do work pretty well with my new boss.

Last Tuesday, I worked at home in the morning which was nice. Virginia was tired again and spent a fair portion of the morning in bed. She said she had nausea and dizziness in the shower this morning. This makes me very worried since I don't know if it is just the hot water and blood pressure (because this has happened to me), not eating enough or the tumor. So I am anxious for the next MRI. I had been feeling a bit better about the tumor and the outlook - but now I'm not so sure. I suspect that this is what happens to many people - you can't relax after any cancer event, because you think it is always there, lurking. And even if it isn't there, your body's immune system could mess up and let another one start.

Wednesday, I had a discussion with my boss about development planning. This has been very useful and helpful. Ben has been a real pain about homework this week and recently. He wanted to stay home on Thursday and 'catch up'. I called his teacher and asked him what was going on. Apparently Ben is very far behind. In the discussion, it struck me that Ben's general skills are just fine, but the problem is planning and organization and focus. His teacher (Carl Backes) agreed with this. So, Ben and I had a talk about this and I told him what the new system was - since he hadn't been telling Virginia and I about the assignments and when they were due. He was supposed to keep a list, but didn't get it done. The new system is Backes initials the list and Virginia looks it over and signs it every night. If Ben forgets his homework or doesn't get a signature from Backes - he can't watch TV. It has been a hard couple of days, but it seems to be making a difference.

Friday, Virginia and I went down to Denver. Rick and Joyce took Ben. Mandy stayed with friends. We stayed at the Scanticon. I was very tired, Friday, but it was good to get away. We ordered room service and had pizza, a buffalo burger and cheese cake while we watched TV. We slept somewhat late Saturday, got some breakfast and then went out and did some shopping at a computer store, an upscale mall and a laser-disc store. Virginia got pretty tired, but had gotten a lot of walking in. We watched a movie in the hotel room Saturday night (The Shadow). I should say that I watched the movie, because Virginia slept. That evening, I asked Virginia to squeeze my hand with her left hand. She was able to get her fingers to do this once. I was pretty excited by this.

We got up a bit late on Sunday again and got dressed. By that time (11:00AM), the breakfast buffet was booked until 1:30PM. For some reason, Virginia wanted to do that - but I was going crazy sitting around a hotel room. I was edgy and in a bit of a

bad mood - I think it was a combination of not having had supper last night and from being bored. We checked out and went out to drive around. We blew off our reservation and went to the Denver Natural History Museum. We had lunch and saw an IMAX movie on Africa and walked around. Virginia was very tired and we headed home around 3:30PM. Ben and Mandy had been with Turley's at their church making crafts. They had a good time and went out for supper afterwards. So I fixed dinner (breakfast stuff) for Virginia and I. Ben was in a foul mood when he got home - because of homework. This Monday went a lot better as the work on planning is catching hold. Ben got enough done so that he and I started work on putting together a variable-rate strobe light. He has been in a much better mood today.

Virginia and I have tried to get back into the swing of 'physical relations'. We've tried 3 times over the last couple of weeks with moderate success. This has been a major relief that things still worked.

This evening, I asked Virginia about when she wants to do the MRI. She said that she doesn't want to deal with it right now. I don't know what to do here. I don't want to push her (or to push her too much), but I am worried about the tumor. General statistics are not good and if it comes back, I want to take all the steps I can to deal with it. I think the herpes virus (immuno-therapy) approach has a lot of potential. But, if we don't know that it is coming, if it hits, it will be too late and she will die. I am not going to push on this, but I don't feel good about it.

Sunday, December 18th

On this Tuesday I talked to the recruiter (headhunter) in Denver. This was interesting - since it has been a long, long time since I went through an interview. I think it went pretty well. Virginia went to Bunko tonight. Wednesday night I went out to a 'bad movie' (Drop Zone) with a pretty big group (Rick Turley, Tom Huibregtse, Paul Bame, Tim Tillson and about 5 others guys from work). We ate at a surprisingly good Chinese restaurant before the movie. On Thursday, some folks from the east and west coast were out for a meeting at work - which took most of the day. At the end of the day, I worked with my counterpart from Chelmsford (Nancy Barkman) and we went out for dinner at Consuelo's.

I was going to take Friday off, but as usual, I ended up putting in a full day. I did go out for lunch with Robert Heckendorn. It looks like he will end up leaving HP, which is a real shame. We went out to Consuelo's. (I didn't mind hitting it twice in two days. This allows me to get spicy food that Virginia probably wouldn't want to try.) In the afternoon, Jim Davis asked Susan and I to be acting Business Team Manager (replacing Alan). Alan is going to take Danny Darr's spot until Danny comes back from medical leave. (It is apparently some strange mental/neurological problem that makes it difficult for Danny to concentrate. There is a fair amount of buzz about

this in the management ranks - whether he will come back or not.) That evening I watched Tron with Virginia and Ben. Mandy was at a friend's house.

This weekend was pretty typical, I did a lot of chores and had trouble getting Ben to do his room and chores. I did get started on my VSI article again. I want to get it sent off in the next couple of days. I also painted one of the spare MacPlus computers. Cindy stopped over. I asked her to help with the check book. This will be a help. We all went out to Cable's end for dinner. Other than that, Virginia didn't get out. I had gone to recycle and do some grocery shopping. I also made a run out and looked at cellular phones. We didn't really do anything on Sunday. I got out for a little with Mandy doing some errands. I am feeling stressed and bored. The work week is very hard and then the weekend doesn't really give me any relief. Cindy stopped over again - helping by wrapping presents. It looks like I will end up buying Virginia the ring that she wanted at Best. The other store we stopped at didn't find anything similar. (Although I find this hard to believe. I don't think they looked very hard.)

Thursday, December 29th

It's been a pretty busy week and a half. Last week at work was pretty busy with Jim Davis's staff meetings (all of Monday and Tuesday morning). Tuesday and Wednesday afternoon were busy with investigation complete discussions figuring out what we are going to do with the business team. Susan and I were 'in charge'. It went okay, but I think that some of the compromises were a bit over the edge. (My team got hit the 'worst' out of the set.)

Mandy was supposed to have a concert Tuesday night, but she had too much homework and didn't feel good. On Wednesday, I was able to run out to Ben's school to see some of his work on 'HyperStudio' - a family history he has been working on. He did a nice job. I took Thursday off to get ready for the trip. I got the car ready - oil changed and washed. Cindy came over and spent the night. On Friday, I wanted to get an early start, but it's not worth the hassle. We finally got out of the house around 10:30 - 11:00AM. We stopped off and picked up Virginia's ring and I also stopped off and got the cellular phone. I still wasn't thrilled about the amount of money that the ring cost, but she wanted it. At times this holiday, I've felt pretty self-centered: I wanted a big deal gift. I thought that I deserved something special for the hard year that I've been through. Feeling that way made me feel pretty rotten. I know that just having Virginia alive and mentally here is probably the best present I could hope for. The drive was pretty uneventful. We made pretty good time.

We had a nice time in Des Moines. Virginia's folks let us have their bedroom so Virginia wouldn't have to climb the stairs. They have a gorgeous view of downtown Des Moines. We didn't do a whole lot. We played poker a fair amount - Art had made a holder for Virginia's cards. We opened presents on Christmas morning -

with Vickie, Nick and Angela and Chris and Julie. For dinner, Virginia's grandmother (Virginia Scher) came over. Art and Lee recently put her in a retirement home (with some difficulty) because she has senility or some other problem (not a surprise given that she is in her late 80s and wasn't a rocket scientist to start with). She did much better than I expected her to. She did ask several times what happened to Virginia's arm.

We went out to eat a couple of times. We did get together with my Tom (my brother), Mary Lee and Chrissy. This went okay - better than I expected. Virginia said that she actually was glad she went out - it gave her better perspective. I got over with Ben to see where Chris worked. I'm excited for Chris - he is having a lot of fun at his work. (Although he is working very, very hard.) We had Mandy's birthday there (on the 27th) with cake. We had gone out for pizza earlier in the afternoon. We got a very late start because of Cindy. She apparently snapped at Mandy, Ben and Angela. I know she lives alone, but she is mostly self-centered and inconsiderate of others on these sorts of trips. We took off Wednesday morning. I wanted to get going by 9AM, but by the time Cindy got out of the bathroom, we got off around 10:30. The weather was very good and we made good time. (I drove out and back the whole way.)

On the way into Fort Collins, I ordered a pizza on the cellular phone. This was pretty cool. I timed it so we had most of the van unloaded by the time the pizza got to us. I've spent today (Thursday) doing laundry and grocery shopping and small errands and chores.

I have gotten very worried about Virginia over the last two days. She is very tired and does have a cold of some sort. However, she has been queasy and has had some pressure and a headache. She has been more forgetful. I am terrified that it is the tumor coming back - quickly. The symptoms are similar. At times she seems like she doesn't worry about it - but she has also asked me what I think. I've told her that I don't know. I've asked her whether she wants me to just take charge. She really doesn't. If things are still sort of questionable tomorrow, we will call somebody. I hope it is something other than the tumor (obviously). She hasn't been taking her pills like she should - which could contribute. She does have a cold - like the rest of us - which I hope is the real problem.

The start of a new year - 1995

Things have continued to improve over the last couple of months. Virginia did get this cold over the holidays, but is finally getting over it. Again, I need to remember how much progress she has made. However, we haven't gone back for the MRI and she was down to maybe one pill (Depakote, the anti-seizure medicine) a day. This caught up with us on January 11th when Virginia had a seizure while she was up at the grocery store.

We continue to worry about the long term possibilities - even though we don't really talk about them. I was hoping that Virginia would be back to school this semester, but I don't know what to expect anymore. She may never go back. I continue to feel very much at loose ends. This job possibility in Texas is of some interest to me and I really want to do some sort of job change - I need it mentally and from a career point of view. But, especially with this recent event, I feel even less able to move. I hope (and expect) the MRI to be good news. This might help open things up and help Virginia with her confidence.

I am going to continue writing entries in this journal, but I will probably do it less frequently. I have gotten a lot of value out of this - it has helped me, but I am going to scale back a bit.

Tim Mikkelsen
January 14, 1995

January 1995

Saturday, January 14th

We had a pretty quiet new year's eve. We were invited out, but Virginia wasn't feeling up to it. Turley's stopped over for a little bit. It was nice to see them. I wasn't overly thrilled to be back at work - I need some more time off.

As I mentioned, Virginia had a seizure while she was up at the grocery store on Wednesday, the 11th. Fortunately, some friends and neighbors were in the store. Cindy Hoxmeier really took charge. Lynn Bogard, a neighbor, called me at work and I headed to the hospital to meet Virginia (since they had called an ambulance).

This was one of the longer car rides I've had. I was wondering if this was 'it'. I wanted Virginia to be okay (obviously), but if she wasn't, I was hoping that it would be fast. This is one of the things about all of this that I hate - the big shifts of emotions and feelings with no control. Virginia had a grand mal seizure, but fortunately she regained consciousness in the grocery store. We finally got together in the emergency room and she was doing okay. They kept us there while they ran a blood test for Depakote. We got there around 4:15 and finally got the blood test results around 6:00. A long, terrible wait. The level was supposed to be 50-100 (to work), and Virginia had a level of 22. Relatively speaking this was good news. Virginia was really upset at herself for the 'back-sliding'. This has triggered her to be serious about the medication and also to some extent about getting another MRI (although Joyce pushing was a part of this as well). This event was very hard on Mandy - she was thinking that this was 'it' as well.

Since the seizure, Virginia has been very tired and we haven't done much. I am hoping that next week she is feeling much better and more back to normal.

Sunday, January 22nd

It has been a strange week. We've had this other MRI scheduled - which was a good thing. I got Virginia in for her blood test on Monday (for Depakote level). It was at 109. I asked the neurologist's office if we should back off a little since she was fuzzy - they said no. (Not a big surprise.) Virginia has gotten more back to normal this week - less fuzzy. I think the seizure and then the high dosage for a few days was the main culprit.

Joyce Turley set up an appointment at the second opinion clinic for Virginia. She is jumping in and 'taking charge'. She left me a message on Monday and Friday about this. I think she wanted to tell me be, but not directly. (She could have talked to me

at home, but voice mail was maybe a bit easier for her.) She said in both messages that she didn't want to imply that she thought I was doing a bad job with taking care of Virginia. However, that is what I think she feels. I feel that way myself sometimes, but I am trying to let Virginia work this through. She is not a child and I think it is appropriate for her to set the pace. I want her to do more and push ahead on some of these things, but when I try to push, it doesn't work. So, anyway, we are set up to go down to Denver to the second opinion clinic (and Joyce wanted to come along).

Work has been very busy this week. I am still very far behind, but that's the way that work will always be. I need to get some evaluations done very soon. At the division staff on Friday, I found out that Alan Arnette, my boss, is leaving for another job and the other business team manager (my previous boss) is going to be out for another 6 months and then will not come back as a manager. So, my guess is that Susan Halter and I will continue to report to Jim Davis for several months. I also suspect that Jim will hire one outside (of HP) manager to replace one of these people and will probably go outside of the division (but inside HP) for the other. So, within 4-5 months, I expect to be back as a straight project team manager. I will probably try for one of the spots.

The MRI was on Friday. It went well, but it has been tough waiting for the results. Virginia and I haven't talked about it much, but she has said that she is scared. She had a headache Sunday morning - but that was because she slept funny. It is very strange: We requested the MRI - it wasn't because a doctor wanted it. The test was done on Friday. I wasn't allowed to watch the screens (event though I've seen 3 sets of results from previous MRIs). The radiologist probably looked at it Friday evening some time. We won't see the results until Tuesday at Dr. Lim's office. I don't really like many aspects of our health care system - where the insurance companies and the doctors are the 'customers' of the service. The patient and family are usually the 'raw material'. I don't like this at all.

Wednesday, January 25th

Well, everything has gotten turned upside down again....

Monday was a pretty good day. Virginia and I took Mandy to a practice concert. 3 local groups are going to some state competition in Colorado Springs on Friday. The other two groups are high school groups (a symphony and a chorus). Mandy's is a junior high band - they are very good.

I worked at home for a while Tuesday morning. Virginia had been out with Joyce getting more records for the Denver second opinion clinic on Wednesday. I got home and Virginia and I went over to Dr. Lim's office for the MRI results. We talked with Eunice, the nurse, and with Dr. Lim for a little bit. Then he put up the films. The tumor had grown. It was about double what it was in October. We were both

shocked. But inside, we were sort of expecting something like this I think. I got a bit teary-eyed and Virginia cried a little - but not much. We got home and Virginia called her mom and Vicki. Lee was hit pretty hard and didn't react very well. Vickie took it very well - she was immediately ready for 'plan B'. I was glad that Vickie responded so well - it really helped Virginia.

When the Ben got home, we told him. He was sort of stunned and asked 'what does this mean'. We told him that it was growing and that we were going to have to fight it harder. He did really well - although later in the evening you could tell he was stressed out. Mandy got home a bit later and we told her - she broke out into tears. By the middle of the evening she seemed to be okay again. She had talked to a lot of her friends - which helps her a lot. All of us had a very hard time getting to sleep and sleeping well. I had a terrible dream about a funeral - it was for Dennis Vetter's wife (who died a little while ago). But, it wasn't at all like Kathy Vetter's funeral. It is pretty obvious what I was really dreaming about and trying to work through. And that really bothers me that at a subconscious level I am trying to get ready - because it isn't over with.

On Wednesday morning, Vickie and Lee went to the gene-therapy clinic in Des Moines. The key doctor who was doing the research was no longer doing the research. The research had shifted to Iowa City. Vickie and Lee called there and found out about what was going on. There are in phase 2 trials for 10 patients and have done about 5. There is no waiting list (which is great!). The neurosurgeon and oncologist needed to call the doctor in Iowa City (a Dr. VanGelder) for an initial discussion. Vickie called me with all this information in the morning. I got a hold of Dr. Lim's and Dr. Turner's office and asked them to call.

Then Virginia, Joyce Turley and I went down to the second opinion clinic. This wasn't a big deal in that we brought down our records and met with the neurosurgeon (a Dr. Breeze). We talked for about an hour and then came back home. From the discussion, the options he talked about were immuno-therapy (white blood cells tuned to the tumor), gamma knife radiation and chemotherapy. From my current sense, I think the immuno-therapy and the gene therapy are our top two hopes/choices. We will have to choose one (if the gene therapy place accepts Virginia). Virginia and I commented when we got back home how all the neurosurgeons are very nice looking (actually we said they had 'network hair' - they would look good on TV). We were both very tired when we got home and rested a bit.

Both Dr. Lim and Dr. Turner had gotten in touch with Dr. VanGelder. VanGelder had requested MRIs and paper work. This was very hopeful sounding. The front desk person (Jane) at Dr. Lim's office had contacted the hospital and made arrangements to get new MRI films made (from the record tapes) and new pathology slides produced. I was very impressed. I need to send her flowers or something. I need to call Iowa City on Thursday and get more information and to check about their need of a CAT scan - that was the one thing the local hospital couldn't get.

Although I am still stressed out about this and struggling with the implications, I am doing better. I think this is mostly due to actually doing something. I don't know if I am watching closer, but I have noticed that Virginia is a bit fuzzier. It makes me worry about how fast the tumor is growing. I know we will be doing some alternative treatment within 2-3 weeks (tops). I don't think we have a lot of time to react. And I certainly don't want to take any chances. Virginia is scared by all this, but is holding up pretty well. Again, the range of options is pretty wide.

Friday, January 27th

Well, we are trying to work our way through this. I was able to get all the CAT scan to Iowa. Even though the local hospital can't do everything, the people are very nice to deal with. They have been very supportive. No one has said - 'oh, I can't do that'. The folks in Denver are doing okay, but it is a big city hospital. I canceled Virginia's appointment with McIntosh on Friday. There doesn't seem to be a lot of point. We know why there was a seizure. The Turley's stopped by Thursday evening. Joyce stayed (waiting for Jeff to get done with cub scouts - which is held across the street). What I wanted to do was to have a pleasant evening with Virginia watching some comedies on television. Joyce would make some comment or ask some question about the tumor or protocols or whatever about every 10-15 minutes. Both Virginia and I just wanted a break from this. We put up with it and Joyce really means well, but when she makes up her mind - watch out. She went to get Jeff and I thought that they had gone. But in a few minutes, I heard her upstairs (we were in the basement) cleaning up the kitchen. I went up to tell her I would do the clean-up. While we were talking she said that she was talking about the medical stuff because Virginia was asking about it. Virginia hadn't been.

I had gone into work on Thursday and on Friday. I got up very early on Friday to get Mandy to school at 4:40AM for her band trip. I told the general manager about the situation. I think he will be supportive. The timing is very poor because Alan Arnette - my previous boss - is leaving and I think I had some small chance at his job. Oh well... this is all much more important than any of that. I talked to one of the residents (a 5th year neurosurgeon) in Iowa about the gene therapy. I have a better handle on the treatment and its underlying mechanisms. I also asked about the phase 1 trials (since it is in phase 2). They had only done things to check effectiveness so many of the people died because they had multiple tumors and only one of the sites was treated. The results were promising. One of the phase 2 patients has had a dramatic reduction in tumor growth. It is still a research project - but it has possibilities. Just about anything that we do will have a lot of risk. The pragmatist in me is not very hopeful about the long term stuff, but the optimist in me still has hope. I still think a lot of it depends on Virginia's health, attitude, my support and the support of all of our family and friends. (So I have a lot of hope.)

We had been invited to a party at the general manager's house on Friday night, but Virginia was tired. We stayed home and watched 'Four Weddings and a Funeral' on laser disc. Although not the most auspicious of titles, we had fun watching it. Mandy is at home, but Ben is up at Turley's for the night. All in all we are coping. The big decision point comes in the middle of next week. I hope we have some good options.

Monday, January 30th

We have been trying to make the weekend as normal as possible. On Saturday, we all went out to the mall for lunch and a little bit of shopping. That evening, we watched a movie at home (Earth Girls are Easy). I remembered the movie as being better than it was. Mandy had her boy-friend, Joe, over and they watched a different movie in the basement. It really catches me to see them on the couch - snuggling. I try to overcome my natural inclination to freak out. He seems to be a good kid and so I am trying to take it easy over this - fundamentally I trust Mandy.

On Sunday, Ben, Virginia and I went out to a late lunch at Chili's and then went out to see a movie. We saw the new Disney movie 'The Jungle Book'. We all really liked it. Mandy should have gone - she would like it. Mildred Dewaele (my mother's friend) called to see how things were going. She had talked to my great-aunt Lil who was wondering how we were doing. Unfortunately we did not have good news. Cindy stopped over Sunday night and was balancing our check-book. This will be very helpful - and she apparently likes doing this sort of stuff.

It is really scary, with so many changes coming so soon. I mostly am doing okay, but it is a lot harder for me this time - I think it is the waiting. I posted a note to two notes groups on Sunday night: [sci.med.diseases.cancer](#) and [alt.support.cancer](#):

My wife has had a recurrence of a high grade brain tumor after the traditional surgery and radiation treatments. We are coming up on a decision point on what treatment to pursue (non-traditional or research treatments).

Out of the set of therapies, my list is:

top: immuno-therapy or gene therapy
 gamma knife (radiation)
 chemotherapy

The immuno-therapy is (as I understand it) the tuning of the body's white blood cells to attack the tumor. The gene therapy involves inserting a gene from herpes virus into the brain that is then incorporated by the tumor cells into its DNA. Then, a chemical substance is injected into the brain. Only the defective gene cells are triggered to use the chemical which then prevents the tumor cell from dividing. Both of these will involve additional

surgery (debulking the tumor).

My question is: Does anyone have any data or anecdotal information on gene versus immuno-therapy? We will need to make a call shortly - within a week.

I would appreciate any information. Also, if you have heard of other possible therapies, I would like to hear about that as well. Note that the information does not necessarily need to be brain-tumor specific.

Thanks

Tim Mikkelsen

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1-303-229-3484 (daytime)

Within an hour, I had gotten two responses. One from a fellow at HP that I know (whose wife has breast cancer). The other was a man in Denver undergoing immuno-therapy. On Monday, I got another 2-3 responses including a couple of researchers (one Canadian and one from the Mayo clinic). I am still leaning towards the gene-therapy.

I went into work and started in on my all day staff meeting. I got a raise from my boss during a break in the meeting. This is the first raise I have had in several years. I am really going to miss this boss - not because of the money, but because we got along well and I think he appreciated and trusted me. During the break, I called Virginia at 10:30 and she was very emotional and started crying. So, I blew off the rest of the meeting and the rest of day and came home and spent the rest of the day with her. We fixed lunch together and then went out for some ice cream at the mall. She settled down and seemed okay the rest of the day.

Monday evening we went out to Del Fannies to celebrate the raise. After that, I dropped Virginia and the kids at home and went to an orientation session for Mandy regarding high school. When I got home, I called Mel Huibregtse about the Iowa City program (since she went to nursing school there). She had found out about what was going on with Virginia from Joyce before I called. She had also called a friend of hers in Iowa City - Debbie Anderson - who turns out to be a nurse involved in the gene therapy program! She has been involved with two patients. One died as a result of complications of the tumor de-bulking surgery. The other seems to be doing well, but there was some effect on speech. But the tumor does not seem to be growing (i.e. the therapy seems to be effective). I also called Lee, and told her that we would not be finding anything out until late on Tuesday and that we would call. She and Art are taking this pretty hard.

I don't know if it is because I am more conscious of stuff right now, but I think Virginia is slipping a bit. She has been having headaches almost everyday (but not terrible ones). She has been a bit confused about some things and gotten some dates wrong. On the other hand, she is moving around reasonably well and is still getting dressed and independent. I am not letting her drive though. I don't want to take that chance with her or anyone else. I am really stressed out by all this and just want to get moving onto the next stage. We hope to hear from both Iowa City and Denver tomorrow.

Tuesday, January 31st

Today at work, Jim Davis said he wants me to apply for Alan's job. This makes me feel pretty good. He understands, I think about my situation. I think I have been handling the stress pretty well - all things considered.

We have been anxious to hear about the various treatments. I stopped off at the grocery store for some stuff and got Virginia a rose. I got home at a pretty good time - around 5:00PM. I came in and saw Virginia on the couch - she looked stressed - and she started crying. VanGelder had called and told her that she was not a candidate for gene therapy. He said that if she were to try it, it would probably kill her. The fluid-filled cavity was very large and this would apparently cause problems with the virus getting into other parts of the nervous system. She was very upset. We were then waiting for Dr. Breeze from Denver to call. He called around 8:00PM and suggested chemotherapy.

In retrospect, it didn't make sense to do some weird research protocol that did not have a clear track record when there were some therapies that had some positive effects. At least that is what I'm telling myself. Part of the desire to do these others was to be more aggressive and proactive about addressing the tumor.

February 1995

Monday, February 6th

On last Wednesday, the first of February, I stayed home with Virginia until we found out about talking with oncologist. The clinic nurse finally called and the first time we can get a hold of the oncologist for a chemotherapy discussion is a week from Thursday. This was somewhat annoying because we wanted to get started - the tumor is growing after all! After we heard, I took Virginia out for lunch.

I am worried about Virginia because she seems more tired and fuzzy. I suspect that this is in part due to her and my stress level, but I am still worried. Art and Lee are coming out this weekend. Lee had gotten very sick - she was terribly anxious to come out to see Virginia and to help. I am very tired, and would really like things to go well for a change. But I am not holding my breath. I don't go in for premonitions, but I have a bad feeling about this coming weekend. It is an odd feeling and don't know why it hit me - except the bad news from the doctors.

On Thursday morning, we all went to Webber to see Mandy get an award for improvement from her biology teacher. She doesn't like the teacher, but decided to stick it out in the class. She has done well and I am proud of her determination. The teacher's little speech bugged Virginia because he referred to stress at school and home - implying to Virginia that we were bad parents. I know what he was trying to say - he just said it badly. Mandy also had her simulated space shuttle (WAVE) launch.

It looks like Susan and I are getting another manager (to report in the business team). I talked to Tim Tillson and according to him, Paul Beiser and I are the leading candidates for the job (internally to the division). I don't think Paul will apply, but I have been trying to encourage him. I wonder about the sanity of me applying.

Virginia has been having some headaches, which worries us both. If it bothers her on Friday, she will call Dr. Breeze in Denver. We want to get started. Art and Lee are coming this weekend and staying for two weeks - which Virginia hadn't told me. There are lots of things Art could help with, but I expect him to be consumed by something for Cindy. I don't know what it will be, but I expect something. I'm feeling pretty beat and stressed and plan on taking a few days off next week. The plan is, in part to look at possible treatments, and in part to just recharge.

On Friday, I went into work and got a fair amount done. Alan Arnette told me that Dan Magenheimer now reports to me. The way the stuff has been worded - he reports to me, not to Susan and I. This seems sort of strange. At a division staff meeting, Jim Davis wants me be the primary contact for the business team. I can do

this, but it just popped up and happened. I know I can deal with the job, but I would like to get someone to replace me. A friend from my MOT class, Andy Binder, called. He had gotten a promotion (to a first level manager) and is doing well. I told him about Virginia's situation and he told me about the miscarriages they have had - 3 in a row. I stayed up pretty late and got a lot of work done.

On the Saturday, Virginia and I took Ben to an animation class and then went out for breakfast. This was nice. The waiter thought Virginia was making a joke about the brain tumor (he had asked about the sling and cane). He felt very badly. I did small chores. I also did some more work to catch up - and actually got there. Art and Lee got in early (around 4:30PM). Lee felt pretty good once she saw Virginia was doing well. Cindy had been over when they showed up. Virginia hadn't told her they were coming. She was working on the checkbook for us. We went out to Young's for dinner. On Sunday, we went out to do some shopping and puttered around. I stayed home on Monday and cleaned up some of our bills and files and paperwork. I took Ben out to lunch.

Thursday, February 9th

Tuesday was pretty nice because I stayed home again. I took Mandy out to lunch - she wanted to go to the Olive Garden. That afternoon, Ben and Art and I went to the Loveland HP scrap parts auction. Ben was really looking forward to this. It would have been a lot of fun, except they had changed the rules and made Ben stay out of the auction area. I thought this was pretty silly and he was really bummed. Since he wasn't having any fun, we left early.

On Wednesday, I went back into work. It was a typical day - I was doing objectives meetings with people on my team. Thursday was a short, but busy day at work - some more objectives meetings and some minor fires (figuratively speaking). It was short because Virginia, Art, Lee and I went to Denver in the afternoon to see the chemotherapy oncologist - a Dr. Cohn. He was very good and I really appreciated his open, honest and caring approach. He is recommending BCNU therapy. This is on a 6-8 week cycle - the drug is administered by IV over 2 days (two 2-3 hour sessions). Then, when Virginia's white cell count is back up, she does an MRI and then starts the cycle over again.

The good news is that BCNU seems to have some effective in 35% of the cases. This is better than I was expecting. In only 20% of these cases does the tumor disappear. The really bad news that he gave us is that, in his experience, the tumor always recurs. It may be a short time or a longer time, but he indicated months to a couple of years. This is because there are millions of the remaining microscopic tumor cells. Again, he was saying that it is only a matter of time. This discussion has really hit me hard - and I am trying to work with the despair and get positive again. I am also worried about Virginia's state of mind. I still think we have a chance of beating all of this, but if our attitude goes downhill, recovery won't happen. Art is being

pretty pragmatic and level-headed about all of this. Lee is taking it pretty hard. I am incredibly sorry that we are putting everybody through this.

We could go back to Denver on Monday and start the treatment. I called a local oncologist and we are able to get in for a first visit on next Thursday. This might mean that we couldn't start with him for another week. Virginia doesn't want to wait. So I am going to try to find out if we might be able to schedule things so that we could get started this week locally. I am feeling very tired and beat. On the way home I got a splitting headache - all stress related I'm sure. I really need to work through my emotions and get back on track - it is critical for all of us.

Wednesday, February 15th

I had a pretty busy, but normal, day on Friday. We got some good news because I was able to get into Dr. Fangman's office for a Tuesday appointment. On Saturday, I did some work with Suzanne on the book we are working on together. We were going to go out Saturday evening for Cindy's birthday. But, it got too cold and icy. (A big storm came through.) We ended up having food delivered from Chili's. Lee is helping around the house, but Art is going stir-crazy because he doesn't have much to do. He did help with a few things, but it wasn't enough to keep him busy. I think he is ready to go back home. We really didn't do anything on Sunday. Virginia and I gave Cindy a Macintosh Plus (that was Ben's). She was thrilled with this. I needed to do some mouse repair - there was a minor cable problem. Ben and I spent some time working on his voltmeter. I also did some work with Art on a worksheet (done in Excel) for him to use at his new part-time job in a hardware store (now that he is retired).

Monday was another busy day. I decided to sell some of the kids investment stock because it wasn't doing anything and I suspected that it would drop even more in value. I learned a valuable lesson about listening to 'tips' - usually you lose money.

On Tuesday, we went to Dr. Fangman's office. He went to Creighton University for his medical degree - in Omaha Nebraska. He was very personable and seems very good. He is not a brain tumor specialist, but that is why we saw Dr. Cohn in Denver. The appointment went okay. I asked him after Virginia had gone out to the lobby about prognosis. I said that I knew that things are not great, but I was wondering that if things went 'as expected', how long we might have. He did not want to say - which was understandable. He did indicate that it was unlikely that things would go quickly down hill and that things would probably not go badly in the next three to six months.

I went back to work for a while and then got my hair cut. Jeanna, the hair-dresser who does the kids and I, is pregnant and will be quitting. She also mentioned that both Ben and Mandy had talked about the chemotherapy with her. I am glad they are talking to someone. I have tried talking with them, but they say they don't want

to. Cindy was over in the evening. Art and Lee are planning on leaving on Wednesday. As soon as they are gone, we won't see much of her. Although different in various respects, Art and Cindy are very much alike in temperament, physical characteristics and some aspects of outlook.

On Wednesday, I worked a couple of hours in the morning. Art and Lee took off after I left. Virginia would really have liked them to stay, but they seemed ready to go. I was surprised because I would have thought that Lee would stay until we really started the chemotherapy. I took Virginia to the chemotherapy session. It is expensive (around \$2000 for each cycle - with up to 6 cycles if it works), but I don't really care. She responded well to the session. She has not had nausea or any other immediate adverse reactions. She will do two more (on this Thursday and Friday). Then we will have 4-8 weeks off. Virginia is more enthusiastic and happy - because we are doing something. It has been very hard over the last 3 weeks, just waiting. I am getting more hopeful, but it is a lot harder this time. At lunch (after therapy) Virginia said that she is feeling strong and good and that we will grow old together. Things are pretty much back to normal tonight.

Monday, February 20th

The rest of the chemotherapy sessions went pretty well. The one on Thursday burned a little, but it wasn't bad. Friday's went just fine. I worked a little late on Friday and then did a fair amount at home on Friday night and Saturday morning. I was able to get all caught up with just a little effort on Sunday morning. It is nice to get caught up.

Ben was out at a friend's birthday party Friday night. We had the normal troubles over cleaning up his room again. I am trying to change all this to where it is not me TELLING him to do his CHORES. If his room is messy (has stuff on the floor), I won't go in. He does have to keep the rest of the house clear of his stuff. We've also changed what we call them from chores to 'things he needs to do'. I think this might work.

Virginia had a little bit of nausea on Saturday, but it wasn't bad. We went out for lunch at Boston Chicken. We had been planning on going out to eat and a movie some time this weekend - but she has been too tired. This is a real shame because it has been a gorgeous weekend - 60-70 degrees Fahrenheit. I am worried about Virginia because she has been fuzzier over the last few days. She forgets where we are going or what we were planning on for supper. Her short term memory is getting pretty bad. I hope that this is just a short term effect of the chemotherapy. Today, Monday, she only got out to Target at the end of the day. She was really wiped out and slept on the couch a lot. This scares me because it is very reminiscent of the few weeks before the original event.

Monday, February 28th

Tuesday was a grinder of a day with the 6 interviews for Alan's job. I think I did well on most, but it was a bit rough with Jim Davis. It is clear he is looking for something very different. I also wasn't happy with my discussion with Gretchen Tobin. On Wednesday, I had my team off-site, team formation meeting. It went pretty well. We did the afternoon part of it outside at a local park. The morning was a direction session. For lunch, I had set up for a gimmick - there were no plans. I had cash and I let the team do what they wanted without direction. It was fascinating to watch as they either tried to take charge or sit back. We went out for a picnic (at the park where we ended up). This was pretty effective.

Thursday and Friday were hell days - it was quarterly review for the division - with just division staff. Susan and I got screwed up on times and got there late on the first day. Not an auspicious start while we are trying to get a promotion! Thursday evening there was a concert that Mandy was in. She and her band does very well. On Friday night we had dinner at The Salad Company with the four of us (after I had gotten home pretty late). Virginia commented about a pain in her arm - that felt like a bruise. I suspect it is a reaction to the chemotherapy - related to her bone marrow being attacked by the drugs.

On Saturday I got some work done. I also called Robert since I hadn't heard from him for several weeks. (He and Marilyn hadn't heard about the current round of trouble.) I also finished up some work on the configuration management book proposal. Virginia slept a lot during the day getting ready for a party Saturday evening. We went to Joe and Karen Gersch's house for a surprise party for Donna Uhrich's 40th birthday. This was a lot of fun and Virginia did pretty well.

On Sunday we went out for a picnic. I got some stuff ready and bought some sandwiches at 10 Bears Barbecue. The food was great - even the kids liked it. The day was nice but a bit windy. I barbecued that evening. I am working on trying to have us all eat healthier. Overall, it was a very nice day.

Monday was very busy (what a surprise). Monday was an all-day staff meeting. I also had to go in to talk with Jim Davis about the interview. The bottom line was that nobody was clearly better or worse than anybody else - so no-one got the job and no-one is taken off the list. I don't know if Davis said similar things to everybody, but he said that I was slightly in the lead. His feedback was that we all are not broad enough. The specific feedback was that I would have done better if I had a passion or hobby or sport - something to help balance the stress of the job. I did not argue with him, because it is valuable getting feedback. (I would love to have a hobby or whatever, but I am busy trying to help Virginia survive. I also think that I am balancing very well.) That evening, Virginia cooked chicken and did a reasonable job - except she forgot to take off some wrapping from the bottom of the chicken. I have noticed some short-term memory problems. This worries me, but I feel helpless. It is strange because Virginia is actually walking better (I think).

Tuesday was pretty busy - some people from another division were supposed to get in for a couple day meeting. But the weather was very bad and it was opening day for DIA (Denver International Airport). So they got in around 6:00PM instead of the noon arrival I was expecting. This gave me some more time, but it was totally consumed. I went out to dinner with them to Young's and got home exhausted. This was the evening that Mandy wanted to work on some of the high school registration materials. It didn't go very well and we got a little upset at each other. I am trying to help her, but I realize that what she wants is guidance and direction. I need to keep in mind that both Mandy and Ben are kids and give them the help and guidance and structure that they need. I hope they realize how much I love them, but it might get masked by all the current stress.

March 1995

Saturday, March 4th

Wednesday was another busy day, but they all are. I had the full day with the MLL folks (from Chelmsford). During the day I got a message on voice-mail from Joyce - wanting to talk. When I got a hold of her later in the day, she mentioned that Virginia had been depressed and was having several small seizures (tightness in her throat and chills). She could feel them coming on, but was very tired. She hadn't mentioned these to me so I called home and checked out how she was doing she mentioned something and I asked about seizures and she told me about them. She said that she had told me. I don't know if this is just another short-term memory problem or if she didn't want me to know. She got a bit testy about this when I asked. I was supposed to go out to dinner with the visitors, but I just got them over to the restaurant and then bailed out and got home around 7:00PM. Virginia had ordered pizza from 2 different places for the kids. I had some of the extra pizza for supper.

Thursday went okay. I had a lunch meeting and a good discussion with on of the upper managers. I ate very light because Virginia wanted to eat out before seeing the oncologist. Virginia and I ate at the Egg and I. She is obviously nervous and anxious. She also wanted to drive to show me that she could it. But I am not going to let her drive as long as she is this tired, having seizures and poor short-term memory. Virginia and I went to Fangman's office for a blood test and a visit. Her blood counts were very good. Dr. Fangman seemed a bit concerned about the seizures (and he is not a brain specialist). So, we scheduled an MRI for March 20th and another visit on March 22nd. If things don't look like the tumor is responding, we will go onto a different chemotherapy. Virginia doesn't want me to be traveling and I am not thrilled about being gone. But I am trying to keep things as normal as possible.

On Friday, I tried to go for a walk with Ben again. We have been trying to do this at around 7:00-7:15AM and he really likes it (as do I). Mandy has missed her bus 3 times this week and has messed this up. I was already upset about needing to cancel out of the trip on Monday. (It was going to be very interesting.) Mandy running late put me over the top and I got very upset at her. I left her in tears at school. I also dumped a bunch on Ben at home. He took it a lot better and has been very nice all weekend. I was feeling a range of very deep emotions - anger, frustration, helplessness, hopelessness, feeling trapped. The kids hadn't been helping much, but I had been holding things together. This promotion that I am trying out for is a big deal to me. It is something that I have been working towards for a long time. I am well positioned and well respected. From the internal candidates, I think I am slightly ahead. I want it for me and I haven't had a lot of things happen recently for

me. I talked to Virginia and in exasperated frustration I said that I was going to have to drop out of the running for the job. She was sorry I was stressed out but happy I was pulling out. I am also bothered by the fact that I want the job so much (it bothering me that I may not value the family as much as I think I do). I expected her to tell me to go ahead and still go for it, but she didn't. At work, I told the general manager, Jim Davis, that I wouldn't be able to go. But I didn't have a chance to pull out of the running. In retrospect - I didn't try very hard to. I still want the job. But I think missing this trip will drop my likelihood of success.

We went out with Turley's for dinner at a hole-in-the-wall Mexican restaurant - Consuelo's. It was great. We went to Target and did a little shopping and then went to the theatre. Unfortunately, the paper printed the wrong times and we missed the movie we wanted to see. We went back and watched part of a movie on laser disc. I should say that I watched it because Rick fell asleep and Virginia and Joyce looked through magazines. Mandy was still upset with me, but Ben was okay.

On Saturday, I went into work with Ben from 10:00AM until 2:00PM. I got a lot done and Ben was great. We went out to the mall for a late lunch. Today was Art's birthday. We bought his present at Target Friday night and I still need to mail it - a Dremel 'moto-tool'. I talked to him a bit - he had called with a question about a game Lee got him. In the discussion we talked about the job stuff. He asked if Cindy (Heckle) couldn't help. I told him, with a preface asking him for understanding, that she could, but that she didn't come over much, wasn't particularly dependable and that she and Virginia didn't always get along. He didn't seem surprised. I went out with Mandy to the grocery store in the early evening and we had a late supper. After that we watched the new tape Virginia had gotten the kids - The Lion King. Virginia had a pretty good day, but was very forgetful by the end of the evening. Her planning skills are generally pretty poor as well - as shown by putting together meals. She does pretty well, but will be way off on amounts or portions. The memory stuff really scares me. It makes me think that we might not have much more time together.

Saturday, March 11th

Even though I didn't travel, Monday and Tuesday were pretty busy. The weather was pretty nasty Monday. When the folks who went got back, they described several near accidents. I suspect that the van we would have taken if I went would not have handled as well. I went in late Monday night to fax some stuff that Susan Halter needed at the meeting. Tuesday afternoon, I took Mandy to her dermatologist (for acne). After that I went to a little bit of a scrap parts auction at HP in Loveland. I got a VGA monitor.

Tuesday night Ben didn't sleep well and Virginia let him stay home from school - but he was going to read. Wednesday at work was spent mostly on business planning. I also was involved in interviewing for a documentation person on my team. On my

way home I picked up some used laser discs. One of them I had gotten for Ben and planned to give it to him tonight because he had finished a book he had been working on for a long time during this day at home. We went to Rocky Mountain High School to register Mandy for next year (starting high school). She was in a weird mood about it - scared I think. Even though I had been after her to set up her schedule for the last several weeks she had put it off until Tuesday night - which caused us both a bunch of stress.

Thursday was the SoftBench business team's off-site. We went to Sylvandale ranch in Loveland. I did the opening and closing remarks. I hadn't put as much time into this as I wanted, but it went pretty well. Debbie, one of the other newer managers, had done the setup and coordinating and logistics (and had done a good job). Roger Ison had stopped by and visited Virginia. It was a long day. I was looking forward to coming home and relaxing with Virginia watching TV. But Ben had a pile of homework. It turns out he was a little bit behind (but not all that bad). He was getting stressed out. I suspect that is why he did not sleep well Tuesday night. He has also been getting nausea at school. I should have picked up on the signs. He splattered pretty badly because he thought he had to be done with a lot of math and some history. I had to send him to bed. I called his teacher, Mr. Backes. He didn't have to finish the math and could do it over spring break. Ben got the history done the next morning.

On Friday, I interviewed another documentation person. The interview team met and we decided on one of the candidates. I had lunch with Bill Follis out at Consuelo's. He is getting ready to try to get a job at HP. He and Roger Ison had been trying to start a business, but they are getting ready to split. He wanted to find out what HP was like these days. He was also interested in getting together - as friends - more often. So we are going to try to do that. He also mentioned that his dad just died (at 85). He is trying to set up care for his 86 year-old mother. I felt sorry for him, but I've noticed that it strikes me as different that people of my age group still have their parents around. I know that it isn't, but I am used to not having mom and dad around.

Friday afternoon, I took Virginia to Dr. Fangman for a blood test. Most of the numbers were good, but her platelets were very low. These are clotting agents. They were low enough that Virginia is not supposed to be around knives or sharp objects. We were also scheduled for several other blood tests earlier than planned. Friday night, Virginia and I went out to a movie (Stargate at the cheap theatre) and then a late dinner at Perkins. There were a bunch of obnoxious high school kids at Perkins. It was fascinating to watch. It was good to get out - even though Mandy was not thrilled about this. She had wanted to have her boyfriend, Joe, come over so they could do something. I heard this from Virginia, because Mandy would not tell me what the problem was. Mandy got her grades - which were very good - A's and 2 B's. I am very proud of how she is doing in school - especially with all this stress.

Saturday, I went into work for 3 hours but didn't get as much done as I wanted. I'll need to do some on Sunday as well - probably. After I got home, we went out to Boston Chicken for lunch and then to the hospital for another blood test. This one came back with the platelets coming up just a bit (from 35,000 to 36,000 where last week they were 250,000). This was good news. We need to watch things, but Virginia doesn't need a platelet transfusion. She was very concerned about needing a transfusion - because of a concern about AIDS. We went to the mall after this and did a fair amount of shopping. The kids were in really bad moods for a good chunk of the day. In retrospect, I see that we were all stressed out about the blood test and being at the hospital. None of us like it. I fixed catfish on the grill for a late supper. Cindy stopped over for a while. In general I think that Virginia is doing well. She is not using her cane and seems to be pretty confident. I think the recent good weather has helped (70 degrees during the day). I suspect that she will improve even more during the spring and summer.

Tuesday, March 14th

On Sunday, Virginia had 4 of the small seizures. I also did a bunch more work - trying to get caught up - mostly later in the evening. We tried to get romantic again. It was nice, but we didn't get very far. I think the problems are that I am worried and stressed out and that Virginia is in at least some form of menopause.

On Monday, Virginia had a little seizure this morning. We talked about this. These small seizures are very different - they start with a desire to go to the bathroom and then work their way up to throat and then Virginia feels very flushed. These are very worrying to both of us. I also did some more work in the morning. I think I am all done for the week now. We went out for lunch at Coopersmith's. Virginia had a total of three little seizures today. For the last one, she watched herself in the mirror - with no signs of tremors or pupil dilation. I find it very impressive she has the presence of mind to watch and think through what is going on. She is tired and has some short term memory lapses, but not bad. But this is still very scary. I really wish I could do more. I wish I was some form of doctor (so I would have caught this sooner or something). I feel, most of the time, trapped on the side-lines, unable to do anything.

Virginia had just one small seizure on Tuesday. It turns out I did some more work - just a little. I did a lot of laundry trying to get caught up

Wednesday, March 22nd

Vickie came in a week ago on Wednesday. Virginia has really been looking forward to this. We went out to the Rio for lunch. This was fun. Virginia had no seizures on Wednesday. On Thursday, Mandy and I went to the Loveland ski area (near the

Eisenhower tunnel). We had a half day of skiing. It was a gorgeous day - occasionally a little cool, but mostly nice. We stopped at BeauJo's in Idaho Springs on the way back for supper. We had a very nice day. Virginia, Vickie and Ben went to the outlet mall during the day. She had only one very mild seizure.

Virginia has been a little testy with me - she says it is because of Cindy. Cindy is over a lot whenever relatives are out, but not much other times. Virginia said that Ben is using her confusion sometimes. He said that Virginia and he talked about a VCR in his room. Friday night, we went out to see 'Bye Bye Love' early and then we ate at Bisetti's. On Saturday, Chris and Julie got into town in the afternoon. We went out to Rio again. This was very fun. On Sunday, we took Vickie down to the airport (DIA). This was the first time we had gone down. It took a good 25-30 minutes longer to get there. Mandy stayed home. It was really nice having Vickie out. It helps Virginia's spirits.

It was tough on Monday going back to work. We had the MRI late in the day. On Tuesday, I was offered Danny Darr's business team manager job. I accepted. I went out with Chris, Julie, Virginia and Cindy for lunch at the mall. At the end of the day, Chris and Julie took the kids to get their haircut. We went out to Moot House to celebrate my job. After that, Chris and Julie left for the rest of their vacation. Virginia seems to be doing pretty well - with fewer seizures, no headaches and reasonably alert. I am very anxious about the upcoming MRI results.

We got the MRI results today, Wednesday. They were not good. There is pronounced tumor growth. The MRI films showed it as much larger, but more shell like - not solid mass. We had been very hopeful, but we both knew this was a possibility. But I was surprised at the amount of growth. So we are going to quickly go to a different chemotherapy. One of the problems is that the BCNU might be working. The earlier MRI was done on January 20th, and chemotherapy started on February 15th, with maximum effect 15-21 days later. So much of the growth could have occurred early on. But, we can't mess around with this. Virginia seems to be okay, but tired, tonight and is ready to move on to the next stuff and fight again. The kids know that we are going to the next step, but we really didn't describe it in detail to them. I suspect they sense some of what is going on, they are both smart, perceptive, people. I have been putting forward a solid front, but the MRI really surprised and scared me. I am working through my fear and emotions trying to get back to a positive attitude. I really worry about helping Virginia enough and question the wisdom of taking the new job. But, there really is positive potential. I've got to get myself back into a positive state so that I can be most effective helping Virginia. She is still feeling pretty good - she only had 2 small seizures. As I write about these small seizures, in the light of the MRI results, I get worried again.

Wednesday, March 29th

On Thursday of last week we went in for another blood test. The tests came back okay - platelets and white count are up. I had gone into work and went back after the blood test. There was a coffee talk that afternoon. Jim Davis did a nice job of 'announcing' my promotion. He did a top ten list about why I was selected. Then he called me up and did a ceremonial handing over of the cellular phone, the car keys, a joke disguise so 'I could sneak up on people', a button that says "I'm the boss, that's why" and a book on speaking Texan. That evening, I got the new pills for chemotherapy. When I got home, I gave Virginia her CCNU pills which are just once per major (~2 month) cycle. CCNU is the 'C' in the PCV therapy. She took anti-nausea pills and did not get any nausea.

On Friday, Virginia seemed to be doing okay. I went in for division staff in the morning. I am still trying to clean stuff up from my old job. I'm getting close. I called the home care person at HP First Health - Lucille. She had called to check in and see if we needed anything else. I told her about the last MRI and how Virginia was doing. I also asked about home hospice care (home care of terminally ill patients) if that becomes necessary. It really bothered me to ask about that sort of stuff - but I felt I should know if it really does become necessary. (The answer was that HP does offer this including nursing care and the benefit is for up to 6 months of care.) Chris and Julie stopped by on way home to Des Moines. We went out to eat but had a ton of trouble finding a place to eat - they were all busy. We finally went to Pulcinella's pizza. While we were there, I saw Brian Fromme, but I didn't tell Virginia until he had left. I knew she would have had enough time to think of something really nasty to say. (He was the guy who left his wife when she had breast cancer - she died within a month of him doing this.) Chris and Julie took off after supper. Based on the directions of Dr. McIntosh, we are stepping up to 4 Depakote pills a day, I hope that it helps the seizures. Virginia does continue to have a few seizures a day.

I have been tracking my weight and what I eat. On Saturday, I got on the scale and found that I have lost around 5 pounds - I still have a long way to go. I made some crock-pot soup - cooking the onions made Virginia a little queasy. She is very tired today. She has also had a couple of the small seizures. I went through the bills and the checkbook getting them cleaned up a little bit. We went out to the Salad Company for supper and then shopping at the mall and ended up at a new discount theatre to see Disclosure. We both liked the movie.

On Sunday, I got after Ben and got him to read 3 chapters so that he can finish his current book in time. We also went out to shop for his bicycle. At the end of that, we went to the mall and I got Mandy a dress. Ben and I picked up a bunch of books at the library book sale (which happens every year).

Monday, we went to Fangman's and Virginia's counts are doing okay. However, she needs to get her counts boosted. Since we didn't want to come back the next two days, I learned how to do this - give her a shot. So, with a nurse instructing and

watching, I gave her a shot at the office of a recombinant white cell growth factor. This went okay. I liked it because I was actually doing something directly to help. Virginia is still pretty tired today.

On Tuesday, I met my new BTM (business team manager) peer - Patty. She came from ProCase where Jim had been before. I am nervous about the state of the key program in my new job - it is a business development thing. Stuff seems pretty fuzzy. After work, we went out for Ben's birthday - he's 11! It is mind-boggling. The four of us went along with Joe (Mandy's boyfriend), Elizabeth (Mandy's friend) and Cindy. We went to Applebee's. Virginia and I shared part of Ben's birthday brownie. It was very good. On the way home we stopped off and looked at another bike (Ben's present). At home we had cake and ice cream. She didn't seem to have any seizures today and has felt pretty good.

Wednesday was a pretty good day. Virginia got up and was busy during the day - cooking a pot roast and doing some cleaning. She didn't have any little seizures. We figured out that she had probably been so tired because of the anti-nausea medication. She has been feeling very good - but that sort of scares her too.

Friday, March 31st

On Thursday, I got up early and did some work - trying to get a bit caught up. I took Mandy out for breakfast and then dropped her off at school. I am working hard at trying to give the kids some time with me. I also took Ben to school on our way to Dr. Fangman's office. Virginia's white counts are good. And so we went ahead and Virginia got a 'vin christin' chemotherapy IV. After that I took her out to the Egg and I. I didn't eat because I was still full from breakfast with Mandy. We got home and I did some calls about insurance - there is still a mix up between PVH and First Health. I took off for work, but stopped off and took Ben out to lunch at Blimpies. That evening, Rick took me out to celebrate my promotion. We ate at Bisetti's. It was very nice of him. I got home and was very, very tired.

Friday morning, we noticed that Virginia's arm was red - a reaction to the IV. I went into work for a bit (I had a meeting). I came back and took her out to check out the arm. It was phlebitis - an inflammation of the vein. We are supposed to watch it and put hot packs on it. I went back to work for the afternoon.

April 1995

Monday, April 3rd

On Saturday, I took Ben and his friends out for a birthday party. We were going to go see Generations (the Star Trek movie), but it had just left the local theatres. I ended up renting some movies for him to watch. Things got screwed up with one of his friends - Jonathan Pilsner - and we didn't get him over for the party. His mom reacted very oddly to the whole thing, like we had done it on purpose of something. Virginia went out with us for the pizza lunch.

Sunday, Virginia, Ben and I went down to Denver with Roger and Susan to see a musical - Forever Plaid. This was a lot of fun - even Ben enjoyed it. Mandy was supposed to go, but she didn't really want to. Virginia hadn't really told her about it ahead of time. She felt like she had a lot of homework and was stressed out. We left it up to her. When we got back, she was bored. That night, she couldn't sleep, and I talked with her - pretty late. It was a nice talk and I think it helped. Virginia is very tired and a bit more confused. She also has headaches and insomnia. These symptoms are right off of the procarbazine side-effects list.

On Monday I got off to work pretty early and had a busy day. Mandy stayed home with Virginia (because she was still pretty tired). I had to reassign someone that I have known for years - there were teamwork problems. This was not pleasant and he didn't take it particularly well. We got her blood tested again and the counts look good. The phlebitis is not any better and they gave us some topical steroids that seem to help. They are talking about needing to do a port. Virginia doesn't want to do that. I also asked about the amount of pills she takes at night (now 2 Depakote, 2-3 procarbazine and 1 Benydril). The doctors office said to check about interactions. I asked one of the pharmacies - and there is a drug interaction. I need to contact the neurologist to check this out for sure - the problem maybe only one of dosage. They did not say there were any negative side-effects - just ones of medication effectiveness. Mandy went off over supper to her first driver's education class. It is very strange that she is now old enough to drive. We went out for supper because Virginia wanted to get out and we went to a buffet - it was fun.

Friday, April 7th

Tuesday was a pretty busy day. Much of it involved getting ready for the third-party company visit on Thursday. I am still hassling with the insurance and hospital over the physical therapy. The team that I had reassigned someone out of seems to be working much better now - a bit more progress and teamwork - but it is still just the

first day. Wednesday was much the same - getting ready. Virginia's phlebitis doesn't look a whole better. She hasn't had the little seizures for a while.

Thursday was the company visit - the code name for the company is Kona. I have to be careful because this is a possible acquisition and I had to sign SEC (Securities and Exchange Commission) papers about not leaking the information. The visit was very different - talking to a company about joint business opportunities with the possible goal of buying them. And it was really bizarre that the amount of money is in the \$50-100 Million range. Boy, howdy! The meeting went well and there are a lot of synergy's between us. Everybody seemed happy with the meeting. It was clear that Jim Davis, the GM was the key driving force. After this was over, I picked up Virginia and we went to Fangman's office for a blood test. We got a prescription for some medicine for the phlebitis (Decadron as an anti-inflammatory and an antibiotic). While we were there we ran into Ken and Felica - some friends of Roger and Susan. Ken had just recently nearly died from colon cancer - it ruptured and he drove from Denver to Loveland in excruciating pain. He amazingly survived that and is now in chemotherapy. He and Felicia shopped around and finally chose Fangman. After getting the new pills, we got home and I fixed supper. After everybody was settled in, I went back to work trying to get ready for Friday. I had asked Cindy to come over and she did but it was late - after we had all gone to bed.

Friday, I got up very early for my corporate jet flight to California. The day out there was pretty good, but I am not looking forward to the travel. Cindy stayed at the house all day, which I didn't expect. Ben stayed home sick (as he had yesterday) with a pretty bad cough and not feeling well. When I got back I went to Elizabeth and Claude Ross's house. Virginia had gone down with the Ison's for supper and I showed up in time for dessert. We stayed there for about another hour and a half. Ken and Felicia were there along with Susan Ison's daughter Wendy and her husband. It was a nice evening. But it was strange sitting around talking about aspects of cancer - the medical community (and the problems with it), how people react to cancer patients (some good, some poorly), and how we are all too young to be having these discussions. At the end of the day, I was just exhausted - it has been a long day and week (and month and year). It is encouraging that Virginia hasn't been having the little seizures. Her arm is looking better and she seems to be feeling better. However, I am thinking about suggesting that she try some of the alternative treatments - the herbal kind that couldn't hurt. The reason is that I suspect that there is some herbal remedy that does work. Just like traditional medicine, however, there are just so many. And so many of the people who talk up the remedies sound more than a bit crazy.

Thursday, April 13th

Last Saturday was a pretty typical chores day around the house. While I was out doing some of the errands, I picked up Lee at the Marriott hotel. I didn't like her taking the bus, but the drive to DIA is a real pain and shoots a big chunk of the day.

That evening we ate at a new restaurant - Golden Corral Buffet. We came home and watched The Last Action Hero. On Sunday, I did some more chores and went shopping. We went up to the Turley's for dessert. For supper, I fixed pizza dough and we all made pizzas from scratch. The Sound of Music was on TV and we watched that. Virginia seems to be doing pretty well - her arm is getting better. She still hasn't had any seizures. She does get a little confused from time to time, but I think it is the pills.

The work week was pretty busy. On Monday, Lee dropped me off at work on the way to take Virginia to Dr. Fangman's office. I had lunch with Bill Follis at HP. Lee had dropped me off so that at the end of the day I drove the company car home (a silver Taurus sedan). It is very strange getting this promotion and getting 'the trappings of power'. It is very unnatural for me. The car is an okay benefit, but the cellular phone is actually more useful and important to me in the job. On Tuesday, I had another busy day and got home late. Lee had fixed chicken and noodles, but everyone else had eaten. We left pretty quickly to go to a concert that Mandy was in. She and her band are very good. On Wednesday, I had a customer visit (a Portuguese financial corporation). After giving the strategy overview, I ran over to Dr. Fangman's where I met Virginia and Lee for a regular checkup (we didn't see the doctor, but a nurse practitioner). Virginia seems to be doing pretty well (with blood counts and all). We scheduled the MRI for the first week in May. We haven't talked about it, but I am very nervous about this. We really have to have good news. When I got home, we fixed pork and pineapple kebabs on the grill. Over the last week I had also been reading the Hobbit again. This has been a real relaxing escape for me. I finished it on Wednesday (after supper I went upstairs and laid down in bed and just read for a little less than an hour. Late that evening, I cleaned out a bunch of voice mail.

I took today, Thursday, off. I did check voice mail early in the day and did some insurance calls (trying to get some stuff cleaned up). Between the help and perseverance of a lady at the HP insurance company and a lady at the local hospital, they were able to clean up a bunch of problems. Many people, like Shannon and Lucile, have been very helpful, but the system can be a real pain. Mandy and I went up to the mountains to ski. She had school today, but I pulled her out of it. We had a nice half day of skiing. When we got home, all of us went out to Olive Garden for supper. Mandy and I were really wiped out. At home, we watched a little TV and then Virginia went to bed. I did some work (cleaning out e-mail). During the course of the day, I got 17 different voice mail messages. It has been a long week. I am sorry to see Lee taking off on Friday. It would be really nice to live around family who could help. I would love to see them move here, but I think that it is pretty selfish of me to want this.

Tuesday, April 18th

Friday, we took Lee to the hotel to catch the shuttle to the airport. I worked a bunch at home, trying to get caught up. I also started making some Essiac - an herbal alternative treatment. On Saturday, I finished up the Essiac stuff and made some for myself. I have read a bunch on it and am trying it out myself first. Saturday (the 15th) is the 23rd anniversary of Virginia's and my first date. I got her a bunch of flowers and a small necklace. She has never remembered this anniversary. That evening we went out to a new movie - Don Juan DeMarco. Ben was supposed to read and clean some stuff up. But he didn't. I was very disappointed and disconnected his TV again (although he still gets one UHF channel). I worked a bunch more and am getting close to getting caught up with some work.

On Sunday, I ran into work with Ben. He brought his book and got a lot of reading done. I was proud of him. I got some stuff done and picked up my tickets for a trip on Monday. I fixed ham for a late Easter lunch. Later on the Turley's came over for desert and an Easter egg hunt. This all went pretty well. During the night I had an unpleasant dream. I dreamt that I had gotten up late and was going to miss my flight to California on Monday. Besides being late in the dream, I was slowed down because I had to bring 'my flute'. I ended up taking Mandy's, but I used a trumpet mouth-piece with it and I did end up missing the flight in the dream. It was a very, very strange dream.

Monday, I got up very early (around 5:00AM) and took the corporate jet flight to San Jose. Virginia was on her own and did really well. I had called Cindy and left her a message that I would be gone, but she didn't stay at our place. Joyce took her to Dr. Fangman's office for a blood test. Virginia's blood counts are good and she is ready for the next chemotherapy injection on Thursday. I also had Joyce drop off the Essiac information. I had a very busy day in California and got back late - around 8:45PM). I was up pretty late because Mandy had trouble with algebra, so I helped her with that.

Tuesday, I dropped Mandy off at school on my way in. I had a very busy day - nearly totally booked. I am going to fly to Los Angeles tomorrow to talk with a company that is a possible acquisition for the division. It is very bizarre going from work where I am involved with this 'executive stuff' and then come home to dealing with Virginia's cancer. I suspect that it helps me prioritize - but I am not always too sure about this. I talked to Jane, a nurse at Dr. Fangman's office, about the Essiac tea. She wouldn't say it was good or bad and that it was our responsibility. Jane had also called Virginia about it. Virginia had cooked some dinner tonight - chicken - that turned out pretty good. I tried to get Virginia to drink some of the tea before supper, but she didn't seem to want to. She didn't really say anything, but I think she wants to read more about it before she has any. This is okay, but it does bother me some because I feel that if I push, she will dig her heels in on the Essiac. But I'm stuck a bit because I feel that she won't read about it or take it unless I push. I don't know if it will do any good, but I think it is worth a try.

Saturday, April 22nd

Wednesday, I got up early and got down to DIA for my flight out to Orange County to visit the company and talk with their senior management. Before I left, I made sure the kids were up and moving and that I had given Virginia her morning pills and at least some chocolate milk. I think she does a bit better, on some aspects, when she has to wake up and be involved. The flight went well. It felt very strange driving to the airport in the company car. The meeting went well and things look very promising. The key question on their part is how much we (HP) think they are worth. I was flying back with Joe Kittle. We got to the airport, just fine and in plenty of time. We got on the plane and they had mechanical trouble. We mucked around the airport for an hour and forty-five minutes before they got things sorted out. We ran into a bunch of other HP people - from Greeley. This was also the time I found out, from Virginia, about the Oklahoma City bombing. Joe and I finally got into Denver - pretty late. We had a tough time finding the company car. Primarily, this was because we went to the wrong side of the structure (East instead of West). I finally figured this out and we got back to Fort Collins. It made for a very long day. Virginia was awake and pretty alert when I got home around 11:30.

The next day, Thursday, I did not get into work until noon-ish because we had a chemotherapy session first thing in the morning. Virginia got her last IV of vin christin which is the last drug of this cycle. Her arm did not swell up, but the vein did get a bit hard. In the afternoon, we had the prep meeting for a visit in Fort Collins with the other company that is a possible partner. At the end of the day, I talked with the guy who I had to take off a team. He doesn't accept that he is hard to work with - in a leadership role. I was very up front with him. I don't want him to leave. But unless he can affect his team interaction style (which shuts people down), I won't have him in leadership roles. He just doesn't get it yet. I don't know if he ever will, but he has a lot of value and I have to try - for his sake and for HP's. Thursday night, we had scalloped potatoes and ham. I had fixed this before I went to work. We were able to watch a little TV and relax.

Friday was pretty much consumed with the company visit. It was very different than the previous one, but there is some potential. It is very strange talking with these companies at, what amounts to, an executive level. At the end of the day I talked with William Woo - one of the managers in my business team. He is thinking about leaving the division - in part because of a bad review by his previous boss. I got him back on the fence, trying to get him to stay. Even though we are new to each other, I feel he has some real value to add and would hate to see him go. It would be fascinating to know what people really think of me and how I work. I ask from time to time, but people don't drop their guard and tell you much. I got home at not too bad of a time - a bit after 5:30. Virginia seems to be doing pretty well. She is starting to lose a little bit of hair. We went out to the Golden Corral Buffet. She really likes the food (especially the mashed potatoes and gravy). But the three times we have been there, she has gotten very confused about how to order what. Mandy did not come with us - she continues to separate herself from us and I tried to get

her to come along, but without being pushy. I was just beat - it has been one hell of a week with Virginia and all the work stuff.

Saturday was a very busy day. Virginia woke up with a headache. The ibuprofen seemed to help. I made muffins and did some chores. Ben actually cleaned up his room and did his chores by 10:30AM. There is an air-show this weekend and he wants to go very badly. I went out and did some shopping for groceries and miscellaneous supplies. Ben and I then went out and got to the airport at around 1PM. We decided to just go to the outlet mall and do the air-show on Sunday. I got Ben some sandals and had a good time. We got home around 2:30PM and I fixed some lunch. Mandy wanted to go to the mall, so I took her, a friend and Ben. She got sort of snotty towards me. At times, like today, I feel she treats me more like a servant. This is in part due to how much I do around the house and how I don't expect much out of the kids. I don't know what to do about this. I don't want to add any load to them, if I can help it, but I am hanging on at the end of my rope. It hurts my feelings when she or Ben don't help or get snotty when I ask for help. I fixed barbecued catfish for Virginia, Ben and I for supper. Virginia has mostly rested today. We did go out for a movie (Rob Roy) which was okay, but a little slow-paced. On the way back, Virginia mentioned that recently (I think in the last two weeks), that when she was very confused, she didn't recognize Ben when he got home from school. It passed quickly. It scared her a lot, but she didn't tell me until tonight. This scared me a lot when she told me - although I didn't let much of my concern show through. It might be drug-induced confusion. However, as I remember, the vision and facial recognition part of the brain is in the right rear. What worried me is that it might be tumor growth in the back right portion. She is also walking a little less well, but that might be a result of the chemotherapy. She did just get off of Decadron (an anti-inflammatory steroid) on Thursday.

Sunday, April 30th

Last Sunday, I took Virginia and Ben to the local air-show at the Loveland-Fort Collins airport. It was cold and rainy. We got there a little late, but it was fun. There were some team aerobatics and the Air Force Thunderbirds (flying F-16s). I was surprised, but Virginia enjoyed this a lot. We ran into several people that we know - Jack McClurg, John Bidwell and Larry Chapman. After we got out (around 4:00PM) we stopped off and got Mandy and ate at Red Robin. This was also a lot of fun. I was a bit tired and wasn't paying attention and Virginia had 3 major items - potato skins, steamed vegetables and a chicken sandwich. Although a surprise, this is just fine. It is good to see her sense of taste and appetite come back.

On Monday, we had our regular appointment at Dr. Fangman's office. The blood test shows that Virginia's blood counts are doing okay. At work I found out that William Woo (one of my managers) is thinking about quitting. I had supper out that evening with Patty and Gretchen at Jay's American. It was a very good meal and a useful

discussion. Virginia had a busy day - she had cleaned out one of the kids' closets in the basement. This is a major chore.

On Tuesday, Ben stayed home from school - primarily because he is getting behind in a book. He got caught up. Reading continues to be a real hassle - getting him to read every night (so he can stay caught up). He usually complains about having to read. I got a call from Prentice Hall (the HP publisher). It looks like Suzanne and I are getting a contract to write a book. This is pretty cool. I took Virginia and Ben and I out for haircuts. This is the last time we will get Jeanna since she is quitting (for a new baby and school). When we got home, I barbecued pork-kabobs. Suzanne came over to work on a response to the proposal reviews.

On Wednesday morning, I worked at home. For lunch, I took Virginia back to the Red Robin. On Thursday, I took Mandy out for breakfast. At work, I got my new toy - a color laptop PC (an Omnibook). It was a good day because there was also a Greeley scrap parts auction. I picked up some monitors and a magneto-optical disk drive (for \$90) that worked and a dual drive magneto-optical auto-changer which can handle 20 gigabytes. I am pretty happy, because I got the auto-changer for \$2. And it seems to work just fine. I told myself that I wasn't going to play with stuff, but I did. Mandy was not happy with her report card - she got a C+ and the rest Bs and one A. I am pretty happy with this, but she is beating herself up about it.

Friday was another busy day with division monthly reviews in staff. I also had a meeting on what approach to take on the Java business. After work, Virginia and I went out to the Outback steak house with Roger and Susan and India Ison. This was nice. Mandy and Ben stayed home. Saturday was pretty typical. I did shopping and chores. I took Ben out for lunch at Consuelo's. We also stopped off at Marshack's comic book store. That evening, I did a fair amount of work. Sunday, I spent several hours getting started on three evaluations. In the afternoon, I drove Ben and Virginia to the mall. I then ran Mandy over to her drivers education class. This is no longer part of the school curriculum. Cindy stopped over on Sunday evening and worked on the checkbook. I went out and got Young's carry-out.

Virginia hasn't had any of the seizures. She seems to be doing okay. She is eating okay and her energy level is getting better. She has been cooking some and some cleaning and laundry. It is going to be hard to deal with the transition 'back' as she transitions back into a more normal routine.

May 1995

Sunday, May 7th

Just recently, Mandy had a dream about Virginia and the tumor. In it, she could see Kathy Fromme, the friend who died of breast cancer a few years ago. No one else could see her. In the dream, I think she said that Kathy talked with Mandy and the next day, Virginia woke up and everything was okay - her left side was totally functional. It was a nice dream.

This last Monday was a long day for me, it ran from 7AM to almost 7PM. I had a breakfast meeting with an engineer who I think is applying for a PTM job that I have open. Then I went to an all day off-site for the division operational staff at Jim Davis's house. After that I talked for about an hour with my counterpart - Patty Azzarello. On the way home, I needed to stop off and order Virginia's birthday cake. Tuesday was another busy day - another breakfast meeting (with one of the managers that reports to me). It was a good day with a presentation by a lady who had been involved with another acquisition in HP. I got home around 3:30PM and Virginia and I headed over to Dr. Fangman's for a blood test. The blood test numbers looked fine. We were going to go out and listen to some Danish organist (Sven Ingvart Mikkelsen!) but I couldn't find out where (at CSU) he was playing.

Wednesday was Virginia's birthday. After a busy day, I stopped off to try to find a present. Virginia hasn't been any help at all with this. I looked, but couldn't find anything that really grabbed me. She and I went out to Jay's Bistro for supper. This was very good. We had cake after we got back (and Cindy was there). Thursday was pretty stressful - I was doing interviews for my previous job and we had Virginia's MRI today. She has been feeling good - very few or no headaches. (The ones she does have seem to be related to sleeping with her head in a bad position.) But we don't want to get too hopeful - especially after last time. The MRI itself went okay. While I was checking her in, I overheard a woman asking about the MRI facility - obviously there to pick someone up. Since I had just been there, I told her that her relative would be done in 5 minutes. When I got done with the paper work, I went back and sat in a protected corner. The woman I had talked to came in and was mentioning that 'a doctor had told her' that her relative was almost ready. It was very strange to be perceived that way. I have wished a lot recently, that I was a doctor. We got copies of the MRI films. I looked at them briefly when we first got home. They did not look good to me. I tried to take Mandy to get her driver learner's permit. We got up there without the necessary documentation, so we need to go do it again. Mandy has been acting sort of strange about this driving stuff. I have expected her to be really excited and anxious to do it, but she seems almost uninterested. I don't know what else might be going on. I know that she was not feeling well - I suspect that it is related to stress of the MRI. I did look at the films

later and it was unclear to me what was happening. There was clearly still a sizable tumor mass, it was odd shaped with a sphere-effect (it looked like the interior was fluid and the contrast portion was the outside portion).

Friday was a pretty good day. I finished up my interviews and took the JAVA (the acquisition) team to lunch to celebrate progress. Suzanne Pherigo and I met with the editor for the book we are trying to write. This was pretty bizarre. That evening, I did a bunch of the laundry and did the grocery shopping. Ben went with me to do the shopping. On Saturday, Virginia went to Denver with Mandy and some of her friends and another mom to look for dresses for the junior high prom. (She is going to a prom!) Ben did his chores early and went to a garage sale with Charlie and bought a LaserTag game. This totally consumed him all day long. I got them out for lunch, but that was all. I spent most of the day playing around with getting Linux (a UNIX variant OS) up on the PC. I finally got this to work. That evening, Virginia was really beat. I worked a bit late in the evening.

On Sunday, I got a bunch of chores done around the house. At one point, I went downstairs to check on the kids. Mandy was getting ready (taking a shower I think). Max, Mandy's cat, meowed at me pretty loudly and was looking a bit strange. I walked up to him and asked what the problem was. This isn't as strange as it seems. Max is a pretty smart cat. He lead me to the bathroom. I opened the door for him. He went in and looked into the kitty liter box and meowed again and looked at me. It was pretty bad in the box. I told Mandy she needed to get it cleaned out. I put some food in the bowls and went upstairs. It turns out that Max had to 'go' pretty badly. He ended up doing it in the family room (a pretty huge dump). He had been trying to tell me that he needed the kitty liter changed. He is a pretty smart cat. Mandy seemed to get pretty upset with me when I told her that she needed to clean up the mess before we took off for the mall. We finally got out to the mall around 2PM and had lunch and did some shopping. Virginia seems to be doing pretty well. She did get pretty tired in the evening and a little confused, but not bad. She snapped out of it pretty quickly. I think, and hope, that it was just her shopping yesterday that caught up with her. I made dough for home-made pizzas. Virginia and I watched a little of Jurassic Park on TV. After everybody went to bed, I did some more work.

Sunday, May 14th

I spent most of Monday morning working at home. We were both very nervous about the doctor's appointment. During the morning, Virginia mentioned that she was having some problems with her eyesight, which worries me. This might be just the side effects of all the drugs and surgery, but I still worry - all the time. We went in for the doctor's appointment. The test results were not great, but not bad either - there wasn't any reduction in the tumor, but there wasn't any growth either. Although I wanted better news, this wasn't bad. We were both pretty relieved. I

fixed a casserole for supper on Tuesday (since I was going to be gone). I had set up for travel this week, but it was really dependent on how the MRI results went.

On Tuesday, I got up very early and went to the airport for a trip to the bay area. I needed to get out and touch bases with the team that is in Cupertino (especially since William Woo is quitting). On Wednesday, I had a busy day at work and ended up having a little dinner with the new sales reps. I had hoped to get home a little earlier than I did. On Thursday, I went out to southern California to meet with the key people at the acquisition candidate company. Joe Kittle and I met with the HP corporate folks at the airport. We were late in getting to the company, because my boss's plane was delayed. We were going to and did talk price. This was a very odd meeting. We worked at getting them to come up with a price. After some 'faunching', they came up with a ridiculously high price. We gave them our opening price which was ridiculously low. We did this with all the indications that we want to 'discuss' the offer. We were at 2x revenues and they were at 3x revenues. It seemed like we were getting very close and they just stopped. The suspicion is that they had something else going. It was very odd.

On Friday, I had to get up early again and had another busy day. The morning was spent in doing a second half forecasting and budgeting exercise. At the end of the day, I went to Danny Darr's going away party. There didn't seem to be many people there (but I got there late). I ended up picking up the bill for the celebration. When I got home, we ordered pizza. I also did a bunch of laundry and went out with the kids to the grocery store. Mandy was in a really bad mood. I tried to talk with her, but she shut me down - so I let her sulk. I'm a bit annoyed with the kids - for their lack of help. We were talking with Mandy later and she apparently dreams about Kathy Fromme a lot. She views her as a guardian angel. I got to bed very late (I did a little bit of reading for fun).

Saturday was sort of normal - chores and stuff. Virginia and I were going to go out to dinner and a movie. This got sort of messed up - the kids were both gone (Ben to Turley's and Mandy to Joe's) and didn't get back until much later than we thought. Virginia also fell asleep so we didn't have time for supper and just went out for a late movie ("The Englishman who went up a hill, but came down a mountain."). This was a nice movie. Today is the one year anniversary of Virginia's tumor hemorrhage. It was rather an odd day and Virginia was in a bad mood a couple of times during the day. I think part of it was due to the 'anniversary' and part of it was due to me being a bit brusque.

Sunday was Mother's day. I got up early and fixed a good sized breakfast for everybody. We really didn't do much of anything. Around 4PM, Virginia and I went out to Red Robin for supper. Later on, I took Mandy to Target for some things she needed. Both of the kids really got on my nerves today. Virginia wanted to go to the zoo and the kids didn't and were a bit rude about it. We ended up not going. They got into a tiff later on in the afternoon. I got very mad at them for not being as nice as possible on mother's day. I have responded pretty badly and have been very

brusque with them all evening. Cindy stopped over tonight and watched TV with us for a little bit. I also talked to Robert Heckendorn and found out his mother is doing well - recovering from a stroke.

Sunday, May 28th

It has been a very long two weeks here. On Tuesday, the 16th, Virginia and I went to Fangman's office to check blood counts. They are looking good and she can start the next cycle of chemotherapy on Wednesday. Work has been crazy trying to get caught up on a bunch of interviews and evaluations and the rest of the stuff. Virginia went out for lunch on Wednesday with Cindy Hoxmeier and Joyce. That evening I stopped and got the pills and we started the third round of chemotherapy.

On Thursday, I took Mandy out for breakfast to the Marriott (she likes the waffles there). In general, Mandy does not like breakfast type foods and meals. Virginia has been fixing meals this week and doing a reasonable job. She sometimes gets portion sizes wrong - they tend to be too small. I suspect some of this is medication, some side effects of the surgery and some of it the fact that she doesn't eat that much. She seems to be doing okay, and is not too fuzzy. She has been a little tired with the chemotherapy, but no nausea. She only took a few of the nausea pills. I finally got her flowers on Thursday as a belated mothers day present. On Friday, Mandy went out to her Junior High prom. She had gotten a pretty black and white dress. She and her boyfriend (Joe) went out with 2 other couples to a restaurant and then on to the dance. She and Joe looked very cute. It made me feel very old. I terrorized her a bit with taking pictures. After the prom, the group of them came over and watched a movie. After the movie, the boys went home and the girls spent the night. She is growing up way too fast.

On Saturday, the 20th, I went to the CSU auction and got a small laser printer. It was a pretty good deal. On Saturday and Sunday, I cleaned out the garage. It was a real mess and I made a pretty good dent, although I was very tired when I got done. On Sunday, there were a bunch of cars at Ateyde's house. It turned out it was Vic and Irma's 35th wedding anniversary. This made me wonder about how many more Virginia and I have.

On Monday, I found out that the company we were trying to buy, but weren't interested, got bought by the new company that we were going to start talking with. Very strange. On Tuesday, the interview team I was running got together and we decided on the new manager in my business team. On Wednesday, Virginia and I went into Fangman's office and got the vin christin IV. The nurses and technicians at Fangman's were very talkative that afternoon. That evening we started the procarbazine pills. I went out with the guys to see a bad movie (Tank Girl) which was bad, but was also fun. Later that evening things went badly. Virginia threw up (or tried to - mostly dry heaves) three times or more. It was a very long night. I was supposed to fly to California on Thursday, but I canceled out of my trip and stayed

home. I got a hold of Jane at Fangman's office and gave Virginia some nausea medication. This seemed to help. It was very scary. I was wondering if this was going to be 'it'. I didn't get a lot done on Thursday. Virginia was doing okay, but as I think about how she is doing, she seems to be slowing down mentally and physically. I don't know if I am just spooked and worried because of this event or if things are going badly. I ask her how she is doing a lot, but I don't come right out and have the discussion with her about it for fear of causing her stress and worry.

Virginia was doing fine on Friday, the 26th. I went into work, starting the day with an off-site at Jim Davis's house. (Actually, I started the day going into work very early to get ready for the off-site.) The rest of the day was jammed with stuff (including a meeting with some other functional managers from another division). Even in the middle of that meeting, I ran off and did an annual evaluation during a break. I am way too busy and I need to take some time off and really relax. My concern is that I don't know if a vacation will give me any time to relax.

On Saturday, I got us all off to get haircuts. It was liking herding chickens getting everybody out of the door. After I dropped Mandy off at a party, we went out for lunch at the mall. That afternoon, Suzanne and I got together to work our the book. That evening, Virginia and I went to see "Forget Paris" and then out to Perkins for supper. It was a nice evening. Virginia is still pretty tired and moving slow, but I need to remember not to let this get me down. It won't help if I do. I got a lot of work done, late Saturday night. On Sunday, we mostly pattered around. We, all went out to eat lunch and did some grocery shopping. In the evening, Virginia went out to see "Bridges of Madison County" with Joyce, Donna Uhrich and Rick's mother. She had a good time and enjoyed getting out, but did not like the movie. I took Ben out to see "Casper". When we all got back, Ben came upstairs and read and drew while I did some work, very late. This was actually rather nice. It was quiet time with Ben where we weren't upset with each other.

I have noticed that I am getting more pessimistic about Virginia's recovery. I have always know that it wasn't good odds. But, know I just feel beat down. It is like I'm walking through all of this in a fog. I don't think that I am proactive enough. I don't think I am really do much good for Virginia, for the kids, for myself or at work. I know that I am doing okay for everyone and that I am just over-reacting, but it has been such a long, hard year. Also, I want to do better than just okay.

Wednesday, May 31st

Monday was memorial day and we were supposed to go up to Turley's for a barbecue, since Rick's folks were out for a visit. Because of the bad weather (it's like Oregon), they canceled this. This was just fine with us. So we just stuck around the house. We went up to the mall for a little bit and had lunch. I spent most of the day going through the checkbook and putting it in Quicken. Cindy had offered to take care of the checkbook, but she was still working on January's register. I wanted to

get this caught up, so I just did it. The software really did help a bunch and I have gotten all caught up. It is scary to see how much money we spend (and waste).

Tuesday was a normal day - back to work. I went to the division staff meeting. Afterwards, Jim Davis called Gretchen and I aside. He talked to us about our being late to staff meetings. This was not a lot fun. I have been late - obviously, I will have to be very careful about this. It was interesting that at a meeting later in the day, Jim was very late to a meeting. There was also a meeting with one of the potential acquisition companies. This went okay, but we are not very interested in them right now. They want too much for themselves and they have some serious management problems. I had to leave in the middle of the discussion to meet with Virginia at Dr. Fangman's office. Joyce had dropped her off, and stayed with her until I showed up. I really appreciate the help. The office visit went fine - Dr. Fangman thinks Virginia is doing pretty well. I went back to work afterwards and did an evaluation. I got home very late and Virginia had made supper. That evening I got packed for my trip to Japan. On Wednesday, I got up early and drove to Denver. In Los Angeles, I got upgraded to business class travel. This made the trip a lot more pleasant.

June 1995

Sunday, June 4th

I arrived in Japan on Thursday at around 4:00PM. I had worked and read most of the flight. I took a bus from Narita airport into the hotel in Tokyo. I did pretty well - tired, but not too bad. I went out for walk. I got to bed around 9:30PM. I did wake up around 3:00AM.

I got up at a pretty good time Friday morning - around 7:00AM. I did some work and got ready for the presentations. I met one of the local HP people in the lobby along with Bob Bethke (an engineer over for a presentation) at 10:00AM. He took us over to the first presentation site and Bob and I met with the interpreters. I then had lunch with 3 of the local HP managers and talked some business issues. The presentation room was very nice. I did my presentation - which went okay. I went too fast. I also had a fair number of questions. I was taken to my other presentation (at another location). I met with that pair of interpreters. There was a very large crowd - approximately 200 people - jammed in a room at an HP conference (HP World 95). The room was very hot, and I was sweating profusely. Again, I went a bit too fast and ended up with a lot of questions. I went back to the previous location, the management seminar, and went to the reception. I talked to several customers. After this, Bob and I went back, via taxi, to the hotel. We went out to dinner with Bob's wife. This was nice.

On Saturday, I got up fairly early again. I got dressed, packed up and checked out. I left my bags and took the subway to a place called the Akhibara district. This is the place in Tokyo with a huge area devoted to electronics and computers. I got there around 9:00AM, which was too early. The stores opened up around 10-10:30. I walked around a lot and watched the place slowly come to life. This was interesting. The prices were not all that great (I didn't think). In general, I could find much better prices via mail order in the U.S. I headed back, but caught wrong subway train back, but I got straightened out and did okay. I took the bus back to the airport (about a 2 hour drive). At the airport I bought some souvenirs for Virginia, Cindy and the kids. I got on the plane but ended up in economy class behind a smoking section. I mostly slept on the way back. In San Francisco, I ran into and talked to an HP vice-president - Wim Roelandts while I was going through customs. I upgraded to first class for the flight to Denver. I got in to Denver, and it started raining. I drove home without incident. It was good to be home.

I got home. Cindy seemed to have been very helpful. But she apparently had bugged the kids. Virginia said that they deserved it. Virginia seemed to be doing pretty well. I was doing okay after the long trip. Virginia fixed chicken and noodles.

Her family came in around 9:00PM. Art and Lee, Chris and Julie, and Vickie and Angela had all come - in two cars. We stayed up a bit and talked.

On Sunday, we got a late start. We went out shopping to Jax for a while in the early afternoon. Art, Cindy and the kids went to the mall after this. We went out to Rio (without the kids) for an early dinner. Chris and Julie told us that they are pregnant. This is really good news. Julie had some trouble about a year ago, so we are all hopeful that this pregnancy goes well.

Saturday, June 11th

Monday, it was a real challenge getting Virginia to get up this morning. She is sleeping more and moving slower. I went into work and had a semi-normal day at work. I had no real side effects that I was aware of from the whirlwind Japan trip. I have some trepidation about the trip - mostly because it was around a previous whirlwind Japan trip that my mom died a few years ago. At the end of the day, I went out to look at cabinets with Virginia, Art and Lee. Virginia seems very frail and confused. I know that a big part of this is the procarbazine, but I am still worried. Later in the evening, I had some gossip-style information and told Virginia just a little and had her figure out the rest. It was a guessing game to get Virginia mentally engaged. It was a challenge because all the relatives wanted to give her clues and help. I wanted her to figure it out on her own.

Tuesday was the kids last day of school for the year. Mandy got emotional at school saying goodbye to everyone. She won't see some of them again (because they are moving away). Ben had a good last day - or at least that is what he said. He brought home his report card and got pretty good grades. Unfortunately, he and I got into a discussion that didn't go well. I got the impression he was fishing for something, a complement or a present or something. Or he was unhappy with his grades. I told him I thought he did very well and that I was proud of how he did this year. I also asked him if there were grades he wanted to improve. It went downhill fast. Later on I went out for the 'boys night out' with Chris to Johnny Mnemonic, eating at Consuelo's. Everybody else went to the Olive Garden for supper. Virginia took her last procarbazine. She also threw up during the night. It was a very long night.

Chris and Julie left on Wednesday morning to head back to Iowa. I was sorry to see them go. Julie had been feeling sort of sick - morning sickness. I hope that Virginia feels well enough to go back at Christmas-time (or around then) to see Julie and the new baby. At supper, I was talking with Cindy about the exercise rider that she had bought over the weekend. She had asked Virginia about using our checkbook. She apparently asked right when Virginia woke up from a nap. I was home and she didn't ask me. So she bought it and some other stuff. She hadn't made any comments about paying us back. She had been helpful while I was gone. So, I asked her if the check amount was for the rider and she said yes. I told her to take \$50 off, since she had been so helpful. Then she pissed me off. She said that part of the

check was for food. This bothered me because we hadn't asked her to buy any food. She got it because she wanted it - and expected us to pay for it. Then she said that she had also bought Mandy some clothes and started rattling off a bunch of stuff she 'had bought for us'. It makes me feel miserly getting upset about the money, but there is something in the way that Cindy responds when you are being nice to her that makes you feel like she expects you to take care of her and help her. And she does this in such a way that you know she expects it and doesn't think she has to be appreciative. It really gets to me.

Thursday was Virginia's folks last day here. They did a bunch more errands and chores. Art got a cabinet in where the trash compactor had been. The cabinets look nice - he did a good job. He seemed much happier this time working on stuff and keeping busy. Art took Mandy to get her driver's license, so she should be a bit more help - being able to drive with Virginia. Virginia did mention that he talked a lot about the hardware store. When he gets into something (i.e. a job), he gets in all the way. Art and Lee and Vickie and Angela took off Friday morning. I was sorry to see them go. The only upside is that we won't see Cindy (after the garage sale on Saturday) for a while. She shows up for the odd special occasion and when there is some of her family out. I took the day off (and next Monday). Virginia and Mandy went out to the mall in the afternoon. When they got back, Virginia took a small fall in the garage. I don't think she broke anything and there wasn't bruising. This really shook us up (especially Mandy who kept blaming herself). Ben and I had been out, but Mandy called on the cellular phone. She had also gone to get Cindy Hoxmeier. She did fine.

Saturday was the neighborhood garage sale. Cindy was over for this and was helpful. I got rid of a bunch of stuff and I am getting the garage pretty clean. At the end of it, Cindy 'settled up'. I didn't look at the numbers closely. I do know that I don't want her to use our checkbook again in great part because of how it makes me feel about myself. I got Virginia out for lunch at Boston Chicken. While we were out Ben went up to Jeff Turley's to spend the night and Joe stopped over. Tom Huibregtse stopped over to drop off a 'tea ring'. Lauren came in with him. Mel and their other daughter stayed in the car because they have colds. I stayed up late and read a bit.

I am really worried about Virginia. She is slowing down and sleeping more. She doesn't walk very well. She has been nauseous and hasn't been eating much at all. I am scared that things are going badly. But it might just be the chemotherapy (which is hard on her even though she seems to tolerate it okay). It might also be her folks leaving or the weather (it has been gloomy for over 3 weeks - very unusual). I am starting to think that this might be the start of the slide. As I have thought about this, it struck me that recently I am writing this journal, in part, for Virginia. When she is through this and is better, I want to be able to pull this out and let her know how scared I was at times, and how I did as much as I could to help. I want her to know how much I love her. I am scared she won't get a chance to see this.

Sunday, June 18th

Last Sunday, Virginia was pretty shaky again in the morning. She almost threw up in the shower. Most weekends are pretty predictable - everybody else sleeps late. I often have a hard time getting Virginia to get up before 11 or 12. So, a week ago I got everybody moving at reasonable time (around noon) and we went out to picnic lunch. I made up sandwiches. It was fun and the weather was finally nice. We went to mall afterwards. Virginia snapped at me while we were there when I asked about Ben and roller-blades. She had gotten very pointed about this and I was asking why. In talking with her afterwards, she indicated that she didn't feel like she had much control over things and she viewed my question as taking away even more control. It really hurt and I got rather sullen. Later on, I got very angry at the kids and got pretty mad at them - it was clearly a reaction to being hurt by Virginia's snapping.

I took Monday off to make for a long weekend. I took Mandy out for her passport. We got her picture and dropped all the stuff off at the post office. I let her drive. She is doing very well. I took Virginia out for her blood test and the counts were coming up. Mandy and Joe went with us. After the test, we drove around the CSU campus. Virginia started talking about taking classes again - this was a very good sign to me. It would be great if she started to do something - to have a focus or a direction. I think it would help her recover.

On Tuesday, I got back in the grind and got up early for work. That evening I went out for dinner with Ben and Virginia to Red Robin. Virginia stayed up longer and seemed to be doing better. She also started talking about starting up some physical therapy. She is still a bit confused and shaky, but does seem much better. On Wednesday, I worked at home and had a team off-site at the house. It went well. We went into the doctor's office late in the day and Virginia got her last IV of vin christin for this cycle of chemotherapy. This went fine. Unfortunately, on Thursday, Virginia got very sick late in the evening. Starting at 1:30AM Friday morning, she threw up every hour until around 8:00AM. All she was bringing up was a small amount of green bile. It was a very long night. She was getting even shakier. At 8:30, we got into Fangman's office and she got an IV for fluids and also something in it for the nausea. We were there until around noon. She actually slept during the IV. Her blood counts were lower, but that might have been because of the way the nurse took the sample (which I noticed and commented on). One of the possible implication of the sudden onset of vomiting is that there is some cranial swelling - which caused the nausea. Another possibility is that Virginia cooked some chicken and she had let it sit in the oven for an extended period before she cooked it - i.e. food poisoning. I hope that it is the chicken. In any case, the doctor said to go back on Decadron (for possible swelling) and then ramp it down over the next couple of days. When we got home, she was obviously doing better. I went into work for the later half of the day.

Saturday, Virginia, Ben and I went out for a late lunch and went to see the 4PM show of "Batman Forever". The movie was okay, but not great. They tried to cram too much into it. I cooked a very late supper and we ate around 8:30PM or so. Joe was over and we all watched "The Shadow". Virginia was tired and not interested in the movie and went to bed. She seems to be doing a bit better, but it is all very worrying.

This Sunday is Father's Day. I am not expecting too much. What I would really like is for the kids to be nice, not argue and be helpful. I slept until about 9AM and got up and read the paper and got dressed and then started working on a personal project on the computer. Everybody else got up around 10-11AM. We went out late for lunch (around 2PM). It was a nice lunch, but strange because there was only one other couple in the restaurant. We went home afterwards because Virginia was feeling tired. She is still very unsure about walking. She will grab onto walls, furniture or your arm. I think a big part of it is just her being nervous. Joyce stopped by for a few minutes and should be by during the next week. While we were there, I got my father's day presents: two books, some suspenders and a rip-apart boss doll. She rested for a while at home while I did some more work. We went to the mall after that for a few minutes, to find another present for me. We didn't find anything. On the way home we stopped at Target and I ran in to pick up some pop and stuff. I ordered pizza later in the evening and before it got there Ben and I went for a quick bike ride - which was nice. Virginia was a little depressed and looked very sad. She wants to get out more - I want her to as well. In the evening, I watched a 'different' MTV cartoon called 'The Maxx'. It is about a social worker and a bum who have an alternate life in another world where they are a jungle queen and her protector. Obviously I like it because it is escapism. Late in the evening, I did some more work. Overall it was an okay day. But, I'm getting tired. A combination of the ongoing grind, bits and pieces of Virginia's medical problems and the new job get to me.

Saturday, June 24th

This was a very busy week at work and at home. We had a blood test on Monday and things seemed to be okay - the counts were coming up reasonably well. At work, I am working through and worried about team finances. The previous manager had a ramp down in headcount and expenses - based on his getting into a new business by this point. Well, we haven't gotten there and the numbers are ramping down. I could deal with this except that the sales are off - we are doing about 80% of target. This is not good. I spent a lot of my time dealing with the 'new business' work trying to figure out what makes sense. I need to remember to think big. On Friday, I spent the whole day doing interviews for my secretary position. This was a strange experience - being the 'executive' that these people want to work for. I am really stacked up and I am feeling very far behind.

Virginia has been doing okay this week. She went driving on Tuesday with Mandy and Ben. The kids demanded that she actually get a hold of me before they would let her go out. They did the right thing. She is still a bit shaky, but seems to be getting a bit better. Her appetite is getting much better.

This Saturday, we all had hair cut appointments. This turned into a real fiasco. Mandy was at a friend's house for the night. I tried to wake everybody up here and called the friend to get Mandy moving. I had told everybody, but I didn't remind them Friday night. Ben was next to impossible to get moving and Mandy 'just couldn't be ready in time'. She wanted me to come over and bring her home so she could get ready (make-up, shower, contacts, etc.). I didn't take this all real well and shouted at both of the kids. A big part was my fault for not letting them know. So, I've decided that the best thing to do is to let them take care of haircuts on their own - they can schedule them at their own convenience. This should work with Mandy being able to drive with Virginia. Saturday afternoon, the family went out with Turley's to the Alpine-Autobahn (a go-kart track). I didn't go because I had a headache, didn't feel well and really didn't want to be around the family - I needed some personal time. This helped. We picked up Joe and then all went up to Turley's for supper. This was nice.

I am still very worried about the MRI that is coming up. I think she might be slipping and part of me is expecting the worst. I am trying to deal with this in the best way I can and I know that getting depressed isn't going to help. I know I can't really do anything and I just have to wait. I am trying not to let it wear me down, but it is getting really hard. I need more personal time to be able to deal with this stuff, and I'm not getting it.

Friday, June 30th

This has been another really bad milestone week. The week started out okay. On Sunday, Virginia wanted to go to the zoo but the kids didn't really want to. It wasn't worth the hassle to her so we went to outlet mall and shopped for a wedding present for Kelly Warden (for the coming Saturday). Virginia and I talked about the MRI coming up on Monday. She said that she was scared because we are running out of options. An appropriately prophetic statement.

Monday was a pretty normal sort of day at work. I went to the interview meeting where Patty Azzarello and I were deciding on our administrative assistants. This was a tough meeting. Patty decided. I listened to the information and wanted to think about it. I was stuck between my current secretary - Phoebe - who is a temporary employee and Janie who runs the site help desk - also a non-HP person. I then ran off to get Virginia and take her for the MRI. I read the films at home - some views were tough to read, but it looks the same to me as the early May MRI films. This was not great, but it was okay. It turns out I was over optimistic.

On Tuesday, there was a monthly review staff meeting. I also decided about my secretary and went with Janie based on her being very equivalent to Phoebe in terms of general skills and intelligence but being more interested in the job. Phoebe did not take it super well and she made a comment that she was glad her husband doesn't own a gun. This was mostly okay, but it did bother me a little. I know it is hard to get this news, but I am trying to work to get her into better jobs - more technical and better pay. What did bother me is that she made this same comment to at least another 3 people. This does not show particularly good judgement to me and corroborates some concerns that some other people had about her (and her attitude and maturity).

On Wednesday, I stayed at home until the morning doctor's appointment. The MRI results were not good. The report stated that there was slight growth. This hit both of us like a shot. Fangman recommended that we go to Denver to check into research protocols. This was the next step since we have run out of conventional therapies to try (surgery, radiation and 2 types of chemotherapy). Virginia and I went out to the Egg and I for lunch. We were both pretty quiet. When we got home, I made a few arrangements for the upcoming doctor's appointments in Denver. I had only been home a little while when Cindy called. Mandy picked up the phone and then I picked up my line. Cindy asked how it went. Mandy was still on the line. If I hadn't been stressed, I might have been able to handle it better, but I said after a slight pause that there was slight growth. I wanted to tell Mandy differently. Mandy hung up after this. I got rather upset with Cindy and told her that this was not the way I wanted Mandy to find out. I went into work for a while in the afternoon - while Virginia was sleeping. I tried to call Art first, but got a hold of Lee first. He wanted to be able to tell Lee bad news like this. Lee took it pretty well. I also told Joyce and Vickie.

I was supposed to go to California on Thursday, but I canceled out of the trip. Tim Tillson was kind enough to take my place. During the day, I arranged to have Virginia's records sent off the MD Anderson in Texas for a review to see if they had any good protocols. At the end of the day, I was pretty stressed and tired. Ben was being sort of contrary. I sent him downstairs because he was tired. When I went down to talk with him and check on him, I found half-eaten oreo cookies in his waste-basket and on his floor. I was incensed. We had been over this and I had banned him from all food in the basement. I found the cookies stuff and candy wrappers. He got into big trouble. On Friday, I told him about the consequences of this - I removed his TV (for 2 weeks), banned all TV for him for 2 days and grounded him through July 4th (no friends). He was not happy, but I've got to show him that I was serious and that there are consequences for his actions and behavior. I went into work and had another busy day. I am trying to set up for my JAVA team to take another run at building a business. I am also trying to do this without knowing if I will be around to make it happen. Virginia and the kids got out to Steele's and Target later in the afternoon. We finally got a final review of some insurance stuff

and we are liable for a therapy bill. This is very annoying coupled with the fact that I have no further recourse. I just have to cough up \$800-900 and be done with it.

My sense of Virginia is that she is slowing down and not doing very well. I don't know if this is because of the MRI report, but I suspect not. I am working to keep a good attitude, but I am not particularly hopeful right now. Virginia seems to have dropped a notch in terms of her attitude and I think that is a big part of my attitude. I think that for us to have a chance, she really has to kick in and fight this. But I know that she is very tired and the chemotherapy has been very hard. I need to straighten up and help pump her up this weekend. We can still fight this and beat it - there are options. I am also struggling with my own exhaustion - I am very tired. I am hoping that taking next week off will help some, but the new stuff we will have to deal with isn't going to help much. I will give it my best shot. People at work are being supportive. This does help.

July 1995

Monday, July 3rd

On Saturday, I got up early and did a bike ride and baked some muffins. Suzanne came over to work on the book. Later, we all went down to Kelly Warden's wedding (now Wagner) in south Denver. Kelly's folks, Tom and Kathy, are friend's from the neighborhood. Kelly has done a lot of baby-sitting for the kids over the years. It is very bizarre to see her grown up and at her wedding. I got everybody moving pretty well and we got down there in plenty of time. The wedding was small, but very nice. We went over to the reception after the ceremony. Virginia got fairly tired during the proceedings, but did okay. The wedding was nice, but strange. Listening to them say their vows made me think about Virginia's and my vows. Virginia leaned over and whispered a comment that I had really lived up to the vows. I was also thinking about how many more wedding anniversaries Virginia and I would have together.

On Sunday, I got up early again and did my bike ride. I got back and read a book that Suzanne had loaned me - "The Five Rings". It did not do much for me. I had gotten a lot more out of a previous book - "The Art of War" by Sun Tzu. (Both books are related to strategy.) I moved some computers around and did some general chores. Later in the day, we went down to Ison's for dinner. Right before we were leaving, Cindy showed up. I didn't stick around, since I was still getting some stuff ready. According to Virginia, Cindy had gotten Virginia a bunch of stuff. She wasn't overly thrilled. We had a nice time at Ison's. Unfortunately, Ben was being terrorized by India - she apparently is very physical when adults are not around.

On Monday, I did a bunch more puttering around and some more chores. Ben and I went out and did some shopping. When we got back, Virginia and Mandy were going to go out to Red Robin to eat. I asked if we could all go and Mandy flipped me some attitude. I wasn't in the mood to put up with her being snippy so I told them to go ahead. I fixed lunch for Ben and myself and after that we headed over to the Fort Collins downtown airport to see a B-17 and a B-24. This was pretty neat. I would love to fly in one of them. It costs \$300 for about an hour flight. I probably won't, but I would like to go. Virginia is doing okay today. She is about the same as the last couple of days - pretty shaky and unsteady. Her confusion hasn't been too bad. I don't know what to expect on Wednesday. I got a message while Ben and I were out from my boss that one of our salesmen, Tom Noll, had died of a heart attack while skiing over the weekend. I had an odd reaction to the news. I was sad - for his family. But, I was also fairly flat - emotionally. I'm getting pretty beat down with respect to emotions. I am trying to work through all this and be upbeat and positive.

Thursday, July 6th

On Tuesday, July 4th, we invited the Ison's. They got up around lunch time and we went out to see "Apollo 13". This was a good movie and we all liked it. Virginia was moving very slow and was rather unsteady. When we got back home, we had a barbecue (with the Ison's). This was fun. Ison's took off about the time that Cindy stopped. About the same time, a bunch of Mandy's friends stopped by to watch a movie. Mandy took off to spend the night at a friends house. We watched fire-works from the back deck and set off a few ourselves. Virginia was getting tired, so she went upstairs to go to bed.

On Wednesday, we set up to go to Denver to the medical center there. I did a bunch of work in the morning trying to get things set up for the Java project. We left the kids to take care of themselves. Ben can finally see friends again today. I took Virginia out to the Egg and I for lunch and then we picked up the records from Dr. Fangman's office and then we headed down to Denver. Down in Denver, we got there a little early and got in to see Dr. Cohn around 3:00PM. This was the same oncologist we saw in February. I do like him, as does Virginia. Dr. Lillihei, the neurosurgeon, was very late and we didn't see him until after 4:30PM. They looked at the films and it was not conclusive about the growth. They were showing us the films and we talked about the various treatment options. Virginia is not a good candidate for the immuno-therapy that Dr. Lillihei is doing. The problem is the size, location and diffused nature of the tumor. The location is such that there is too high of a risk of the surgery causing paralysis. There was also some concern about the tumor crossing over into the left side. This was the first time I had heard this comment. They showed us an artifact on the MRIs that went over into the left side. This was in the films without contrast (the tumor shows up most clearly on MRIs with contrast). They said that was a good idea and looked - it looked the same on the last one. I suspect it might just be an artifact of the structure of Virginia's brain. So the choice of therapies - from their suggestions - were Taxol and carbo-platinum (probably together) if the tumor has been growing - even slightly. If the tumor hasn't been growing, we stay with the PCV for another cycle. We could do these here in Fort Collins. And even though they are not 'normal' chemotherapy for brain cancer, it should be straight forward getting this through the insurance since they are approved chemotherapy for other cancers. They will take the information and review it at their Tuesday meeting and call us. This wasn't great, but it was hopeful. Both Virginia and I are 'guardedly optimistic' about this. We took the kids out to Red Robin when we got home. I was in a bad mood with them. I don't know how much was the stress of the day and how much they contributed.

On Thursday, we pretty much puttered around the house. I got up early and was on the phone for a good three hours trying to clean stuff up from the division staff meeting. Apparently, the staff was in a very bad, depressed mood. I did get Ben and Virginia out for lunch at the park. This was nice - it was warm and sunny. We stopped a few places on the way home including Dairy Queen. Mostly, I was waiting for a call from MD Anderson - but it didn't come. Mandy went out with friends to old-town, without parents. I wasn't very sure of this, but I had her take the cellular

phone. It is hard to let go of her emotionally as she gets more grown up. Ben had been cleaning up his room at my request. He had started on it yesterday and didn't get it done. He has been asking about playing and I have let him. In spite of this, he got in there on Thursday night - late - and got it done (pretty much). His room looks a lot better. I was very happy with this.

During Thursday evening, Virginia had what she thought was a seizure. She got dizzy and nauseous and then got very warm. This was around 9:30PM. In the middle of the night (around 4:30AM) she got sick again and threw up, but just once. It was just a small amount of bile. I don't know what to think. This is so hard trying to stay positive and upbeat when there are these signs that things are not going well. But again, I have to.

Sunday, July 9th

This was the end of my 'week off' from work. On Friday, we were going to go into see Dr. Fangman. But they called and they didn't feel it was worth it until we had the information from Denver. At first, we were still going to go in because of how Virginia had felt during the evening. She was feeling better and so we canceled out. We were still hoping to hear from the cancer center at MD Anderson in Texas, but they didn't call. I did some phone calls for work in the morning. I've ended up doing between 2-3 hours worth of calls Wednesday, Thursday and Friday. So much for my week off. We got out for a picnic lunch. I did a bunch of chores afterwards. We were going to go out to a movie, but didn't. Vickie called and talked to Virginia for quite a while. I got the impression that Virginia primarily just listened.

On Saturday, we went out to the mall for a late lunch. After this we all met the Turley's at a theatre to see the movie "Casper". This was the second time Ben and I had seen it. It was okay again. Mandy liked it. Virginia thought it was okay. She was pretty groggy and nearly fell asleep. I think this was in large part due to the theatre being rather warm. We got home and Cindy stopped by. This was okay, but she still gets on my nerves. I cooked supper. After supper, I told the kids about some new chores. I want Ben to do his laundry on Wednesday. I want Mandy to do hers on Thursday. I want them both to do chores on Friday (so we can have some fun on Saturdays). I also want Ben to set the dinner table and Mandy to clear it up. They took this really well. I was surprised.

On Sunday, I got up and did a morning bike ride. I have been doing 1-2 bike rides a day and it feels pretty good. My wind is getting a lot better. I do wish I would start losing some weight around my middle. I have, however, been having some pain in my left elbow for the last week or so. It hurts a fair amount today. I don't know what I have been doing differently. I have been taking aspirin or ibuprofen, which helps a little. When I got back from my ride, I did some weeding. It was hot but it felt good. The back yard is like a jungle in a couple of spots. I would like to take out the swing set and put in a hot tub or a small deck area or something. I've also been wanting to put in a couple of dormers in the upstairs so that my office and the large

'exercise' room would have a view of the city. We had gotten ready to go swimming, but it clouded up and started raining lightly. So, we packed up and had another picnic lunch at a park. After that we stopped off at Target. After supper, Virginia and I talked for a little bit about the therapies and how we are running out of options. She said she knew this. We also talked about the tumor - growing or not growing. I asked what she thought, and she said that she thought it had grown a little. I told her that I thought the same thing. She has looked sort of sad and pensive for the last few days. (But she is entitled.) I have noticed her looking at me, sweetly, a lot recently. I ask her what she is thinking about, but in general she doesn't really tell me. I suspect she is thinking about what might happen. In spite of this, she actually was doing pretty good today. I suspect we only have a few more traditional, if research, protocols to try before we run out of traditional options. After that, it will be alternative therapies.

It has been a long week. But, I am not looking forward to going back to work.

Tuesday, July 11th

Monday was a relatively normal day. However, before I went in, I called MD Anderson. They didn't have our area code (since they weren't able to write it down when I told it to them last week and apparently were incapable of looking it up or calling information). The bottom line was that they couldn't tell us anything over the phone. We would have to go down and see them. I was not overly impressed with them so far. The plan was to see what we found out from Denver. I got into work and had a pretty busy day getting ready for staff on Tuesday. Virginia had been out with Joyce and was very tired when I got home (asleep on the couch). I cooked supper. She didn't eat very much.

Tuesday, I got into work very early to get ready for staff. Staff didn't go very well and the division manager seems to have changed his mind a bit about the major project I am working on (in terms of what it is all about). I think he is shifting his focus to match what is going on in the computer side of HP's business. During a team debriefing, I got a call from Mandy that Virginia had thrown up. I quickly finished up the meeting and went home. Virginia was doing okay when I got home, but had thrown up twice. I stayed home for the rest of the afternoon and tried working a little, but it was pretty tough. Virginia was resting most of the time, but got a headache and also got somewhat nauseous. I got her some medicine for these symptoms. We were expecting the call from the Denver doctors at 5:00PM. We waited for about an hour and I called several of the numbers and left messages. They finally called around 6:45PM. It was not good news. Virginia's tumor has shown steady progression since January. They recommended the Taxol and carboplatinum chemotherapy. I feel pretty hopeless tonight - more so than I have in quite a while. It strikes me that it is just a matter of time. But, I have to work through this, because there really is some hope left. I don't want to waste any time going to M.D. Anderson, so I'll call Dr. Fangman on Wednesday so that we can get started as soon

as possible. Mandy overheard part of the conversation and looked pretty bummed and stressed. My guess is that she has a pretty clear idea what is going on. I tried to talk with her a few times, but she didn't want to. Ben seems pretty oblivious to this, but I don't know. He is a pretty sensitive kid. Virginia and I were supposed to go to a release dinner tonight, and we started over. But she started to feel nauseous, so we just drove around. I ended up driving up to the Horsetooth reservoir dam and then over to Swensen's for a malt. It was nice just sitting in the car watching traffic. We didn't say a whole lot. She made some comment about how much trouble she has been. I told her I wouldn't trade any of this although I would love to change our lives so she didn't get the tumor. I do think that she is getting tired and getting close to giving up. I wish I knew what else I could do. I suspect that I will shortly take some time off from work. If things get very bad, I'll take a leave of absence. When we got back, I called Lee and Vickie and Joyce. I hate calling with bad news. I hope that things look a little better tomorrow.

Saturday, July 15th

On Wednesday, I worked at home in the morning for a while. Susan Ison stopped over for a bit. She has been stopping by and calling a fair amount. This is nice. I went into work around 10:00AM. I got some work done, but not a huge amount. I had called Dr. Cohn and left him a message. We finally connected in the afternoon. He said that the Taxol and carbo-platinum had a 20-25% chance of working. If it did, this could give Virginia another 8-10 months. If she didn't get it or if it doesn't work, she would have a decline in 1-2 months. And then there would be another 2 months or so after that before she would die. He, of course, couched all of this in broad expectations.

On Thursday, I stayed at home in the morning and took Virginia in to Fangman's at 11:00AM. I was hoping that we would get started, but I knew that there would be some silliness with insurance. I had called both the insurance people and Fangman's office to try to speed this up. That did not seem to help. After the appointment, Virginia and I went to the Egg and I. After I took her home, Susan stopped by. I went into to work. I was trying to get a requisition approved, but Davis said no. I also told Davis that I needed time off to try to do something. He said that this was fine. He also told me that he wanted me to get someone else to evaluate how I was doing emotionally. I don't really want to, but it is probably a valid point. The people at work are being very supportive. I stopped off on the way home to pick up Young's. I talked with Virginia about telling the kids what was going on. She wasn't sure, but we talked it through and agreed that they should be informed about what was going on - in the sense that we had run out of conventional therapies and where going to be investigating other avenues. Both of the kids took it very well.

On Friday, I went into work and had a relatively busy day. There was a Java program debrief of Joe and Ian's meeting with a potential licenser of Smalltalk

technology. This went okay. I talked to Carol afterwards about next steps. The logical thing is to shut down Java and transition it into the larger division planning. This is necessary because to move ahead requires broader organizational support, and the bigger picture will take a while and it is the right way to proceed. I found out that Dr. Fangman's office was very busy and had not gotten any documentation off to HP insurance about the Taxol treatment. But, the nurse did give me the information about the treatment cost. It would be somewhere in the \$5500 per treatment (which could be once a month). I will end up scheduling for Tuesday so we can get started. The side effects will be full hair loss, some small nausea and low blood counts. I got home a little after 3:00PM. Virginia had made an attempt to bake a sheet cake for the division picnic. It didn't turn out very well. I think Virginia had mis-measured and had not mixed it very well. This worried me and got me into a foul mood. But, she wanted to go up for the picnic at Hermit Park, but we were already running very late. So, we headed up and got there about an hour or so late. There were still some folks and Virginia had a good time. I actually relaxed a bit and had a reasonable time. We got home around 8:15PM. I did a whole pile of chores. Vickie called and talked with Virginia. Before they talked, she and I talked and I was still in a foul mood. I was rather rude to her - at least I think I was. Virginia has been fairly nauseous today.

On Saturday, I got up and biked a bit. I called Vickie and apologized. She said that it was fine. She is planning on coming out in a week or two. Suzanne came over to work on our book. We made some good progress. Virginia slept very late. She has been sleeping more and more. I finally got her moving to get out for a bit. Before we got out, I put up a motion-detector light over Mandy's bedroom to try and catch somebody who has been knocking on her window a few times over the last few weeks. We got out (Virginia, Ben and I) and had lunch at Red Robin and then headed down to the outlet mall. Virginia got tired after a bit of shopping and so we went home. Cindy was at the house. While she was there, I ran out with Ben to do some errands. When I got back, I finished setting up the lights and put together a video camera and VCR to try and tape the guy (if he comes around tonight). If it is a neighborhood kid, I'll work through his parents. If it is an adult, I'll contact the police. I fixed a late supper, but Virginia did not eat much. She has been eating less (at least it seems to me). Virginia, Cindy and I went out to see the movie 9 Months. It was a cute movie and Virginia stayed awake through it. She did get dizzy during movie - while sitting there. When we got home she had a strong feeling of pressure and then some nausea. This is very scary. I got her into bed.

I am losing hope again. I need to fight this and work through it. But, I don't know how much time is left, and I get the sense that it isn't much. She is eating less. She is sleeping more. She usually uses the wheelchair anytime we go out. She is getting nausea and dizziness and pressure. She has also had an occasional headache. She will just sit and stare at times. I ask her what she is thinking and she says "nothing". I don't always believe her. I want to ask her if she is giving up or wants to give up, but I'm afraid to ask. I am afraid that asking a question like that will remove any

hope we have. But, at the same time, I am afraid that by not asking it, we are putting on a strong front for each other. I feel very helpless.

Sunday, July 16th

Sunday turned out to be a very bad day. I woke up around 4:30AM, or there about. Virginia was having a grand mal seizure and was convulsing. I assume that is what woke me up. I don't know how long she had been doing it. I got over to her and tried to get her to respond by holding her and calling to her. It seemed to last forever, but I think it was maybe 5-10 minutes. She finally stopped convulsing and was lying in my arms. But her eyes were open, but there was no response. I thought that this might be the end. After about 5 minutes or so, I called 911 for an ambulance since she wasn't coming out of the seizure. When they got here, Virginia finally regained a bit of consciousness. They gave her some oxygen and looked her over. She was getting a little better, but was still really out of it when they left. I helped her up to go to the bathroom. While she was doing this, I quickly changed the sheets and put down some towels since the bed was wet. She was really beat so she slept. Before I went to bed, I checked on Mandy and she had apparently slept right through the thing.

I had a hard time going back to sleep, needless to say, but I tried. I stayed in bed for a quite a while and did get a little sleep. It almost felt like a dream, when I got up, but I knew that was just wishful thinking. Virginia got up a couple of times, to throw up. She had a headache and was not feeling real well. She ended up staying in bed all day. I kept checking on her and making sure that she was doing okay. I gave her an anti-nausea pill, which helped her stop throwing up. I called a couple of doctors (a neurologist and an oncologist) and increased her dosage of Depakote and Decadron.

Mandy found out about the seizure from one of the neighbors and was very upset. I made a mistake by not telling her. I had gone down and talked with her and was sort of testing of the water - I non-verbally indicated that something was going on. But she either didn't pick this up, or didn't want to ask. I made a mistake. I told Ben as soon as he came home from spending the night at Charlie's house. I ended up cooking supper around 6:00PM and still couldn't get Virginia to get out of bed. So, I got Ben to bring a card table upstairs and I served dinner in our bedroom. I got a little nasty about this, because I think it is important for Virginia to get up and to get some decent food. I even tried getting Vickie to talk to her on the phone to help get her moving and a little more involved. She had only gotten up for dinner. Joyce stopped over towards the end of supper, but Virginia went to bed after supper. This really worries me, but it still doesn't mean the end is imminent. I know that I really worried Virginia's mom about this (I had called Vickie and left it up to her judgement about when or if to call Lee). I think I have decided on trying a combination of Taxol, carbo-platinum, Tamoxifen and hydrazine sulfate. I hope that we don't have any trouble with Fangman or that he is helpful in recommending a

treatment (but I am not expecting that). It has been a really 'crappy' day and I don't know what to expect out of the night or tomorrow.

Tuesday, July 18th

On Monday, Virginia seems to be doing better today. I got her some breakfast and she ate it pretty well. She actually got up and went to the Pawnee grass-lands with Susan. I called Dr. Fangman's office to arrange for Taxol and carbo-platinum treatment and possible some Tamoxifen and hydrazine sulfate. They called back to tell me that they require money up front since the insurance probably won't pay. They estimate that the cost will be \$6000. It really annoyed me that they wouldn't come right out and give me an answer as to what they needed me to do. I know the person was probably trying to be nice, but I needed to know what to do so that I could get started (if they had to have the money up front). They finally said that they were 'willing' to let me pay in the next week or two. This reminded me that medicine is mostly about money and that I should really deal with much of the medical profession in this light. I went into work briefly, while Virginia was out with Susan. I had a pretty bad headache - a combination sinus and stress headache, I think. Virginia and Susan got back. They had a good time. I took Virginia in to the hospital to get a 'picc' line - this is a step between a regular IV and a chemotherapy port. Virginia's veins were pretty scared and it took the nurse at the hospital 3 tries to get one of these to work. It is an externally accessible line that feeds through her arm vein up into her chest. Mandy and Joe went with us and were very patient. On the way back, I stopped and got Virginia a malt afterwards. Although she did pretty well today, I can see her slipping - one sign is that her walking is getting less good. She is to the point where she really needs someone around all the time. It is good that I am taking some time off. She has also been spilling food on herself some of the time. She threw up right before she went to bed. I hope that the treatment is in time and will help.

Virginia slept okay. We got up early on Tuesday for the appointment at Fangman's. It was very hard getting her moving. She said that they are always late. As it was, pushing her, we still got there at 8:45AM for our 8:30AM appointment. We got there and they weren't ready for us because they had rescheduled our appointment for 9:15 and forgot to tell us. This annoyed me a great deal, especially in light of the \$6000 payment. Dr. Fangman finally got in to see us around 9:45AM or so. I had done some more reading and was luke-warm on the hydrazine sulfate. I still wanted to do the Tamoxifen and Fangman thought that this was okay to do and had good experience with it. We got started on the drip at around 10:30AM. Virginia was taking the stuff well and I went out a little after noon and got her a chocolate malt. She ended up spilling it on her shirt. I think part of the reason that this bothers me so much is that it is a sign of her being an invalid or not being independent. This is not what I wanted for her or for me. So part of it is related to my emotions for her and part of it is my reaction to being a 'primary care giver'. I get upset at myself when I react badly to stuff like this. We finally got done at 4:30PM. I took Virginia

home and then went out to get some groceries and her new pills (including the tamoxifen). Mandy went with me. She told me that she is worried about money. She doesn't want to waste money - doing things that take money away from Virginia's treatment. I told her not to worry a couple of different ways. It didn't seem to help. I also told her that either this would help and things would be okay with the money or that things would go poorly but not take very long. She understood what I was telling her, but it didn't seem to help a lot either. Joyce stopped by and we talked and reminisced about the 'old days' when we all first met in 1978. Virginia is very tired tonight, but stayed up until around 9:30PM. She woke up in the middle of the night not feeling well. It took her a minute to figure out she was having stomach cramps - she had to go to the bathroom. She felt much better after this. But it was very scary waking up and having Virginia feeling poorly and not knowing what was wrong.

Thursday, July 20th

I started Wednesday, trying to track down money to pay for the treatment. I am going to use some of my stock options. I am going to try to exercise enough to do 3 rounds of treatment. HP stock had been high, but after an Alan Greenspan (a federal treasury official) statement, there was a drop in the stock market. HP stock dropped from 82 to 73. The key is not to panic. I called and found out that Virginia's Depakote level is okay. Joyce stopped by to visit for a little bit. Virginia is very lethargic again today. I know that this is going to be a very hard period, and that she will be not so good for a little while. I also know that after this rough period either the drugs will work, or they won't. I suppose that there is some middle road as well. This is very hard, and I wish I could do more, but I'm already pretty wiped out. I can tell that this is really wearing me down and my general energy level and emotional state is pretty low. Virginia is pretty much at a full-time care point. If things get much worse, I will have to have live in help (relatives or something else). I hate this. Virginia threw up 2 times, once with a lunch, another with a chocolate malt from Swensen's late in the afternoon. Vickie called and they talked for a little bit, right when Virginia was throwing up the malt. She ended up staying in bed all day, and she has eaten very little.

On Thursday, Virginia got up and had cream of wheat - and kept it down. This is good. Cindy Hoxmeier had called while Virginia was sleeping and I told Virginia about the call. She said something about having Cindy taking her out on errands. Virginia had forgotten that I was taking an extended leave and was going to be around for a while. The mental fuzziness really worries and scares me. I ended up exercising the stock options today to pay for treatments. I ended up exercising them around \$77 per share. Not bad. Around 1:00PM, Virginia took a shower. Before she got in, I had to wrap her right arm to protect the picc line. I tried to stay there or stay close to help. She did fine and I helped her out onto the toilet. I went into my office for a minute and she fell just sitting on the toilet. This was very scary. We just sat there for a while. She was very shaky and tired after this. So she finished

getting dressed and then laid back down in bed. She has lost a lot in the last 2 weeks. This is very hard, and I am really looking forward to Vickie and Lee coming out. Virginia threw up once, just a little. She did come down stairs around 4PM and slept on the couch and watched some television in the evening. I ran out and got her a vegetarian burger from Red Robin (carry-out). She ate a little bit of it and I fixed her a hot-fudge sundae for dessert. I got her back upstairs around 9:00PM. I got her up to the bathroom and she almost threw up again. On the way into the bedroom she made a comment about how she shouldn't have stopped on this floor, but should have kept going. I asked her what she meant and she had thought there was another floor above this. This was another of the mental fuzziness stuff. She has done okay today, but this is very hard. I need to keep my spirits up so that I can help her.

Saturday, July 22nd

I woke up a couple of times early Friday morning and saw that Virginia was looking at me. She had a sparkle or sense of being there in her eye, she looked better to me. This helped my attitude a lot. When I got up, I was in a better mood and I found that my bike ride was easier - attitude does a lot to help. I can tell that I am losing a little bit of weight. But I still have a long way to go. Virginia threw up a little Friday morning. She is still staying in bed, but she had breakfast - some cream of wheat. She also had some lunch - half an apple, a little toast and some sheet cake that I made this morning. She almost threw up again in the afternoon, she said it might have been a seizure. I did a little work on the book and called and talked with Suzanne about it. I left a copy of the current draft and a floppy in the mailbox for her to pick up (since I ran out to the grocery store). All together, she threw up (or almost threw up) three times today. I talked with Vickie and was pretty down-sounding. I am very tired and worried. I feel badly that I was down, but I need to be able to talk with somebody.

On Saturday, Virginia stayed in bed most of the day again. She did eat a little cream of wheat, but she is not drinking much and is getting more and more tired. Chris and Julie called. They said Vickie, Angela and Lee were coming out on Tuesday. Julie is doing fine with their pregnancy. Virginia talked to them a little, but was very tired. Turley's stopped by at the end of the phone call. Rick and I went out for a bike ride. After that, Rick came in and Virginia started to throw up again. She had thrown up three times by 4:00PM. She was feeling pretty bad and wanted to find out what a doctor thought. I called and got Dr. Merrill (Dr. Fangman's partner). He suggested that I get her into the hospital for an IV to get some fluid in her. Ben went up with Turley's and Mandy was at the Renaissance Festival in Larksville with Joe and his family. Rick helped me get Virginia down stairs to the car. The Turley's took off and I took Virginia over. She got a lot better at the hospital. She ate some chicken noodle soup and some apple sauce. She looked tremendously better and was more alert. We got out of there about 8:30PM. She was very quiet in the car on the drive home. We got a call from Mandy a few blocks from home. She was really freaked out by us having to go to the hospital. When we got home, Virginia got up

and had a seizure. I couldn't get her to walk into the house, so I had to wheel her in. This freaked Mandy out even more. I put Virginia in the first floor bedroom, because there was no way I could get her upstairs. This seizure thing and the quick down-turn scares me again. Like the line from a movie (Clockwise with John Cleese) - "I can handle the despair, it's the hope...". These quick turn-arounds in her state and my emotions are really getting to me. Cindy had shown up at the hospital and came back to our place when we were done there. She stopped and had gotten a chocolate shake for Virginia on the way home. She went down and talked with Mandy - this seemed to help - sort of girl talk stuff. Ben seems mostly okay, but I'm sure my concern and emotions show through too much. Virginia got up a bit later and went to the bathroom and seems a little better. It has been a long, long week.

Sunday, July 23rd

Virginia slept through the night very well. She is still very tired and has stayed in bed all day. However, she got through most of the day without a seizure or throwing up. I got her to eat a little bit of cream of wheat for breakfast and a little bit of apple and toast for lunch. Cindy came over in the early afternoon. While she was around, I went out with the kids to Target and to Sam's and picked up some miscellaneous stuff. Mandy was pretty tired - I think she needs to eat a little more than she does. I took the kids out to see a movie - "Species". Not a great movie for little kids, but it was what they both wanted to see. I let Mandy bring Joe along. We stopped at Taco Bell before the movie. We stopped at Dairy Queen afterwards. While we were gone, Virginia went to the bathroom - and actually went into the bathroom, not just the commode chair, with Cindy's help. After we got back, Virginia got up to go the bathroom, in the commode chair, and had a huge bowel movement. I don't know where it came from. She hasn't been eating much for several days. She was dizzy after she stood up from this and then had a small seizure and threw up. Even though this was scary, today was better than yesterday for this sort of stuff. Lee called while we were out and said that just she and Vickie will be flying out on Tuesday. I am really looking forward to them being here to help. This is really wearing me down. I wish that we all lived very close. This would help a great deal. I still don't know what to expect out of all of this. I am going to call the nurses and Dr. Fangman's office on Monday and discuss how she is doing. Maybe they can suggest some things.

Monday, July 24th

Another pretty long day. Virginia threw up a little during the night, but it wasn't too bad. Dr. Fangman's office called (Kay) to find out how Virginia was doing - they had seen the report from our visit to the hospital on Saturday. They said they could get her into the office to hydrate her (i.e. an IV). I wanted to see how she did first. Virginia stayed in bed all day again. But in general, she seemed a little better. She ate cream of wheat three times during the day, some crackers and some apple along

with some rice pilaf that Joyce brought down. Joyce took Ben out to a water slide for most of the day and Mandy and Joe stuck around the house most of the day. When Joyce brought Ben back, Virginia asked her about washing her hair. So, we washed it in bed. She did have a short seizure almost immediately after we put the warm water on her head. I suspect it was a the stimulus from the water that triggered it. This passed quickly and we finished washing her hair. This seemed to help Virginia quite a bit. I have been sort of bothered by Virginia being uncommunicative and I thought she was mad or upset at me (about pushing her to eat or drink water or get up and move around). She has made some comments to both Joyce and Vickie about this. I am working on not letting it bother me. Cindy came over around 7:00PM and stayed with Virginia. I am a little more hopeful tonight that the stuff is working and that Virginia will start regaining her strength and interest in things. I think Vickie and Lee will also help this a great deal. I asked Virginia tonight right before bedtime if she was mad at me. She said no and we talked for quite a while (relatively speaking). She really does seem better tonight.

Tuesday, July 25th

Virginia slept through the night and didn't throw up at all, I don't think. I got up, but didn't do my bike ride. She did have some cream of wheat and kept it down. I cleaned things up a bit and then tried to get Virginia to wake up and get ready for the blood tests at Dr. Fangman's office. It was very hard getting her moving. She is obviously mad or upset at me for constantly being after her to get up or drink water or eat or whatever. I got relatively short (i.e. pushy) with her and finally got her moving. We got to the office on time. She is very tired. She was commenting on something on her glasses or on her eye today. She tried cleaning her glasses, and I cleaned them a couple of times. I also looked at her eye and put some eye drops. She still saw it there. They also looked at it (at my request) at the oncologist's office. They didn't see anything either. My concern was that it was something mental or in her eyeball. Her blood counts came back pretty low and we need to come back in on Friday to check them again. She might need a platelet infusion or some growth factor injections (like I did several months ago). I asked the nurse about fluids and we got another IV of saline solution. Virginia slept through most of this. I also paid for the previous week's chemotherapy session. Again, the lady at the office was not clear about what she wanted. She talked about paying \$1700 when they had asked for \$6000. I had to say - "What do you want?". It was very annoying to have made arrangements for \$6000 and for it not to be clear what they wanted. Towards the end of the IV, Lee called from the Marriott that they were in Fort Collins. I ran over and got them while Virginia was finishing up the IV. She was very happy to see them.

We drove home and Virginia wanted to eat at Sonic. She asked a couple of times what Vickie and Lee wanted, when we had already told her that they had eaten. She had part of a BLT, tater-tots and a cherry-limeade. I was taken back that she wanted this, but if she will eat - great. She ate several bites of the sandwich and then had

some chocolate cake. She kept this down. She slept most of the afternoon on the couch, but at least she had gotten up and around. I talked to Lee about how she was doing and Lee sees the major down-turn in how she is. Cindy Hoxmeier came over and visited for a little bit. Cindy (Heckle) came over after work. We had Boston Chicken for supper and Virginia ate a lot. This was very good to see, but I was a little surprised at the major shift in appetite. Later on, she threw up twice. But she was still much better off. Virginia and Vickie and Lee talked about some stuff when I wasn't around and Virginia mentioned how I was always after her on this stuff. When Virginia threw up the first time, this really scared Ben. I took him outside and we talked. For the first time, with me, he verbalized his fear that Virginia was going to die. We talked about this. He has many of the reactions that I do - wanting to help more, feeling helpless, wishing it didn't happen, but would be happy if she just lived - whether her arm worked or not or anything. I think I helped, but I couldn't say that everything would be okay. I did say that we were doing everything we could to beat the cancer. Later on, I took Joe back home with Mandy. Mandy mentioned that during the day, there was a point where she thought Virginia had not recognized her. This might have happened, since that happened once before with Ben. But it could also just be how tired Virginia is.

Vickie and Lee being out is great and will help. But I am surprised by my immediate reactions. I am feeling very tired and concerned about when they leave on Saturday about 'stepping back up to the plate'. I am a little hurt by Virginia's recent reaction to me. I understand it and I don't know what else to do. I still don't know what is going to happen, but I continue to get less hopeful about the outcome.

Wednesday, July 26th

Virginia threw up a little but did get up and have breakfast. She also had lunch and dinner, but she threw up a couple of times. But, she is still getting more to eat than last week. She had a couple of small seizures - one in the afternoon and one this evening. I am being asked about my birthday, but to a great extent I think I would like to ignore it. I am letting Vickie and Lee take over taking care of Virginia while they are here. So I spent some time working on evaluations and catching up on my pile of email.

Friday, July 28th

Virginia slept through the night into Thursday morning well. She did throw up after breakfast. She still has her sense of humor and has made some jokes over the last couple of days. I think it helps have Vickie out. She didn't know or remember that I am still sleeping with her - even though I help her up to the bathroom. She thought Lee was there with her last night. She had a seizure when she got up from her chair. She threw up some in the afternoon as well. Thursday was my birthday. I fixed chicken. Mandy had made an angel food cake - filled with chocolate frosting and

topped with 7-minute white frosting. It was very rich, but good. Cindy had gone out and gotten my presents, I think. I got a couple of comic books (X-files and Ren & Stimpy), a note pad, some pens and gift certificate at Camelot music. Rick dropped off a 2 disc Firesign Theatre anthology CD set. This was very nice of him.

Friday was a very long day. Virginia got up and Vickie and Lee gave her a shower in the morning. They were going to do it on Thursday, but she wasn't feeling up to it. This went okay. She threw up a little after it. I went into work for about an hour - to check in and to sign time-sheets for myself and my team. When I got back, we went to get Virginia's blood counts checked at Dr. Fangman's office. Vickie went with us while Lee stayed home and did some things. Virginia had two small seizures getting out of the car and then again getting into the recliner at Fangman's. She threw up after she got into the recliner. Her counts were a little lower, but okay. We got another liter of fluid in her to hydrate her. She slept through the whole thing. We got her home after stopping for a chocolate malt. Lee fixed chicken and noodles for dinner, which was very good. Vickie and I had picked up some comedy tapes so that we could watch them. During this, Virginia had two bowel movements that she was not able to control. She got her clothes and the wheel chair on the first one and the couch on the second one. I ran out and got her some Depends (adult diapers) around 10PM. She also had a seizure during this. I am very worried about this. She has thrown up several times, had several seizures and is becoming incontinent. Virginia also mentioned that she had some pressure and a headache during the course of the day. I will be calling on Monday to arrange for some home care. I will need this. I don't know how much longer this all will be going on. I really don't want Vickie and Lee to leave.

Sunday, July 30th

On Saturday morning, I took Vickie and Lee to the Marriott to catch their bus to head back to Des Moines. Vickie is doing just fine. Lee is also doing well. I think it helps that her doctor back in Des Moines prescribed something to help her relax. Cindy is staying here over the weekend. This is a big help. I went out and did some errands early in the day. Virginia stayed in bed until around 2PM. She threw up after a little cream of wheat, but not bad. I fixed 7 minute frosting to put on an angel food cake - because she wanted some. I had never made the 7 minute frosting, but it turned out really well. This whole experience is turning me into a pretty good cook. Virginia had chicken and noodles and the cake. A little later, the cake came back up. We went out for a drive and to turn Cindy's water on at her trailer. Virginia seemed to like the ride. We stopped at Dairy Queen for a chocolate malt. Virginia kept this down just fine. She did have a small seizure when we were getting her ready for bed. Overall, I think she is doing a little better today. But it has still been a very long day. I don't know what to expect or what I'll be doing next in several days or several weeks or even several months. I want Virginia to get better, but it is wearing on me.

On Sunday, Virginia got up reasonably early - around 10:30AM. She was actually the first one dressed. She had a small bit of nausea, but it passed. I fixed her cream of wheat and she kept this down. Virginia, the kids and I went out to the mall around 1:30PM. Virginia was very tired and had a small spell or seizure getting out of the car. This worried Mandy a great deal, but I think it was better to get Virginia out and about. She had a pretzel and a hot fudge sundae at the mall. We shopped for a bit and then headed home. Getting her in and out of the car is getting harder because of the seizures and because she is getting weaker, I think. I went out for Young's for supper and Virginia ate pretty well - the vegetable soft noodles. She kept this down as well. She slept most of the evening. Cindy headed home after we got her in bed.

I struggle with where we are at. In some ways Virginia did a bit better today than she has been doing. But she also still sleeps most of the time. Today, she has made several jokes during the course of the day. But, she is also very weak. I don't know that I wish I knew what was going to happen, but the ups and downs really get to me. When I look at her, sometimes she doesn't seem to have much spark in her eyes. I find that one of the scarier parts of this whole thing.

On Monday, I got up around 9AM. I am getting up later these days, even though I am getting to bed at about the same time I used. I am also feeling more tired. The day was actually pretty nice, for me, because it was a lot cooler. I was able to get Virginia out of bed at around 11 AM. I did a bunch of calls today including setting up for the kids and I to talk to a therapist and also calling about home care. I am not particularly excited about talking to a therapist. It will probably help and my boss told me he wanted me to do this. It is part of my up-bringing not to go in for stuff like this. I do think that it is fine and appropriate for the kids, I just don't want to do it. I think I am doing okay dealing with all of this. I was disappointed in the response from the insurance company on home care. They cover hospice, but not general home care. This requires Virginia being declared no more than 6 months away from death. I don't know that and I am not really excited about stating this - just from a mental attitude point of view. Apparently, there is a new program just starting this fall (in November), but I really need it now.

After lunch, I took the kids to their dental check up. Mandy did fine and Ben had one cavity that was filled. This all went okay. I also did a few errands - getting extra car keys made for the Probe and stopping at Target. I had also called about getting some additional pills for Virginia. Dr. Fangman's office said they would do this, but never got around to it. This disappointed me a bit. While I was out doing this, Cindy Hoxmeier and Joyce were staying with Virginia.

Later that evening, I picked up Boston Market (which was previously called Boston Chicken) for supper. Virginia actually did pretty well today. She had no seizures that I saw or was aware of. She only threw up once - and that was because of a pill without water, not nausea. This is all pretty good, but she is still very weak and very tired. It could go either way. Cindy Heckle stopped over after work. Tom Huibregtse stopped over and we swapped some equipment. He stayed and we

talked for a little bit. After he left, Cindy and I got Virginia into bed. She has been wearing the adult diapers - Depends - since Friday night. But she has seemed to have had good bladder and bowel control. I want to keep using them until she has a bowel movement (which she hasn't since Friday night). After she got to bed and Cindy went home, the kids and I watched "The Mummy" on laser disc. This was fun.

August 1995

Wednesday, August 2nd

Tuesday, I got Virginia up in the mid-to-late morning and gave her a shower. This went okay and she felt a lot better after this. But, Tuesday was not as good a day as Monday had been. She had three small seizures during the day and threw up late in the day, after supper. Susan and Joyce both stopped by during the day. And Cindy Heckle has been stopping over after work every evening. During the night she complained about her feet, legs and hips hurting. I couldn't see anything wrong, but I am sure that they do ache. I suspect it is because of the chemotherapy working on the bone marrow.

On Wednesday, I got Virginia up and dressed for the doctor's appointment. She had a small seizure getting into the car (and in fact almost every time I do a transfer). This is very worrisome and troubling. She also seems to be getting weaker. We didn't really learn anything new at the doctor's office. Her counts are still dropping and we have to go in on Friday to have them checked again. She might need a platelet transfusion or another set of growth factor shots. It also looks like the insurance won't pay for this round of chemotherapy. I got some papers to file for a 'compassion' funding for the chemotherapy from the drug company. However, I don't see how they will pay for any of it given that I make a fair amount of money and have some assets. We set up for an MRI next week to see what is going on. We stopped off for a chocolate malt at Swensen's. Virginia had some more seizures getting in and out of the car.

After we got home, I went out to the grocery store and also picked up some more medication. I have now gotten to the point where they know me at the Steele's pharmacy. This is not something I ever expected to have happen. I counted up and Virginia is currently taking a total of 14 pills at 5 different times during the day. While I was at the store, I saw an elderly couple out shopping. This got me thinking about how that is what I wanted for Virginia and I - to get to old age together. This also got me thinking about how this should be some of the best times of our lives, but I worked through this pretty quickly because it doesn't do any good. When I got home, I called about home care, but didn't really get any help from the Hospice people. They suggested I talk to my doctor. I really need help with this. I would dearly love for Lee to come out and stay until we get through all of this. But, I don't want to ask her and screw up Lee and Art's life. I am feeling very tired - almost like stumbling mentally - with all the stress, care needs and so on. I have very little interest in work and most stuff. I can putter a little, but I feel almost aimless. I recognize that this is because I am waiting for things to go up or down with Virginia. I am trying to work through this and get beyond the helpless, hopeless, aimless stuff

and move on to doing something. I should be able to be useful for Virginia, the kids and myself.

Virginia slept most of the afternoon. She says that she is feeling better, but I am not sure. She did get through the day without throwing up (although she was nauseous). She does still have her sense of humor and made a bunch of different jokes and cracks today. She still hasn't had a bowel movement (since Friday night), so I gave her something to help. She has also still had bladder and bowel control, but I don't want to get her out of Depends until she has another bowel movement. She is losing her hair a bit more - all over.

Saturday, August 5th

On Thursday I got everybody moving relatively early - for the way things have been going. This was so that we could get out for a drive. I let Ben and Mandy invite friends. Mandy brought Joe. Ben was going to ask Ben Kaiser, but that ended up not working out. We got up to Estes Park a little after noon. We stopped at McDonald's and had lunch there (eating in the parking lot). We drove up into the Rocky Mountain National Park. It was very pretty and there were a lot of wild flowers in bloom. We were doing okay, although Virginia was getting very tired. We got up to trail-ridge road and Virginia was getting very groggy (even more so). So we turned around and headed back down. We only got a little way down and she threw up. I stopped in Estes Park to clean up stuff from this. We went into Estes Park and got out to look at a couple shops. Virginia wanted a hot fudge sundae (which Ben always calls a 'hot sudge fundae') at DQ. She ate about half of this and then slept most of the way down. I got her in the house and she slept for quite a while at home. She doesn't seem to be as good today to me, but I know that I am really running out of steam.

On Friday, I got her up and over to the doctor's office for a check of her blood counts. On the drive over, we were talking about the day and what was going on. I mentioned that it was Friday, August 2nd. Virginia asked me "isn't your birthday coming up pretty quick?". So, she has forgotten when my birthday is. I know this bothers me a bit, but I hope it is only temporary. I suppose it is good that she knew it was in this general time period. Doing some of the transfers (from the van into the wheel chair), I have had to raise my voice to get her to let go of the car so that I can transfer her. The counts are okay, still going down a little, but not at the point where she needs any transfusion or growth factor injections. I cooked up a pretty good supper and an apple crisp and some custard. I am trying to find as many things as possible that she will eat. After supper, with Cindy at the house, I took Mandy, Joe and Ben out to see the late show of the movie "Waterworld". It was okay. During the day, Virginia choked a little, but didn't throw up and this was mostly because of getting some pills down. And she only had one small seizure. This is much better than she has been for a week or two.

On Saturday, everybody got up very late. I puttered around and exercised. I cleaned up my workroom. A little after noon, Robert and Marilyn Heckendorn stopped over and we talked for a while. Virginia wasn't able to wake up to talk with them. They dropped off some corn. They also offered to help. I know that I need to get more help, but I have a very hard time asking people for help. I need to recognize that this is something that people want to do - it helps them (and me!). I wasn't able to get Virginia out of bed until after 3PM. I got her up and into the shower. Most of her hair has come out. She does have some left, but not much. The shower was difficult because Virginia wouldn't let go of the grab bar in the shower when I was trying to get her out. I had to physically pick her up and move her over to her wheel chair. She was grabbing on because she was scared. I got her dressed and into the living room. In the mail, I got the official response from the insurance company turning down the Taxol treatment. I am not surprised, but I was angry about this. I want to talk to the people and ask them "well, what should I do then - let her die?". I know this wouldn't help, but it is a small fantasy that lets me work out my anger. I also imagine myself telling them that "at some point, you or a love one will go through this same thing".

Cindy showed up and I went out alone to the mall and to a warehouse store. I picked up a couple of laser discs ("The Princess Bride" and "Time Bandits") partially with a gift certificate from my birthday. When I got back, I cooked supper. Virginia had not yet had a bowel movement and she had been getting some laxatives for a few days. She felt some GI distress so I called a doctor. Before I got a call back, she went to the bathroom. She has had pretty good bladder and bowel control. I suspect that, if she does well on Sunday, we'll stop using the Depends. This will be nice. After supper, I called Vickie (who had called earlier in the day). She and Virginia talked for a bit. After this, Cindy and I got Virginia into bed. The kids and I then watched "Princess Bride". This was nice. So today, Virginia didn't throw up again and only had one small seizure (getting into bed). Overall she has been stable or slightly improving. She does sleep all the time and is often very unresponsive to me and my questions.

Sunday, August 6th

This was not a great day. I got up at a pretty reasonable hour, but I could not get Virginia to wake up and get out of bed. She stayed in the 1st floor bedroom until around 4PM. A portion of this was with Cindy in the room. With Cindy here, I went out with Mandy and did some shopping at Target and at Pier 1. I got Joyce a birthday present (a moon and stars candle holder) at Pier 1. While we were there, I looked around and found a lot of neat things - furniture and kitchen stuff and decorating touches. Mandy commented how I have taken over Virginia's place (for shopping). It really is rather true, possibly even down to some of the style preferences. While we were out, I commented to Mandy how the current period reminds me of times with my folks - being in limbo and how I hated it. She said that she felt the same way too. I told her this in part because I feel that way and in part so that she could know that some of the emotions are okay. I also hoped that she

would open up a bit, but she didn't. I understand how hard it is to talk about these emotions.

During the later portion of the day, Virginia threw up twice. Late in the evening, she wanted to sleep on the couch. A little later, Cindy figured out that Virginia was thinking that she would have to go upstairs. She had forgotten that we were sleeping on the first floor. We got her in the bedroom and were getting her ready for bed when she had a grand mal seizure. She went rigid and was unresponsive with her eyes open and dilated for around 5 minutes (although it seemed longer). I held her and told her in a calm voice to relax. I thought this might be 'the one'. Cindy was there too and sounded pretty shaken (from her voice and breathing). Virginia came out of the seizure and threw up some more. She was very tired. She did make some comment about how 'we were the best'.

Tuesday, August 8th

On Monday I had trouble getting Virginia up in the morning. I tried a couple of different ways. I got angry with her about this and I let it show a little. I think this is my response to her inability to get up which I read as her giving up. But I don't want to come right out and ask her if she has given up in case that will push her over the edge when she really hasn't. I finally got her up around noon. She had a bowel movement in her Depends. When I got her up, she had another one on the commode chair. It turns out (I found out later in the day) that she didn't realize that she had done this - had the movement in the Depends. I fixed her some cream of wheat which she ate well. It seems to be the one dependable meal that she likes and will eat - all of. We got going to the doctor's office. We dropped the kids off at the swimming pool on the way. Virginia's blood counts were coming back up, finally. So, I hope that she will start feeling better in the next day or two. She had 3 small seizures during the day. I fixed some ravioli and spaghetti for supper. Lee called and told us that she is coming out for a month or so starting next week. Art and Chris and Julie will come out for a little bit, but go back after a couple of days. Virginia is sounding very groggy, but still made some jokes today. I just try to make it through one day at a time, at this point. She was obviously hurt that I got angry at her today. I found this out during a discussion at supper.

On Tuesday, I was able to get Virginia up a bit more easily. I fixed her cream of wheat for breakfast. She had another bowel movement during the night. It was messy enough, I gave her a shower to clean her off a bit. (It was about time anyway.) I had fixed her cream of wheat and some applesauce for lunch. She didn't eat much of the applesauce, but did eat a hot-fudge sundae. Elizabeth Ross came over and sat with Virginia while I went to talk with Dr. Motl, a therapist. I was doing this because my boss told me that he wanted me to go. Motl was nice, and had a good suggestion about trying to separate the primary care-giver role from the husband role. This is so that I can help Virginia emotionally, as well as myself. He was wondering about my coming back. I told him that I would think about it and

that it depended on how things went over the next couple of weeks. I came home and got Ben and took him out for a haircut and made a quick stop at the grocery store (while Elizabeth was with Virginia). I started supper after a little while. When we were done and I was getting Virginia on the couch, something seemed wrong. So I asked her what was the matter - was she having a seizure, did I hurt her, was she scared (possibly because of the transfer). She said that she was too tired to be scared. This made me feel very sad.

Late Tuesday night, she had another grand mal seizure a little after midnight. It lasted a few minutes, but she did not become responsive for about a half of an hour. When she finally responded, she wasn't speaking. When she finally started speaking, she spoke well, but wasn't able to tell me her name or my name. Finally, about 45 minutes after the seizure, she told me our names and seemed okay. She said she had known when I talked to her earlier, but she was just tired. I am not sure.

Thursday, August 10th

Virginia was very sleepy on Wednesday. I am working on 'an experiment' based on the idea that her seizures are mostly due to fluids and diet. This is not unreasonable given that she hasn't had headaches or pressure. I was able to get her some cream of wheat for breakfast and am trying to get her a lot of water. I was able to get her up only after Susan Ison stopped by for lunch. She was very groggy during this. But she did eat some of the middle-eastern food that Susan brought - humus and falafel. At 4PM, I fixed her some more cream of wheat and a hot fudge sundae. Joyce stopped by in the afternoon. We gave her the present that Mandy and I got for her on Sunday. She seemed to like it. She said it was the first wrapped present that she had gotten. We ate Boston Market chicken around 8PM. Virginia actually seems to be doing a lot better. She says that she doesn't remember the seizure (or any of them). She also asked for some Essiac tea. This was a good sign to me - that she cares enough to want some of this. So, I made up a batch over night. She did not have any seizures or throw up at all day long.

Thursday was another very long day. I didn't push Virginia, but tried to get her up. She just wanted to stay in bed. I fixed her some cream of wheat for breakfast and for lunch. She didn't have any seizures during the day. For supper, I asked Cindy to stop off and pick up Young's. Virginia ate a little bit of a crystal roll and then stopped. She went to the bathroom (but no bowel movement). Then she wanted cream of wheat again. She threw up a little. Cindy stayed with her while I went to a meeting about high school with Mandy. After that, Suzanne came over and we worked on the book a little bit. Virginia was awake with Cindy a little bit, but mostly slept. She told Cindy that she was hoping that she had more energy tomorrow. She also told her that she was upset that she had spent the entire day in bed. I am frustrated, concerned and very worried about all this. I am not being very effective

with her. I am really looking forward to and need Lee to be out here. But at the same time, this bothers me that I need the help.

Friday, August 11th

I had trouble getting Virginia out of bed again. I got up and exercised (on the Nordic Track) and then did some cleaning up. I cleaned out the closet where we are sleeping (Mandy's old bedroom on the main floor). I also cleaned up the spare bedroom closet (Ben's old bedroom on the main floor) and the kitchen cupboard above the desk. I am not at a point where I have the mental energy to do much heavy duty thinking. So, I haven't started any books or done any work reading. I don't have the energy, interest or motivation at this point. I fixed Virginia cream of wheat for breakfast and then made some apple crisp for her lunch. She ate both of these and kept them down. Ben went out with the Turley's for the afternoon. I got her up for the MRI this afternoon. This was a struggle. It was obvious that she didn't want to go. But she wouldn't come out and say this. I got her up and over there. She had a small seizure getting into the car and also getting out at the hospital. When we were getting into the hospital, Virginia made a comment that 'this is strange'. I asked what she meant and she said 'your moving me around, this was something I did with Timmy'. I think she meant with Ben, but this caught me funny and worried. While we were getting her on the table, she got nauseous, but this passed quickly. While we were gone, Mandy had made brownies with cream cheese frosting - since Virginia had asked for this. Cindy came over after work and Rick stopped by after work for just a minute.

I went upstairs and looked at the MRI films. It was, again, difficult to tell exactly what was going on. But it looked like some things were bigger and some were smaller. My overall sense was that it was about the same. I am anxious to hear the official report. I had been very worried about the MRI. Looking at the films made me feel a little better and somewhat more hopeful than I had been. Virginia ate some of the brownies and then shortly afterward, threw up. Mandy went out for a skating party. Virginia was actually awake for a reasonable amount of the evening. We, Cindy and I, got her to bed. In talking with her, she mentioned that she had a headache today. I feel a little better about the MRI, but we still need official results. I am more worried about her lack of energy, confusion and throwing up. Lee called and said that they were not getting in until Tuesday afternoon. Art and Chris and Julie will all be going back on Friday.

Saturday, August 12th

I got up and exercised and did some laundry. Turley's stopped by and picked up Ben to go on a bike ride to Loveland. I lathered him up with sun-tan lotion so that he didn't get burned. (He is like me and burns very easily. When we were in Florida several years ago, he got sunburned badly enough to have gotten sick. When I was a kid, we had gone to Lake Okaboji in northern Iowa and I got a similar bad sunburn.)

I fixed Virginia some cream of wheat. While I was asking if she wanted to get up and go into the living room she said 'well you get an A for effort'. It is really obvious that she just wants me to leave her alone.

I was doing a little more cleaning and straightening around the house. In going through some of Virginia's school papers, I found 4 yellow sheets with some notes from April 1994 that Virginia had written down as part of a family planning class. I've typed these as they were written:

April 5, Tues -

Another Drs. appt. - I wish they could find what is wrong and fix it. This recent health problem has not been cut & dried. Difficult to pin point and very frustrating. If I could just get some energy - I would feel more in control.

This has made me think about something else I value - health. Mine & my family's. Because my health has been off - it has affected my whole family: I haven't had the energy to keep up activities around the house. Tim has had to pick up the slack. It also has put a burden on Tim's freedom to switch careers. If these next tests show something - it could make us very dependent on Tim's current health insurance. This would seriously (reduce) our options. Tim's goal was to start his own business in the next 4 yrs. We will have to rethink this and make the necessary adjustments if needed.

Sunday, April 10

Spent the day studying. I have fallen behind in most of my school work. Poor management skills!! Or just senioritis?

My 1st step was to write down & priors. my goals & tasks for the rest of the semester - I put in order according to due dates the projects needed to be completed - and then listed them as to the amt. of work needed to complete them.

I worked on the most urgent project 1st and gave myself a deadline as to how long I could and would spend on each.

This is always a very hectic time in the semester. I talked to my family & told them that I would not be very available to them for the next 4 weeks.

We reorg. the house duties & set up a reward system (bribe) to help motivate them.

I also reduced my expectations as to what is getting done around the house. That alone (reduced) the stress immensely.

April 15, Friday

22 yrs. since our 1st date. - And tax day. Mailed in the check to the IRS last week - so now we can celebrate. Tim & I went to Wine Cellar for a dinner, long, slow & expensive. It was very nice.

The last 22 yrs. seem to have flown by. We were both amazed at how far we have come - and how much more we want to accomplish. We spent part of the evening re-evaluating goals. #1 is to find out what is wrong w/ my health. #2 is to get me thru the rest of college. #3 is to get me a job. #4 is to get Mandy's college fund built up. Then we talked about how. All of this depends on the tests next Thursday and what the results are.

Poor Tim's goal of a career change has not been abandoned but it is definitely the one sacrificed at this time.

Once Again, the ability to be flexible & react quickly has proven to be vital.

April 21, Thursday

More tests at the lab and then maybe some answers. At least these early morning appt. get me out of bed and started in the morning. It is nice to get up early and get so much accomplished with all the extra time.

I was done at the lab by 10:00. Spent some (of the) day at the mall - met Tim for lunch and then grocery shopping & home to do laundry.

Spent the rest of the day doing phone calls. I have a good chance at 2 internships and touched base w/them. I should

That was the last of the writing on the fourth page. It was very odd reading these notes. It reminds me of what our life used to be like and what I wish it were again. It makes me think about some 'what ifs'. What if the doctors had been able to be better at diagnosing and discovered the tumor before it got so large. But, this path won't help Virginia, the kids or me. The notes were very prophetic in the sense of dependency on health insurance and of our plans for the future. It isn't really very odd, but the career stuff (at HP or starting a company) is not very important anymore. I would still like to do a lot of the same sorts of things, but I am not rabid about it. Family stuff has always come first, but it is even more important now than it was before all this happened.

Virginia stayed in bed all day again today. Cindy came over in the afternoon and so did the Turley's. Joyce fixed kadayef (an Armenian desert) for Virginia. While they were doing this, I went out with Mandy and did a little school shopping. Virginia was awake when I got back and was eating the desert. We ordered pizzas. Virginia went back to sleep. Later in the evening, Virginia woke up and Cindy was asking her if she dreamed. Virginia said that she was - about being normal or mostly normal again. Cindy asked about traveling, and Virginia talked about cruises a bit. Today was the most conversation that she has had for a couple of days. Vickie also called

and talked to her for a few minutes. Virginia threw up a little bit after Cindy and I gave her some of her pills. I am worried about her not getting enough of her medication and triggering another grand mal seizure. Ben and I watched "Time Bandits" on laser disc late in the evening. I am just beat and don't know what to do to help anymore. I hate the helpless and hopeless state that I have gotten into.

Sunday, August 13th

Another pretty long day. I wasn't able to get Virginia out of bed and wasn't able to get her to eat until late in the day. And actually, Cindy was the one who got her to eat. I thought of it, fixed it and brought it in, but Cindy was the one who got her to eat about half of it. When Cindy got here, I took Mandy and a friend (Missy) to the pool and then Ben and I went out and did some of his school shopping. I still need to get both of them out for clothes and shoes. Virginia has not had any seizures today, but was a little nauseous twice. She hasn't had a bowel movement for a couple of days now. I set up the VCR in the first floor bedroom where we are at now and I put on "Mr. Blandings builds his dream house". Cindy had suggested the VCR. Virginia was awake for maybe 10-20 minutes of the movie - not bad.

Tuesday, August 15th

On Monday, I was able to get Virginia to eat some cream of wheat pretty early - around 10AM. Susan Ison stopped by. Virginia mostly slept, but I went in and Susan and I talked about a bunch of different things. After Susan left, I exercised and took my shower. I wasn't able to get her up during the day. Later in the day, Joyce stopped by to stay with Virginia while I took the kids to talk to the therapist - Dr. Motl. She fixed Virginia some Armenian cream of wheat. She wasn't able to eat this. I took the kids to the therapist. This went pretty well. Mandy went first. She didn't want to talk about her session, but she liked him and she thought it helped. She went ahead and scheduled for another session next week. Then Ben went in. He seemed to think it was okay, but he said he would wait until we found out what was going on (from the upcoming doctor's visit) whether or not he would schedule another session. When we got back, Rick stopped by with Amigo's for supper. Rick and I went out to Tortilla Marissa's for supper. We were going to a movie, but decided not to go. When I went to bed, it smelled a bit - like urine. I didn't want to wake Virginia up, and I didn't think it was going to be too bad.

I got up on Tuesday and found out that Virginia's Depends was soaked and it had leaked out a bit. I got Virginia up and fed her a little cream of wheat and changed the Depends. I exercised and got dressed. Lee called around 1PM and I went to pick them up. Julie didn't come because she had a slight case of bronchitis. So, Chris, Art and Lee came. I took them back to the house, reminding them that Virginia was not doing so well. We got home and they went in to say hello. Virginia woke up a bit. Art got emotional and had to leave the room. I have a hard time dealing with this,

but I don't want to imagine doing these sorts of things with my kids. We got Virginia up for lunch out in the kitchen. She got a bit upset when we were overloading here with questions and stimulus. I stripped the bed and washed the sheets and bed spread.

I went out with Chris, Art and the kids to do the rest of the school shopping. We left around 5PM and got back around 8:30PM. I was able to get the rest of the stuff they needed - although we were all pretty tired at the end of it. Lee had done a great job with Virginia. She was awake more and had eaten more and had gotten all of her pills down. She hadn't thrown up or had any seizures. This was her best day for over a week. Cindy and Lee tried to move her off the couch to get her ready for bed, but she fell. I needed to come in and get her up off the ground. She looked very sad. She still doesn't talk a lot, and mostly shakes her head.

We go in to see Fangman tomorrow. I don't know how things will go, but I don't expect things to go well. (I am expecting bad news.) At this point, I am just living day by day. I can't really plan even to next week. We might do another round of therapy or not. It is really great having Lee out here to help. I talked with Art and Lee a bit about all of this. They both commented about the 'look' in Virginia's eyes - like she has given up. Even if the MRI is good news, if she has given up, it won't matter much. I also talked with Art about some of this stuff alone. He is very worried about Lee and the strain this has placed on her. Mandy has been much better with Virginia today - I think Lee commented that it was coincident with Mandy talking with the therapist.

Wednesday, August 16th

The day started pretty well. Lee got Virginia up and she fixed her some breakfast. Lee, Virginia and I went to Fangman's office at lunch time. Her blood counts are getting better. But, the news was not good. Her general and neurological condition are not good. The MRI report stated slight disease progression. So, Dr. Fangman did not think it was appropriate to do another round of chemotherapy. We did get set up for increased Decadron - in the hopes that this would improve her condition. I also requested and he agreed to high doses of Tamoxifen. I asked to look at the MRI report and read it. It made the comment about the right side tumor being unchanged, but that there was some progression in the left frontal lobe. This was new. So, I asked to look at the MRI. During this discussion Virginia was awake, but very tired. She responded to Dr. Fangman a couple of times, but it was obvious that she was marshaling her strength and energy to be present.

Asking about looking at the MRI was partially to look at the MRI, but also to talk with him separately. The right side being unchanged was about what I expected after I had looked at the films. The left frontal lobe comment was related to the non-contrast scans. So, it is unclear what this means - it might be pressure, fluid or tumor. In talking with him, he felt that things were pretty much over. I asked how

much time and he said a few weeks to several weeks. I needed a little clarification and asked if that meant 3 weeks to 3 months. He said that was the general time frame. The healthier and younger someone is, the longer their bodies can survive. I also asked about how long it would be before she was no longer conscious. This is very unclear and it might not be very long. He made a referral for us to Hospice to come in and do an evaluation. He was setting things up for Virginia's decline and eventual death. On the way out, I set up for a next possible visit (although one of their staff could come to the house) which was set up for three weeks out. I have been succeeding in staying in control of myself about this. It is very hard, but I have to do it.

When we got home, we got Virginia onto the couch. I sat at her side. Lee was right next to us. I asked her if she understood what was going on. She looked very sad and tired. She nodded that she did understand. (Most of the time now she doesn't answer verbally, but shakes her head.) I asked her "what does it mean?". She did not answer me. So, I asked "you know that things don't look good?". She shook her head yes - and looked very sad. This was all working up to the key question I asked next which was: "How do you want me to help you? Do you want me to help you fight it? Or do you want me to help you not fight it?" Her answer was one of the key things that made me feel hopeful. She sat up and opened her eyes very wide and said "How can you even ask me that? Of course I want to fight." I told her, and so did Lee, that we thought this was great, because we hadn't seen that she was interested in fighting. Any small chance depends on her wanting to fight. And for me, it means I have not been trying to help for no good reason.

And Virginia has done pretty well today. She has been more awake and eaten more than she has for the last week. Lee being out is really helping. So, I do not expect things to go well. However, there is hope. She is doing a little better. The tumor on the right side is essentially unchanged. And, most importantly, she wants to fight. It is a long shot, but I don't want to give up. The next week or two will tell how things are going.

Art took Mandy to her high school registration while we were at Fangman's. This went pretty well. Ben and Chris stayed home. Chris fixed the dishwasher while he was there. I needed to take Mandy back and straighten a few things out at Mandy's school. She and I also picked up Virginia's new pills and did a little shopping. I took both of the kids aside and told them what was going on. I told them that things did not look good - which they both were expecting. I also told them about the probable time frame and that at some point, if things go badly, she will lose consciousness. I also told them about the good news side. They took it much better than I was expecting - they are dealing with this pretty well. But, this is so hard on them and on Art and Lee. Late in the evening, we got Virginia in to bed. She had a small seizure during the transfer, but it wasn't too bad. Later on, the kids found a huge spider in their bathroom. I caught it and put it in a jar. I need to get it checked out to see if I need to get the house fumigated. It has been a long, hard day.

Friday, August 18th

On Thursday, Laurel, a coordinator from Hospice stopped by in the morning to have a preliminary discussion. This went okay. They have a range of services and are some of the first people that we have dealt with in this process who aren't here for the money. They seem to care and want to help out. They will accept whatever the insurance pays them - no additional charges. They will cover any additional equipment that we need. Of course, their goal is to make Virginia comfortable and to help us (as the family). Apparently, they won't leave after six months if things are taking a long time. The lady seemed very nice and compassionate.

After this, I took Mandy to her doctor's appointment with Dr. Merkel. This was to discuss her dizziness and stomach pains. (We forgot to ask about allergies.) Merkel looked her over and told her what I had been telling her - that she needed to eat a little more. She has actually lost weight over the last 6 months. This is not surprising, given the stress. She is about 10 pounds under where she should be for her age and height. She got a DPT (diphtheria, tetanus and pertussis) shot. She had the expected immediate soreness and ache from this. On the way back, we picked up Chris and went out for lunch and stopped off at high school to track down her locker. We ate at Consuelo's for lunch and shopped for a little at Finest (a CD store). Later in the afternoon Art, Ben, Chris and I went out to shop for a TV. We ended up going back out and getting one later that evening. (The old TV probably would have lasted a little longer, but it was going bad. This way, I had Chris to help move the old and new TVs around.) Late that evening, I had a talk with Ben. I asked him about the therapist and if he wanted to go back. He said no, because Motl wanted him to think about things he didn't want to or like to. It was about Virginia dying. The way Ben put it, Ben said something like "when I don't have a mother anymore". I talked to him about this and told him that no matter what happens with me and with Virginia, he will always have a mother and a father - Virginia and I. Nothing will ever change that. And, no matter what happens to us or to him, Virginia and I will always love him - always - no matter where we are. I liked talking with Ben and comforting him. He also made a comment along the lines of "it's like Mom is already in a coma". I tried to tell him that this wasn't true - she slept a lot, but was still here and still has her sense of humor. I know what he is talking about, because many times, she won't respond to me either. But she is still around and will talk.

On Friday, a Hospice nurse, Wilma, stopped by to do an initial evaluation. Virginia had eaten some breakfast earlier and had just thrown up when Wilma stopped by. Laurel did not talk to Virginia at all on Thursday. Wilma, after the initial information gathering, did go in and talk to Virginia. Lee took Art and Chris to the Marriott to catch their plane back to Des Moines. Art got pretty choked up when he was saying good-bye to Virginia. I didn't see how Virginia reacted. I wonder if he will see her again.

Lee brought back lunch. Virginia ate a bit of the food (a baked potato and some French fries). We put many of her pills, crushed, into some ice cream. This worked very well. Later that afternoon, I took Ben to meet his new teacher. It is a Mrs. Cox. I have met her before and she seems nice and I have heard good things about her. I talked to her a bit about Ben and the stress of the home situation. I asked her to let me know if there were any problems or if Ben seemed very stressed out. We ran into friends and several HP and neighborhood people - the Turley kids (but I didn't see Rick), Pugmire's, Pilsner's and Osecky's. I talked to Marty Osecky for a while. On the way out I spotted Brian (what a schmuck) and Diane Fromme. Ben and I stopped at Target on the way home - unsuccessfully looking for a dresser for Lee's room. We watched TV in the evening for a bit.

Virginia has been a bit more awake and alert during the last two days. She seems to have less strength. She is still very uncommunicative with me. She often won't look at me - almost like she is avoiding my eyes. I can interpret the last two days in both a positive and in a negative light. The next week or so will tell. It is going to be a huge help having Lee here. Although, I do worry about the stress level on her. I will go into work a little next week and clean up the evaluations that are due. Right now, I do not care about work at all. (SESD had just sent a cookie bouquet a few days ago.) I feel very disconnected from all of the work stuff. I need to read my e-mail and check my voice mail on Saturday. I am very tired tonight.

Sunday, August 20th

On Saturday, we had a pretty busy day. I got up early and took Mandy in for her blood test (part of the follow-up with Merkel). This went fine and we stopped off at Steele's to get her some breakfast (since she hadn't eaten since around 10PM the night before). I dropped her off at Joe's house since they were going hiking together with Joe's folks. I did some miscellaneous chores and did the weekly grocery shopping. Lee went out later in the afternoon to do a little shopping. Around this time, Rick and Joyce stopped by. Joyce said she would stay and Rick and I went up and looked at Dan and Marty Osecky's new place (they are building a new house). On the way out, Cindy Hoxmeier caught us and I talked to her for a few minutes. She went on over to the house to see Virginia. When we got back, Cindy and Joyce were talking with Virginia. During this, I commented about when Lee and Art and Chris got in and that Art and Chris had left on Friday. Virginia was surprised by this and apparently didn't remember that they were gone. Virginia had thrown up a little while we were gone.

Tom and Mel Huibregtse and their kids came over around 6PM with chicken for supper. We let Virginia stay on the couch and fed her after we were done. This seems to be working out better - letting her stay on the couch. Tom and Mel would like to help, but I am not sure what I want people to do. After they left, Virginia needed to go to the bathroom, but we didn't move fast enough and she got some urine on the couch. After we got her on the commode, she had another BM. So, they

are coming more regularly. After we got her in bed, I took Ben and Mandy and Joe out to see a movie - 'Virtuosity'. We all enjoyed it - a pretty good sci-fi action film. Virginia has done much better today. She was awake more and talking more, but she is still mostly sleeping and is very weak.

On Sunday, I got up and took Mandy over to a fund-raiser for the upcoming Paris trip. On the way back, I did some shopping for a dresser for Lee's room. I have had a hard time tracking something down. I also stopped at Target and picked up some waterproof baby spreads (one for the bed and one for the couch). The check out lady asked if it was for kids. I said, "unfortunately not". In retrospect, she might have thought that I was having a problem. This is reminiscent of when I bought the baby monitor at Radio Shack last year. I stopped off at home and then headed back out again to get Mandy. On the way back, we stopped off at the mall and Mandy got most of the rest of her clothes. When we got back, I asked Lee what sort of cake she would like for her and Art's 44th wedding anniversary (which is today). She said she wanted one of the chocolate sheet cakes - so I made one. For supper, we ordered carry-out from Bisetti's. After supper, I put on "To Catch A Thief". Virginia watched a bit of the first side of the laser disc. We got her in bed at the side change. She hasn't thrown up today and was awake a bit more than yesterday. It is very confusing and I don't know what to expect any more. This might just be some improvement from the increased Decadron dose. At least she hasn't had any seizures over the last two days.

Monday, August 21st

I got up pretty early and got the kids off to school. I drove Ben and then came back home. Virginia was doing really well in the morning. I went into work between 11AM and 2PM. I didn't really like it because many people were asking. 2 people got very emotional and started to cry a little. I appreciate their emotion and concern, but I ended up comforting them - and I think I either want to get away from the situation for a few hours or I want to be comforted. I did sort of expect some of the reaction a bit. I don't particularly care about work right now and stuff is pretty weird at work. I will do a couple of evaluations this week. I called home and talked to Virginia for a while - she wanted to talk! This surprised me and at one point I tried to get off the phone because I thought she wouldn't want to talk anymore. It was nice to talk to her again - I miss talking with her. She really has been the other part of me and I feel cut in half or alone.

When I got back, I met Cheryl - the Hospice nurse. She seems very nice. All the Hospice people have been very good. She commented that Virginia looked very good given her situation. She also said that we were taking good care of her. I feel that this is due in great part to Lee's presence. I went out and talked with her outside. She said Virginia knew what was going on and was still fighting. She could tell from her reactions and her previous experience with patients. She said that if things go badly, she felt Virginia would not go soon, possibly a couple of months -

maybe. After Cheryl left, Donna - the certified nurse assistant - came and gave Virginia a sponge bath. She seemed to like the bath, but it made her tired and she threw up afterwards. Virginia was doing okay in the evening, but threw up after her dinner pills. She was very tired tonight. We got her into bed. After this, Lee and Cindy and I were talking. I don't know what else to do at this point except ride out the course we are on. This bothers me because I think it will go badly (the Tamoxifen won't be enough). But she is so weak and most of the other treatments are not good options for her or would cause her to have a very poor quality of life if they worked. I feel like I'm giving up, but again I don't know what else to do. Lee mentioned that she and Virginia had talked. She asked Virginia if she was mad at me. Virginia said very clearly that she wasn't.

Tuesday, August 22nd

In the morning, the kids got off to school just fine. It is good to have them back on a schedule. Lee and I got Virginia up and in the living room. I needed to wash the sheets because a little urine leaked out of the depends. I started some soup in the morning. I also got some exercise in during the morning. I have been feeling really down. A big part of this is that I feel like I'm just sitting around waiting and reacting. So, I thought about this. I came up with a set of things that can help Virginia (medical, physical, emotional, spiritual (not necessarily religious), mental, nutritional, and so on). Out of these I thought about the ones that I could really help with. I sat down with Lee and talked about this and came up with some things we can do. In the worst case, I will at least have done all that I could and maybe make her happier. In the best case, these things may make the difference. So, I know I can help with emotional, mental, physical and nutritional aspects. Some of the things I have thought of include getting Virginia more involved and engaged in the world, life and us. So, I want to have the kids talked to both Virginia and I after school about their day. I want us all to eat together in the living room. I am going to set up for some friends to come over and visit. I feel better having thought through this and having some things I can proactively contribute.

After lunch, I went into work. Donna (the certified nurse assistant) was here this afternoon. Lee went out while she was around. I was going to do the evaluations that were due, but Jack Walicki agreed to do them for me. This was very helpful. So, I sent him the files and the drafts. I talked to some of the folks and stuff is going okay, but for the most part I don't care. I did a little shopping on the way home. We had the soup for supper. Lee and I went out and looked for a new coffee table so that we can all eat in the living room more easily (also, the previous coffee table - a drum - is looking pretty shabby). While looking, I bought a mortar and pestle to crush Virginia's pills.

Virginia has had a pretty good day today. She hasn't had a seizure and only got a little nauseous twice. The second time was when we were giving her the last pills of the day. She started to get a bit sick while Lee and I were talking about babies (since

Chris and Julie are expecting). We ended up talking about the ability to know the sex of the baby before birth. I mentioned hermaphrodites (I think this is the term for sex-indeterminate people). This was when she got sick. She still has her sense of humor because when the nausea passed she said "Oh no, lions and tigers and hermaphrodites". All in all not a bad day.

Before I went to bed, I wrote the following note to Ben's teacher:

Mrs. Cox,

You had asked for some information about Ben. To make it readable and a bit more organized, I thought I would do it in this format..

Personality: I think Ben has a great personality. Even though he is very big for his age, he is a very caring and sensitive young person. He is often protective of younger or smaller children. He also takes positions based on his internal sense of right and wrong and justice. I feel he is very bright. He is very personable - he could and would talk to a fence post. He also holds his opinions pretty solidly (i.e. he is somewhat stubborn) and will argue about things.

Needs: The key needs that I think Ben has are related to reading and focus. Ben can read at grade level, but it is a real chore for him. I have tried to help him and encourage him. He has read a couple of books over the summer (which I'm very proud of him for doing). I do, however, have to continually remind him to read. I think the more fundamental need relates to focus and planning and motivation. He really struggles with keeping focus on some tasks (like reading or un-fun homework). He also struggles with keeping focus - even on fun things. Recently, I have gotten (encouraged and cajoled) him to save a small bit of money (around \$50-70). He is constantly bouncing around what he could do with the money.

Joys: He loves art and drawing and does excellent drawings. Often they are of science-fiction style objects and characters, but they are very good. (His robots are especially good.) He takes great pride in his art work and can spend hours on the art and milliseconds on the text of an assignment. He likes building models, playing sports with his friends, science-fiction movies, and so on.

Fears: He is very sensitive and can be easily hurt with put-downs by friends (and others). He is very self-conscious of his weight. Obviously, he is afraid of losing his mother.

Strengths: Drawing and art, computer skills and knowledge (he helps his 15 yr. old sister), creativity, verbal skills and vocabulary, mathematics, science, interpersonal skills (working and playing with others).

Hopefully, this was what you were looking for. If you would like to talk about any of this, please call me (226-0292).

Tim Mikkelsen

22 August 1995

Wednesday, August 23rd

It has been an okay day, today. The social worker for hospice stopped by around 9:30AM. He was a nice enough fellow. He got some history information and told Lee and I that he (and others) were there and available to help us (i.e. emotional and grief support). Joyce stopped by around lunch time with some bagels (and Nate). We ate in the living room with Virginia. I talked to Joyce after lunch. She had been going through a lot of the same emotions that I have - about giving up. She was glad to hear about the general approach that I wanted to take. She asked about contacting a doctor in New York and I said it was fine. She also suggested that I contact Cohn again. This was an excellent idea and I talked to him later in the afternoon. I will be arranging for the current information to be sent down and they will look at it on next Tuesday. After the kids got home, I went out with Mandy and looked at some furniture before she was set up to talk with Dr. Motl. Before she went in, we were talking and she told me how it was bothering her that everyone was telling her that Virginia was going to die soon. I have been trying very hard to be realistic, but to keep the hope going. Apparently, she has gotten a different message. We talked about this, and I think it helped. When she was done, she asked if just she and I could go out to eat at a Chinese restaurant. I called Lee and set this up and we had a nice supper. Ben was a little grumpy, but got his homework done. He also forgot to eat supper. Virginia was awake less today and was complaining of a headache in the evening. She has looked a little more droopy and less 'bright' in the eyes. She still hasn't had a seizure or thrown up (although she has had nausea). She was less good today.

Saturday, August 26th

Early on Thursday, I arranged for getting the information from PVH and Fangman's office down to Dr. Cohn in Denver. They will read it and discuss it at their review meeting on Tuesday. Donna, the nurse assistant, came in the morning. While she was here, Lee and I went out and got a coffee table. I ended up getting one at an oak furniture store because the regular furniture stores were either too expensive or were not helpful. The table worked out well - so that we could all sit around and eat together with Virginia. It looks better than the drum (because it was getting really ratty looking). As soon as we had the table in, I took off to get Ben and take him to Dr. Merkel - for his cough. It turned out that Ben is nearly over the virus. Ben and I stopped off at Consuelo's for lunch. Joyce was over when I got home.

Virginia had a pretty good day on Thursday. She had no seizures or nausea. She did have a little bit of a headache - which really worries me. She seemed to be talking a little more. I was very tired, but with more hope.

On Friday morning, Virginia fell off the bed. She has been shifting towards the edge of the bed a lot. She has even had her left leg stuck over on the floor (and it stays because she can't get it back up). But, she hadn't fallen. She fell and cracked her head on a small garbage can. I heard it happen on the baby monitor and ran it. I

don't think it was a fast fall. She had a little crease on the right side of her head and she also might have gotten a little knot on her forehead. She didn't seem to be hurt and she was responsive. I checked about every 20-30 minutes for responsiveness (talking) and also checking her pupils. I called the nurse at Hospice. She called back later while I was out and she said that we had done all the right things. I went out and did a bunch of errands and shopping. I gave the kids some small things to thank them for a good first week at school. I picked up Consuelo's for supper. Mandy was out for the evening at a party at Larissa's. Virginia seemed more quiet on Friday. She still hasn't thrown up or had a seizure. My arms are getting very sore. I suspect the stress and the transfers are taking their toll. I felt odd doing it, but I asked Lee if she would spend the night with Virginia. This allowed me to get a good night's sleep. (I end up getting up several times in the night to shift Virginia or to check on her.)

On Saturday, I got up early and got Ben moving. He wanted to get his chores done so that he could go to the CSU auction with me. He got a good chunk of them done fast. He and I went out and I got my hair cut first. Then we went over and checked out the stuff. (I had stopped by on Friday and looked it over at a preview.) They had some old 9845s (the first machine I worked on at HP) - with my ROM's still in them. We were looking for some Macintosh stuff. We looked around and then went home for a few minutes and then had lunch and got back to the auction. The stuff we were interested in went way too high - so I didn't buy anything. When we got home, I did a bunch of paper work and finally cleaned up my office a bit. We barbecued for supper, fairly late. Virginia is not eating a lot, but she is eating pretty well. She had two bowel movements today. We watched TV after we ate, and Virginia seemed to be listening to some of it. She is still very weak, but hasn't had a seizure for nearly 11 days or so. This is very good, although I am nervous about it. I am still not expecting great news from Cohn or for things to turn around, but I have had more hope recently. I often imagine that Virginia quickly gets better - becoming more alert, stronger, and able to walk.

Sunday, August 27th

Sunday went okay. Virginia got nauseous in the morning and threw up some bile. It was relatively dark. She hasn't had any grand mal seizures, but I noticed this morning that she was just staring at the ceiling without blinking for an extended period. She might be having some smaller, less visible seizures. She had breakfast in bed. We did get her out into the living room before noon. I noticed this morning that I have cracked a tooth. I need to call and get that fixed pretty soon. We really didn't do much today. Mandy and Lee made kadayef (an Armenian or middle eastern dessert). Ben and I used a blow-torch to get some components off of a couple of circuit boards. Ben thought that this was pretty neat. Ben and I put together a little FM wireless microphone. It seems to work, but I need to do a little more on it. I did some system configuration on the kids' computers. We watched a rented laser disc - "Bullets Over Broadway". This was a pretty good movie. We also

started watching "Ed Wood". This was pretty quirky. I might watch it by myself sometime, but it is not something the rest of the family wants to watch. Lee is going to sleep with Virginia tonight. Part of me doesn't like this, but I feel that it helps me.

Things feel very surreal right now. Virginia did less well today. I guess I am getting ready for the news to be clearly bad - with no real hope. I don't like that I am gearing myself up for this. I don't know what else to do. I have also been thinking about what I can do to help Virginia 'spiritually' - for lack of a better term. I don't know what this means and I need to think about it a lot more. Another thing I am struggling with is what I am going to do after this is 'over'. If Virginia gets better or not, I am not really enthused about going back to work. I know that I need to thread back in to work and all of that stuff, but I surely don't care about it now. I feel very much at loose ends. I really miss talking with Virginia. This isn't about any particular aspect - deep stuff, comments (rude or otherwise), puns, current affairs, the kids. I miss it all. At times, she will close her eyes and turn her head away from me. I hate that. I miss her and look forward to the few things she says during the day, because they generally show me that the Virginia that I miss is still in there. I also like it when she looks at me and smiles. This really helps me.

I worry about what long term effects this will have on both of the children. I know it will affect them both. At times I think it will affect one or the other more, but as I think about it, they both are 'at risk' emotionally. I try to spend time with them and watch how they are doing, and still try to keep a sense of normalcy. This strikes me as being the height of lunacy - maintaining a sense of normalcy. How could things be any less normal. But, I think it helps all of us to do this.

Monday, August 28th

It was another long day - mentally. The kids are getting off to school just fine and have adjusted to the new school year. They seem to be dealing with all this well, but I need to keep paying attention to their needs. Lee and I got Virginia up and into the living room around 9:30-10AM. I exercised and took my shower. Then Lee went out and got her hair cut over lunch. Cheryl, the Hospice nurse, stopped by around 12:45PM. She talked with Virginia. Virginia was very sleepy and didn't really answer her verbally. Cheryl seems like a very nice person - very caring. Lee came back part way through Cheryl's visit. Virginia's blood pressure was good (something like 106 over 70). Cheryl checked Virginia's lungs, since I had asked her to check this because of Ben's viral infection. She was fine. While she was here, she made arrangements for the bed rails so Virginia doesn't fall out again. Cheryl was asking Virginia if she had any questions. Virginia shook her head yes, but wouldn't speak. Cheryl tried to guess, but Virginia didn't say that these were the ones. I asked if Virginia wanted me to leave the room. She shook her head no. I talked to Cheryl afterwards, outside. She said that Virginia probably wanted to ask about what was happening and how things were going, but she was also trying to protect me. I will make a point of being out of the room on Thursday so that Cheryl can ask

again. Cheryl said that it shouldn't be a problem with Lee, just with me. This doesn't bother me, I understand what Virginia is trying to do. Cheryl said that she sees a clear decline over the 3 visits. Her guess is that Virginia will probably decline a bit more and then plateau for a while. I also talked to Cheryl about organ donation stuff and about how things will go.

Virginia still hasn't had any seizures. She has been eating, small amounts, but still eating. Her pills are working out well in malts, applesauce, orange sherbet, etc. The kids had a good day at school. Mandy started watching 'Ed Wood', but ended up stopping part way through - it was too weird for her too. I took the movies back. Mandy took off and had supper at Joe's house. Chris and Julie called after supper. Virginia talked a little bit on the phone with them, but Lee and I couldn't understand what she was saying. Her voice is very weak and a little scratchy. She did stay on the line and listen while Lee talked with them. We got Virginia into bed a little after 10PM. I had laid on the couch with her for a good portion of the evening. This felt good.

After we got her into bed, I talked with Lee about how things are going. Things are not going well. We still both feel that it is not real. I find that I still can't use the actual term for what is happening, I use euphemisms (declining, not going well, ...). I still want and half expect for us to beat this and have Virginia recover. But, it is getting harder and harder to feel that way, even a little bit. I am still waiting to hear from Dr. Cohn before I 'transition' into the 'next phase' (euphemisms again). Earlier in the day, I called the insurance company today and checked to make sure that the life insurance (for the house mortgage) was up to date and in effect. I need to do this for several reasons - the main one being insuring that the kids college is taken care of. I hate all of this. It does feel like giving up. I really want to talk with Virginia about all of this, but I haven't yet. I might be running out of time.

Tuesday, August 29th

I got up early and made sure that the kids were moving and got off to school okay. They did fine and I went up and got my exercising done on the Nordic Track. We let Virginia stay in bed since Donna was going to be coming over around 12:30. Susan stopped by for a few minutes. Virginia talked a little with her. During the conversation, Susan asked if Lee was still here. Virginia shook her head 'no'. Susan said that must be sad and asked when she left. Virginia said 'over the weekend'. I came in and told her that her mom was still here. This worried me, but it could be the medication, the general confusion associated with being in bed for an extended period or it could be something related to the tumor. I cleaned up the living room carpet which has been very nasty looking. This helped some, but I still want to have it steam cleaned or replaced. I made some bread in the bread-maker for lunch and started some soup to use up some left-overs in the refrigerator. Virginia wanted to go to the bathroom (and hadn't wet her Depends). I noticed something in the urine and called about it. It might have been some paper from the Depends, but it could

have been something related to an infection. The nurse said that it was normal - the bladder sloughs off tissue occasionally. I didn't realize this. Donna came and cleaned Virginia up.

I got a call from Ian Fuller, one of the managers that reports to me, in response to my call to him. He is having a hard time and I tried to help him out. He is having what seem to be standard new manager transition pains. After that, we had lunch in the bedroom with Virginia. Donna fed Virginia. After this, Donna's supervisor came over for a few minutes. It was around 2PM and Lee and I went off to do some errands. Lee went to get some enlargements of some pictures of Virginia, Mandy, Ben and I dressed up for Kelly's wedding in early July. Also on this role were some from our trip up to the mountains. She also mailed some of Mandy's clothes that didn't fit to Angela. I went out to pick up some pills and do some grocery shopping. On my way, I stopped and looked at some CDs.

I got home and headed out for my dentist appointment. Joyce was just leaving. They are planning on coming down on Saturday and showing some old slides (remembering better times). I got a temporary filling and scheduled coming back in the middle of September. Any more, I think and wonder about what these future dates will bring. On the way there, I talked to Vickie on the cellular phone. I told her what was going on. She said she was going to be coming out in 3 weeks. I was concerned that Virginia may not be aware at that point and warned Vickie about this. I don't want to be an alarmist, but at the current pace, it seems likely. I wouldn't want Vickie to miss possibly her last chance to see and talk with Virginia. On the way back, I talked with Art. I let him know that Lee was doing fine. I also mentioned how things were going. When I got back, Lee ordered Boston Chicken. Tom and Mel stopped by and dropped off our treatment book. It turns out that one of the people at their church has a glioblastoma-multiform in the left rear (medulla) and has just had surgery. I made a bunch of suggestions - basically, keep beating at the damn thing. Lee got back just as Mandy and I had to leave to go to a Paris meeting at her high school. The meeting was pretty uneventful. I did check about the recent terrorist bombings in Paris. They talked about this. I may end up choosing to not let her go if I am concerned. I talked to Mandy about the possibility of Ben and I coming - if things go badly. I also asked Mandy if she still wanted to go. She does, but she doesn't know how she will feel if things go badly. She also commented that people keep talking like things are all over now. I really try to watch this, but apparently I communicate that sense. It does seem to be most likely, but I try to hold on to the little hope that I have.

Cindy, Lee and I watched TV in the bedroom with Virginia. She has been very tired today. She hasn't been very responsive. A little worse than yesterday. She did eat, but not very much. Lee called Art, late in the evening. She was going to tell him that Vickie should come out, sooner. Apparently, they had already decided that and are planning on driving out on September 7th for a few days. Lee had the same concerns that I did about how Virginia is doing. The doctor from Denver didn't call

tonight, so I'll call him tomorrow. Lee is going to sleep with Virginia tonight. I don't like this, but I think it helps me - alternating like this.

Wednesday, August 30th

All the days are just flowing into one another. I got up and made sure the kids got off to school okay. While Mandy and Ben were both in the living room with me, Ben got overly upset about a comment Mandy made about his watching cartoons. It, his response, was out of proportion. I think he did it as a result of the stresses. After Mandy left, he and I talked about it. I asked again if he wanted to talk to someone. He doesn't like Motl - he talks about stuff that Ben doesn't want to talk about (Virginia dying). He doesn't like his school counselor. I asked about Julie (his aunt). He perked up at this, so I will arrange for Julie to talk to him every so often. By phone isn't great since Julie lives in Des Moines, but it will probably help. I called down to Denver and left messages for Dr. Cohn to call us back.

Susan Ison stopped by for a while. She dropped off a humorous video tape - 'Wallace and Grommet: The Wrong Trousers'. I have seen this before and it is very good. While Susan was there, Lee mentioned that she had had a strange dream. In it Art had gone and bought a house with acreage. Lee hated it. In this dream, Art had gotten a billy goat and an emu! My comment was that Lee was identifying with the emu - a flightless bird trapped in a house. After Susan left, I took my shower and got dressed. I ran out and got a battery for the camcorder. I want to record Mandy's band thing tonight so that Virginia can see it.

While I was gone, Virginia threw up. We were going to let her stay in bed, but we got her out into the living room so we could clean the bed up and wash the sheets. I called our accountant and asked about any issues in terms of the life insurance and taxes. Basically there aren't any. But, the house valuation (basis) will change. I also called the court house to find out about wills and probate. This was very annoying because the people there "wouldn't give me any legal advice". What it comes down to is that I need a lawyer to find out if I need a lawyer (unless I want to go to the court house and get permission to go to the legal library and review the probate legal codes). So, I will be needing to get a family lawyer set up.

In the afternoon, I was sort of jittery and felt a bit odd. I also took a nap - something I hardly ever do. I must be feeling the effects of the stress of all this. I got a call back from Dr. Cohn. He basically said that there really wasn't anything curative that he could do. One possibility was to do a shunt. It turns out that one of the ventricles in Virginia's head is enlarged. It isn't clear why this is happening. There is a very small chance that a shunt would improve Virginia's condition for a little while (maybe a month). But it would be only temporary. I thought about this and talked to Lee and we are both in agreement that we don't really want to do this. It will be surgery and it is unlikely to help and it will only give us a little more time. I will talk to another doctor about it on Thursday as well as the hospice nurse, but I don't think I want to

put Virginia, the kids, Lee and myself through this. Dr. Cohn said that he expected things to be over in just a few weeks based on my description of where Virginia is at.

I took Mandy out to her band thing (a pep rally) and taped it. Virginia watched this a bit when we got back. Mandy was trying to talk with Virginia. Virginia was relatively unresponsive to her. Mandy felt that Virginia was more responsive to Ben tonight - and this really bothered her. I talked to her about it later. We had supper semi-late. Cindy Hoxmeier stopped by and talked for a while. A bit later, after Cindy had left, we got Virginia into bed. She hasn't eaten very much. She was pretty wet when we got her ready for bed. When I talked to Mandy, she was bothered by Cindy Heckle answering for Virginia earlier in the evening. She was also bothered by Motl forcing her to think about Virginia's dying. Mandy finally realized tonight that Virginia is probably going to die. She asked me how long it would be. I said, if things go badly, a little less than a month to two months. She started crying and asked "it can't be that soon, can it?". She also said/asked "do you know how hard it will be?". There was no way to explain to her how much I have been thinking about that. I know only too well how hard it will be. When I got back upstairs, I told Cindy about this and tried to get her to understand that this is Mandy's last chance to make contact and Cindy is getting between them. Cindy got a quirky look on her face at this. I suspected that she might be dismissing some of the importance of this to Mandy so I made the point again. She got pretty quiet for a while.

I guess that I have finally gotten to the point of letting go of any serious or probable hope. Things could still turn around, but that would be a miracle at this point. I don't like it, but I think I've done everything that I could.

Thursday, August 31st

I found out yesterday that Del, where we get our hair cut, just lost his wife to cancer on July 4th. Apparently it came on very suddenly. She was 47. I feel badly that I didn't know - to send a card or to say something to him.

A different nurse assistant came by today - Tracy. She seemed nice, but I didn't get much of a chance to talk with her. I was baking a couple of cakes - I guess nervous energy. Virginia's neighborhood friends stopped by at lunch time today - Cindy Hoxmeier, Peggy Seidl, Kathy Warden and Kay Godowski. Virginia had her eyes closed most of the time, but did get in a couple of zingers and smiled a couple of times. Cheryl, the hospice nurse, stopped by in the afternoon. I made a point of not being in the room so Virginia could ask any questions. She didn't ask any. Cheryl also talked to Virginia about the sort of things to expect to be happening (physically). Cheryl did talk to her about getting to her 'peaceful spot'. Cheryl told me about Virginia's response later. She said that Virginia was listening and Cheryl saw that Virginia understood and wasn't scared by what Cheryl was saying. In talking with Cheryl, she said that Virginia is weaker again today - she is continuing to decline. Even though she is declining, she is doing it in a stable fashion - not

crashing. She still expects her to plateau soon. I don't know. Cheryl said that Virginia has started to cross over - getting ready to let things go. She isn't in it deeply, but she is on that side of things.

I sorted through a bunch of unlabelled camcorder tapes and got them organized. Some were from the trip to the Caribbean and Disney World. It was nice seeing the happier times. The kids looked so young. The kids liked seeing how the other one looked. It was nice seeing Virginia as she should be. We had Chinese food in the bedroom with Virginia. She is continuing to eat less. But she still hasn't had seizures. We watched the tape that Susan brought over. It was a funny tape. Rick stopped over late in the evening. We talked for a bit. I indicated how things were going. I can tell that our friends want to do stuff and help, but have a hard time. Dr. Pierson called - he was Virginia's boss when she worked at Anesthesia Associates. He had heard from Bill Cheedle - our accountant - about Virginia. He asked about stopping by. I said this would be fine. Dr. Lillihei didn't call today.

September 1995

Saturday, September 2nd

On Friday, Virginia was very awake and alert in the morning. I told her about Pierson and she responded. I ordered a bunch of computer software in the afternoon. One of the things I ordered was a French language CD. I am expecting to go to France with Mandy and want to be prepared, linguistically. I went out and did a little bit of shopping - Target and the grocery store. I fixed chicken for supper. At one point in the day, we were moving Virginia and she accidentally scratched my head with her hand. She said "excuse me". It was strange because it sounded more like her normal voice and she said it quickly (not a long delay like a lot of the responses). It amazes me how her brain can still function as well as it does with all the problems and medication. I slept with Virginia on Friday night. She was pretty restless. I remember having a dream where things were normal. I really miss all of it - the big things and the little things.

On Saturday, the kids got up and eventually got around to doing their chores. I exercised and baked some muffins - blueberry muffins - for Mandy. I had talked to Julie on Friday night and asked her if she would talk, via phone, to the kids. I think they need an outlet. I want someone to be watching out for their emotional needs, and I might miss the signals. I don't think they talked to her about Virginia, but it seemed to help them.

Dr. Lillihei finally called. He had a slightly different story than Dr. Cohn did about the shunt. He said that it could, on the far upside, give us a possible 6 months. They don't understand, from the scans, why she is doing so much worse. He suspects it might be pressure from fluid. He didn't think that the left side stuff was as bad as PVH did. However, he did say that it was probably tumor activity of some kind. He felt that Virginia might have a 30% chance of some level of improvement. The best improvement that I could expect would be to her level of function in late June or early July - no more. And the 6 months would be a combination of the shunt and another couple of cycles of chemotherapy. He said the surgery would be pretty simple - about two hours. The biggest risk or issue would be with the anesthetic. He said the eventual outcome is not in question. We would just be buying some time. I asked him what he would do in a similar situation. He couldn't really say - he said it would depend on other factors like children and the impact on them. Afterwards, I talked with Lee and we are still in agreement that it doesn't really make sense. It is a small chance and could just prolong Virginia in a bad quality of life situation. If Virginia shows a couple of days of improvement, I will probably consider doing it. (In other words, if the tamoxifen is starting to have some benefits, I want to give it more of a chance. However, I don't expect this to happen.) I feel

bad or ashamed part of the time because I am not trying everything. But it seems that things are getting to the point of heroic, but mostly hopeless efforts.

In the afternoon, I let Ben go to a CSU game with Hoxmeier's. He was sort of whining, and didn't come right out and ask. Mandy took him aside and told him "why don't you try asking". So he finally did. I took Mandy out to the mall to get some more clothes. We stopped and had lunch on the way and ran into Joe at Wendy's. Mandy and I had a very nice time. She is a very nice person and a lot of fun to be around.

Virginia is not doing quite as well today. She has slept most of the day and thrown up 3-4 times. She has still not had a bowel movement. She is also eating much less. We ended up giving her a anti-nausea suppository (well, Lee did). She still made a joke with Cindy (her sister) and Lee. She has been very restless and not very responsive today. I am wondering how much longer things will continue. I suspect not very long. I have recently started, for lack of a better term, meditating. I sit upstairs in the quiet of our bedroom and try to concentrate on Virginia and asking her to fight this.

Joe came over in the late afternoon. I fixed steaks. We ate out in the dining room and let Virginia sleep. Lee and Cindy went in after supper and watched TV in the bedroom. I watched "Interview with the Vampire" with Mandy and Joe. Ben watched some movies downstairs.

I suspect that things are going to get even harder and more emotional and stressful as Virginia gets worse.

Monday, September 4th

It has been a pretty long Labor Day weekend. On Sunday, we really didn't do much. Virginia didn't eat very much. Because of this, we are just trying to get the Depakote and Decadron into her. So we are not trying to get her to take the tamoxifen. She hasn't been very awake today. I fixed burgers for lunch. I was out doing some shopping and called Julie to find out how it went talking with the kids. She said that they both seem to be doing fine. They mostly didn't talk about Virginia or how things were going, but they both got around to talking to her about this. She said that this is a good sign - since they are 'facing' the issue. For supper, Cindy and Lee had some leftovers. I took Ben and Mandy and Joe out to a movie ("Crimson Tide"). We all liked the movie. We went out to Chili's for a late supper afterwards.

I really struggle with how things are going. Virginia doesn't seem to respond to me at all. I want to be with her all the time, but part of me wants to let Lee take over. To some extent, Lee has. This helps somewhat, but it makes me feel pretty useless.

I spent the night with Virginia. She was very restless. I got up Monday morning around 6:30-7AM. After Lee got up, I went out for a bike ride around the neighborhood. This felt good - it seems like months since I've done it (even though I know it hasn't been that long).

Lee told me that she had been talking to Virginia and told her how special she was - as her first-born. Virginia got a big smile on her face. She said that she and Virginia sort of grew up together. Virginia responded and said "yes, we did".

Virginia was pretty unresponsive in the morning, but did better in the afternoon. Ben and I took a bike ride to Target between 2:30 and 4PM. He did really well. He seems to be dealing with the situation as well as could be expected. He said that he would help out with Virginia on the weekends after Lee goes home. I told him that I appreciated this, but that Grandma Lee was going to be here until things were resolved "one way or another". We got back and Turley's and Hoxmeier's had shown up for a barbecue. I had fixed the burrito roll-ups and baked beans. After a quick shower, I threw the burgers and hot dogs on the grill. It was a nice time, although I felt very much at loose ends when Rick and Butch were talking about work. I think it is going to be an emotional roller-coaster to get back into work. Mandy was very quiet and was obviously feeling depressed. Cindy and Joyce went into talk with Virginia and she responded. So she has been doing a bit better this afternoon. Butch invited me out for a beer this week. After they left, Mandy wanted to get out for a little bit, so she and I drove up to Target. When we got back, I called Vickie and made sure she knew what to expect. Lee had talked to her about this, but I wanted to make sure. Depending on how the week goes, Virginia may not be responding to anybody by Thursday.

Tuesday, September 5th

I got up early to take Mandy and her friend Larissa to school. I had slept upstairs and Lee had stayed with Virginia. Virginia has been about the same today. Donna, the nurse assistant, stopped by about 1PM and got the bed changed and Virginia cleaned up. Cheryl, the nurse, stopped by around 2PM. She talked to Virginia. Again, I left the room to allow her more freedom in responses. Cheryl said that Virginia recognized her and held her hand - and squeezed it in response. Cheryl says that Virginia is very tired and is letting go. She is again much weaker than last time. Apparently, she responds well to Cheryl because Cheryl is part of the transition process, whereas family members are barriers to her letting go (at some level). Cheryl set up for suppositories for most of the remaining medication and a hospital bed. I asked how much longer things might take - I am concerned for the kids. I also know that I don't want Virginia to linger. I also know that I am getting ready for the end (and don't like the fact that I am). Cheryl said that it could be a month. This sort of surprised me because she is continuing to slip and is not eating. Part of it is for all of us as family members to 'give her permission' to let go.

I have gotten very emotional today. I have started crying or almost started a couple of times - for just a little bit. I think about all the things I am going to miss with Virginia. I won't buy her Christmas or birthday or anniversary presents. We won't go on vacations together. I won't get to take her back to Ames for our 25th anniversary of our first date (which would have been in 1997). She won't see the kids graduate from high school or college. She won't see them at their weddings. We have had a great life together, but we had so much more that we were going to do. It is so incredibly unfair. (Talking to Vickie, this has really shaken her belief in church.)

After Cheryl left, I got Mandy and Larissa from school. After dropping off Larissa, I took Mandy to her dermatologist and then to the grocery store (for more pills for her acne treatments). We ordered pizza for supper and ate in the bedroom with Virginia. I had gotten some CDs today and looked at them for a bit. Lee and I talked about the 'letting go' aspect. I am going to talk to Virginia tomorrow. I needed to talk with Lee to make sure that I was ready to talk with Virginia. I want her to know how much I love her and that I am here to support her in whatever she wants or needs. I also want to make sure she knows that the kids will be well taken care of. I called Julie and warned her that I would be talking with the kids on Wednesday and that they might call. Art and Vickie will be driving out on Thursday. Art will stay and Vickie will use Lee's ticket to get home on Sunday. Julie will also be coming out over the weekend.

Wednesday, September 6th

Today was a hard, but good day. I got up early (around 5:45AM) and exercised. I had been sleeping in the bed with Virginia last night. This was the last night before the hospital bed. Lee went in with Virginia after I got up. I got up so that I could get Mandy to school early for her school pictures. When I got back, I had breakfast with Ben. We had a fair amount of time and I had him read before he took off for school. He seems to be doing okay. Susan Ison stopped by shortly after Ben left. She tried to say hello to Virginia, but Virginia didn't wake up. I talked with Susan for a little bit before she had to leave. The hospital bed came in the late morning. The delivery guy got it all set up. After he left, we got Virginia ready to move and I picked her up and moved her. We warned her that I was going to pick her up, but she was still very startled. She opened her eyes very wide - panicky. She was reaching out with her right arm trying to grab anything. When I got her set down, I asked if I had hurt her and she said yes. I apologized to her - I didn't want to hurt her, but I also wanted to do it quickly. She went back to sleep. She looks much more comfortable in the hospital bed. Lee and I moved the other beds around so that someone can sleep on a single bed in the room with Virginia. We put the full sized bed in Ben's old room - where Lee is sleeping.

Around lunch time, Roger Ison stopped by. He is taking off to visit his folks because his mother is ill. He will be gone 12 days and I suspect he wanted to stop by in case

things move quickly. After Roger left, I went in for my talk with Virginia. This was hard. I told her that I had heard from Cheryl how tired she was. I told her that if she is too tired to fight, that I understood this and just want to help her, however I can. I also told her that I would take care of the kids - that they would be okay. I told her that I loved her. Lee was by her side while I was saying this. She didn't respond during any of this. I believe that she was listening. I gathered that because of a lack of response, she really was ready to let go.

After I fixed lunch for Lee and I, I called around to several funeral homes about cremation arrangements. I don't really want a chapel or church service or for there to be any interment. So, the prices ranged from \$1285 to \$825 for the direct cremation - no ceremony. They all seemed fine, but the expensive one was the most helpful, but that might have been because they were the first one I called. I need to make sure about cornea donation stuff. Apparently, the corneas have to be removed within 4 hours. After this, I went out and got Mandy and Larissa (and the Schendel's exchange student). Mandy went in after school and was very up and bubbly. She rubbed Virginia's neck and told her about her day. Virginia responded really well. She opened her eyes and was pretty alert. She talked a little bit. She was as good as I have seen her for over a week. She actually ate some soup and malt and water. She was awake more. She didn't talk to me much, but did respond verbally when I asked if she was comfortable - she responded with "I'm comfortable". It was interesting to watch my reaction to this improvement. I don't want to give up and want it to be a 'big deal turnaround'. But, I also know that it is probably a combination of things - Mandy, some new medication and the new bed.

I debated whether I should and also talked with Lee about talking with the kids. In the end, I talked with both the kids. I talked with Mandy first. I told her that I thought it was neat how Virginia responded to her today. I also said that, this response aside, she is not doing well. I told her about the discussion with Cheryl. I made a big point about Virginia having fought hard for a year and being tired (not that she wants to give up). Mandy took this really well and was obviously preparing herself for it. I went on to talk about how sorry I was and that I wish I could just fix this. I told her that I was most sorry for her and Ben and Art and Lee. Art and Lee shouldn't have to deal with this and Mandy and Ben are too young for it. I told her I wasn't happy about Virginia dying, but that it was part of the deal - sickness and in health. I signed up for the duration and we both knew that one of us would die first. We just didn't expect it this soon. I broke down and cried when I started talking about all the things that Virginia and I wouldn't get to do together. Mandy had been crying a little, and we both cried together for a little bit. She said that she was worried about me. I also asked if she had any questions and she didn't. I did tell her that she and Ben didn't need to worry about money or college. I told her that Virginia and I had planned ahead years ago. She did really well with this and seems to be as well prepared as you can be for something like this.

I went with Ben to pick up oriental take-out. I talked to Ben about this on the drive there and back. I would have preferred to do it some other place, but it went well. I

told him the same basic things that I had talked with Mandy about. Like Mandy, he seemed to be prepared for this, he wasn't surprised. We did talk about how, in Ben's perception, Virginia was only responding to women. I told him that this wasn't really true, that she still hears us and loves us, but that it is part of the letting go process. I told him that she is still here and alive and can hear us - she isn't dead yet. He should take advantage of the time - it is precious time that we should use. He did get very sad looking, but he didn't cry. I think that this was mostly due to being in the mini-van and that I kept my emotions under control. He thought that she would be buried in a coffin. I told him about the plans. He had a question about Virginia's remains. He would like a memorial in the back yard. On the way back, he said that he would be happy when the fire got to the last part of Virginia's head because then the tumor would be totally dead and couldn't hurt anybody else.

I am very proud of the kids. Virginia did a great job raising them. I know that I helped too, but a big part of their personalities and style is due to her and the first years of their life with Virginia. We had supper in the bedroom again. It was a nice dinner. Virginia had her eyes open every now and then. After supper, I called Ben's teacher about some homework and what was going on here.

I have tried several times over the last few days to call and leave a message at work, but I just don't like the way the messages start to sound. So, I tried to call today and talk with my boss directly - but he wasn't there.

I would really like for this all to turn around and for Virginia to get better. But, I'm trying not to get my hopes up. My guess is that this is a temporary thing. What I need to do is to accept the gift of time together that we have and be happy with it. But that is very hard to do.

Thursday, September 7th

I got up and exercised this morning, but didn't have time for a shower right away. I took Mandy and her friends to school again and then got back and got Ben off to school. About this time Tracy, the other nurse assistant, stopped by. While she was here, I took my shower. Virginia does seem a bit better again today. Cheryl stopped over in the morning. She saw that Virginia was doing much better. I asked her what about this - hopeful that she might turn around. Cheryl said that she is doing better, but that we are still talking about the same period of time. She felt that her doing better was a combination of the bed, the new suppositories and my telling her that things would be okay. I asked about the reaction she has toward me and if I should do anything different. She said that I should keep doing what I am doing. Joyce stopped over and talked with Virginia. I left the room again - so Virginia would be more talkative. Joyce told her how much Virginia meant to her. Joyce was crying some and Virginia reached up and touched her face. She also said how sorry she was that Virginia wasn't doing well. Virginia made a joke and said back "What? I'm not doing well?". This really got to Joyce.

About this time, I left to pick Ben up for lunch. He wanted to go to Godfathers. We had a nice lunch together. After I dropped him off, I went to the Steele's pharmacy in the old-town area to pick up some more of the suppositories. I got back home and fixed some blueberry muffins for Mandy. Apparently, when I am out of control and stressed out, I like to cook. After this, I went to pick up Mandy. When we got home, I called the lawyer on the Hospice board back with a question about the will. I was trying to find out what, if anything, I needed to do to settle the estate. I didn't get a particularly clear answer, but it looks like I should make out a sworn affidavit accounting for Virginia's personal belongings and file this with the court. Everything else should just flow over because of the ownership that Virginia and I set up a long time ago (joint tenancy (ownership) with right of survivorship). The belongings that I could think of were really just some of Virginia's jewelry. I should probably get this appraised (and insured) at the same time. I also need to get an appraisal of the house because the 'basis' for capital gains purposes changes - my half stays the same, but Virginia's half comes to me at the new valuation. This is all really a pain to have to worry about. I also finally got in touch with my boss. I had been trying, and started to leave messages but I didn't like the way the all started sounding. I told him that things were going down-hill and that we had maybe a month. He expressed his sympathy and told me not to worry about it and that things would still be there when I got back. It is very nice having the support like this from where you work.

While I was on the phone, Art and Vickie got here from Iowa. They had driven and made good time. Virginia has been very alert with Vickie around. I had fixed scalloped potatoes and ham for supper. We had this in the bedroom - Art, Lee, Vickie, Mandy, Joe, Ben and I. It was quite a crowd and I think Vickie asked if it was too noisy. Virginia answered, "It's heaven". She obviously likes having all of her loved ones around. Mel Huibregtse stopped by and dropped off some fresh tomatoes and peaches. Later in the evening Virginia gave a kiss to somebody going to bed. I asked if I could get one. Lee said that she shook her head yes. She was looking at me and I kissed her a couple of times. She still hasn't talked to me today, but she has looked at me a bit more - and I got a kiss! During the evening, I also rubbed her back for a while. She seemed to like it, but I didn't get any response. Over the last couple of days, I have noticed that there is a difference in her eyelids. Her left one doesn't open as much as the right one most of the time. I've also noticed that her mouth seems a little droopy to me. It is a bit lower on the left side and the left side has a tendency to be open a bit. Even though she doesn't talk to me, she does talk with others and her voice is very quiet and she sounds throaty or like someone with a chest cold.

Art and I talked about a bunch of stuff during the afternoon. He was wondering what we were going to do regarding a service and so on. Virginia will have a simple cremation without any 'viewing'. For a service, my thought is to have something here - because the whole house will remind people of Virginia. He was also wondering about flowers. I told him that I was going to ask for donations to Hospice

or to the American Brain Tumor Association instead of flowers. While we were talking, he had also been wondering about how Virginia had responded to him. He seemed to be somewhat comforted by the explanation that she is doing this as part of the letting go process. Vickie is going to stay with Virginia tonight in the room.

Friday, September 8th

I slept okay last night - upstairs. Vickie stayed with Virginia. I sleep okay, but I still get up during the night a couple of times. I exercised a little and then drove Mandy and Larissa to school. When I came back, I finished exercising, got dressed and then took Ben to school for his day up in the mountains. He seems pretty excited. Susan stopped by this morning for a little bit. She talked with Lee and I for a bit and then went in with Virginia. Art and I ran out to try to take Mandy to lunch, but she wanted to put it off until Monday. We got back and I did some paperwork and did a little cleaning in my office. Julie called and Art and I went to pick her up at the Marriott. When we got back we had lunch out in the kitchen.

I got a call back from Dennis Vetter. I had called him to ask about a couple of things. One was funeral homes. He didn't have any real comments - the one he used last year seemed okay. I asked about legal stuff. His situation was very different and he is still hassling with it - a year later. This was because this was their second marriage and Kathy (Kathleen?) Vetter had most of her estate go to her family and nieces and nephews. The key thing I was calling about was this reaction from Virginia - not responding to me. He and I talked about this for a little while because he had the same experience and it was obvious that it really hurt him. He hadn't been able to come to closure because of this. As I write this and think about it, this is one of the things that worries me - that Virginia will die without ever really talking to me again. I also heard that Dennis is getting married in about 3 weeks. He is going to marry Mike Bacco's sister-in-law. (Mike was a friend who died of cancer several years ago.)

During the afternoon, I loaded some game software for Art on my computer - so that he would have something fun to do while he was here. I took off and got Mandy and then did some shopping (Target and groceries). When I got back, it was just in time to go get Ben. On the way to get him, I called Josie and asked if she was not coming to clean anymore. She hasn't been out for about a month and hasn't called. She apologized and said that she still wanted to do it and would be out next week. If she gets unreliable, I'll have to look around because I need someone to clean the house after this is all over. I stopped off at Wendy's and got Virginia a baked potato and a frosty (a chocolate shake). Virginia had asked for a baked potato, explicitly! Rick stopped by and asked if I would like to get out. This was nice, but I wasn't really in the mood. During the evening, Art and I watched the "Tuskegee Airmen". It was a pretty good movie.

I have gone in several times during the day and talked to and touched and kissed Virginia. She has turned away or closed her eyes each time. She hasn't talked to me or responded to me at all. This is really starting to affect me and it hurts really badly. She does it to Art and I think to Cindy. But she has talked to Vickie and Rick and others. I think I understand it intellectually, but it rips at my heart emotionally. I am still trying to go in but I don't know if she doesn't want me to. I am going on the assumption that she wants me around, but just can't really interact with me. She has been having some headaches. It turned out that by going with the suppository, we were not giving her enough Decadron. We have sorted that out and I hope it helps the headaches. She has been drinking a lot more, but she is still not eating much.

I think another part of my stress and emotional pain is that with Lee and everyone out here, I am at loose ends. I don't have to take care of Virginia, cook, clean, ... I do take care of the kids, but I am bouncing around a little more. This has been a very hard, long day.

Saturday, September 9th

I slept with Virginia last night. I got up and gave her the suppositories at 1:30AM and at 3:30AM. I had set an alarm for the first one, but didn't hear it at all. I meant to do the second one earlier, but I fell asleep - I'm just glad I woke up when I did. I tried to be as gentle as I could, but I was a little clumsy putting them in.

I woke up early, but got up around 9:00AM. I fixed muffins because Virginia shook her head when Lee asked if she would like some of my muffins (with Lindt chocolate). While I was out baking, Virginia responded to Lee with a comment something to the effect of "he's a great guy". I still wish she would talk to me. Julie took a call from a neighbor (it turned out to be Sylvia Thomas) about stopping by. I thought it might be Deb Goliass and Nancy Morley. I asked Virginia if she would want to see them and she shook her head 'no'. After the muffins, Nancy Morley and Sylvia Thomas stopped by with some flowers. Virginia was mostly asleep during their visit. I went out for a bike ride right around noon. It is a little cool and rainy today, but it is sort of nice being cooler. After my shower, I took Ben out for a late lunch and picked up some groceries. I went out a little later with Art and picked up a CD storage rack. I spent a portion of the evening sorting through and organizing the CDs. Mandy went out with Julie and did some shopping (and talking). Ben was supposed to be cleaning his room, but it is going pretty slow.

Lee fixed a brisket for supper. We were all going to eat in with Virginia, but she was pretty jumpy. I went in and asked her what she wanted - none of us, some of us or all of us. She lifted her hand and put her thumb and first finger together to communicate 'a few'. So, Lee, Vickie and Julie ate in the bedroom with her. During the day, I have rubbed her back a lot.

Later in the evening, I was out on the porch with Lee. I asked her how she thought Virginia was doing because I think she is doing a little less well today. She looks more tired and has been fussing with her head. I think it is hurting her, even though she doesn't say so. Lee thinks the same. I think Lee is doing okay, but is really struggling with the emotions. I told Lee that in spite of this, Virginia and I had a great life - adventures and travel, great kids. We had a better life in 20 years than most people do in twice that time. Lee agreed with me. Lee then asked me how I was first attracted to Virginia. This is a challenging question. I told her it was the total person. It was a combination of personality, sense of humor, smile and appearance. Virginia always looked good in white ribbed sweaters and blue jeans (boy howdy!). Even though she is beautiful and pretty, it is really an inner sense of spirit that I think is the source of a lot of this. I was looking at her lying in bed today and over the last few days. She is still very pretty in spite of all of this that has happened. I guess it sort of surprised me that I still honestly think she is pretty. I also talked to Lee about how it seemed fated that Virginia and I should be together. Virginia and I had, a long time ago, talked about this. At one point, Art had almost moved to Oregon. It struck both of us that if we hadn't met at Iowa State, we would have met out in Portland. It was meant to be. So the thing I struggle with is if it was meant to be, why has it been cut short. It isn't just fate, it's a cruel fate.

After this, we went in and I rubbed Virginia's back a little more and talked with Lee and Vickie and Cindy about some of the early days. When we first were dating. Some parties and the clothes we wore. This was fun to talk about. Virginia didn't chime in, but I think she might have smiled once or twice. Later on, I made up an ID card for Vickie and showed her one of the CDs "Oceans Below". I took Joe home and then talked to Julie about the kids. She says they both seem to be doing okay - all things considered. They don't want to dwell on what is happening, but they do talk about it some. Vickie is sleeping with Virginia tonight, since it is her last night. I am expecting the good-bye's tomorrow to be really hard - since this will probably be the last time that Julie and Vickie see Virginia. I wish I knew what to do to make Virginia the happiest and most comfortable during the little time we have left.

Sunday, September 10th

Vickie slept with Virginia last night. I sleep okay either place (our bed upstairs or the bedroom with Virginia) but not great. I sleep pretty fitfully. I went in and checked on Virginia a couple of times in the morning before Vickie (and Virginia) woke up. I got up and exercised and took my shower early. Virginia was very alert this morning. I went in after getting dressed and said "Hey beautiful!". She responded quickly with "Who? Me?". She also made a comment about Lee being "ready to get away" or something like that. I think it was joke, but I wasn't sure of what she was trying to say. Again, her voice is pretty husky and weak. After everybody was up and dressed, Vickie and Julie said their good-byes. This was very hard because this is probably the last time they will see Virginia. Art, Lee and I drove them to the Marriott for their bus. It was a very quiet drive. After we said our

good-byes, Art, Lee and I stopped off at Swensen's and I got Virginia a chocolate malt that she had asked for.

Ben spent most of the day cleaning his room. It had been okay, but it was impossible to find anything because of disorganization. So, since I've been at loose ends, I had him clean it. In the afternoon, there was the annual neighborhood picnic. Mandy went (with Joe and some of her friends) to the picnic. She said it was pretty boring.

Rick stopped by. He and Joyce have been trying to get me out for a movie or dinner or something. It is very sweet of them to do this, but I don't really want to be gone. We went out for a walk. I talked to Rick about some of the plans for a memorial service. He had a similar idea to one I had about having people write down some memories. He also thought of bringing pictures. He offered to have part of this (the public part) at their church - which is pretty non-denominational. I am still struggling with what to do about this. I do want to have family and close friends over to the house, if they want to. I suspect we will do something at a hall for the larger masses. I suspect that between the neighborhood, our friends, the kids' friends and my work, there could be around 150 or so people at a service. Talking with Rick and Lee about this, there was a spot where I couldn't speak and needed a moment to collect myself. I took Rick home (since he had ridden down on his bike). When I got back Lee had made most of supper, and I put the chicken on the grill. We ate out in the kitchen so that Virginia could sleep.

After supper, Ben and I worked on his supplies for Eco-week. This took a good hour getting everything found and ready. Butch and Cindy called saying they wanted to talk with me about something - but they didn't say. I assumed it was something about the service. They came over around 8:30PM. Butch had been working on getting Virginia's degree granted. He succeeded! It took him two weeks to work through the system. They both knew how much it had meant to Virginia. She was short 9.5 credits and the liberal arts college agreed to waive these last credits - based on the situation and her grade point average. Art, Lee and I were all very moved by this. Butch will stop by tomorrow with the folder, a letter and some certificate, but not the actual diploma. That will be granted in December at the normal CSU graduation. Butch also told us that Joyce had called up CSU this week to start the same process. The secretary was pretty confused - since it was happening - and asked Joyce if she knew a John Hoxmeier (Butch's real name). They wanted for me to tell Virginia. Lee was, after a while, able to get Virginia to wake up. I came in and told her that CSU had waived the last 9.5 credits and that she was now a CSU graduate. She looked at me and said "No way.". Cindy asked her what we should call her - "Mrs. Mikkelsen". Virginia responded with "doctor". She smiled at the news. I was talking with Joyce later, letting her know that Virginia knew. She mentioned that because of Virginia's grade point she would probably be a Phi-Beta-Kappa. In talking with Joyce, I think the reason the Hoxmeier's came over was because Joyce had told them how Virginia was looking (they had stopped by while we were dropping off Vickie and Julie). They wanted to make sure that she knew that this had happened.

Even though I know things are going to keep going down hill, a part of me still clings to hope for a turn-around. I am hoping, inside, that this news about the degree triggers something inside Virginia and she pulls out of it. I know this probably won't happen, but it would be really something.

Virginia hasn't been eating much again today and seems weaker. She needs help getting the water bottle up to her mouth, although she can hold it and get it part way. Joyce and Art and Lee and I have noticed that the left side of her mouth is drooping more. She doesn't look as good to me in other ways. Her right eye is closed more often and her eyes look sunken. I just hope that she isn't in much (any) pain. She says not, but I suspect that she is.

The kids are doing fine, but I am worried about both of them. I am also worried that something will happen while Ben is up at his Eco-week sleep-over. Mandy looks like something is bothering her, but she won't tell what, if anything, is going on.

Monday, September 11th

I slept in the room with Virginia. She slept reasonably well, but she is fairly restless. She rubs her head and neck a fair amount. I got up pretty early and was up with Mandy and talked with her for just a few minutes. I got Ben ready to go for his Eco-week thing and then exercised and showered. He went in and said goodbye to Virginia. Then I got him over to school. We carried his stuff into the library area. Usually he gives me a kiss as he is taking off for school. Today, with all his friends and class-mates around, he just sort of gave me a hug. It was sort of cute. Art and I went over and took Mandy out for lunch - at Wendy's. This was fun. She and Art get along pretty well with their mutual ribbing.

After lunch, we got back and Cheryl, the Hospice nurse, came over. She went in and checked Virginia over and talked to her a little. She told us that Virginia is weaker and sleepier again this time - she hasn't plateaued like Cheryl expected her to do. Her blood pressure is getting pretty low (at 80 over 56) and her heart is compensating by beating faster (at 110 - and she had normally had pretty low heart rates. Her heart sounds weaker. She is still clear in her lungs - which surprised Cheryl. Cheryl asked Virginia if she had found the 'restful spot' and Virginia spoke "Oh yeah.". Cheryl tried several times to find out about pain. Apparently her neck and the back part of her head are hurting or at least feeling very different. Cheryl asked about nausea and Virginia responded verbally again with a "no". Cheryl checked with Virginia about going with Roxinol and apparently Virginia is okay with this. Cheryl recommended going from Depakote to Phenobarbital and also doing the Roxinol which is apparently a liquid morphine. With these things, I expect that Virginia will become unresponsive almost all of the time (because she is pretty close now). Joyce stopped in for a minute as well. She dropped off some information about a memorial wall at the CSU library (you can buy inscribed stones). Art spent

part of the afternoon tearing down the swing set. The poles are going to be real buggers to remove.

Mandy came home and had a pretty good day. She had talked to one of her counselors. She wanted to cancel her appointment with Dr. Motl - which is fine. She was worried that he might be mad at her for canceling twice. I told her that this was okay. He is working for us. I canceled it and did not reschedule. I told Mandy that I would reschedule whenever she wanted. But what she wants is to be able to call somebody when she needs to talk. I told her that I am always here for her and that she could also talk with Julie whenever she wanted to. She went out with Joe and his mom to the mall at around 4:30PM. When she got back, we headed out for her back to school night at Rocky. We talked a little on the way over (with her driving). I told her that things were proceeding with her mom. I also asked her if she had any wishes about the service. This really got her and I am sort of sorry that I asked. She asked how soon. I said no more than a month. At school, I met with all of her teachers and her counselor. I made sure that they knew what was going on - all but one did. They all seem to be good folks. We ran into Scoot Crandel (who we had shared a maternity room with on Mandy's birth) and also Ellen and Tim Buchanan (from the old neighborhood). Ellen didn't know that things were going so badly. She said that she would stop by. Mandy told me afterwards that I look mad when I am telling people what is happening. I can believe that this is true, but I am not mad, just trying to control my emotions. Mandy and I drove over and picked up carry-out Chinese. On the way, I told her how I was feeling - so helpless. I talked about how I cry at a lot of music because it makes me think of Virginia. She said that she has the same thing happen to her. She was being very comforting to me. She is a good kid.

Virginia has been sleeping most of the afternoon and evening. It turns out that I was supposed to get a written prescription from Fangman's office (for the Roxinol). I didn't realize this. I will run over and do it first thing in the morning. I feel really bad about this because it would alleviate some of Virginia's pain.

On the way to get the food with Mandy, she told me that Cindy has been bossing her around and been sort of mean. Cindy has done a couple of things that have really gotten under my skin as well. She is under stress from the situation, as are all of us, but I think I need to talk with her. I can put up with the stuff that she is doing that bugs me, but I will not have her muck with Mandy.

Today, I was looking around on Virginia's Macintosh and found some more of these journal entries - including the ones that I had found the hand written notes for.

#1 Saturday, February 5, 1994

We had to be at McGraw at 9:00 this morning for Ben's basketball game. He stayed up late last night and really didn't want to get up. He was moving slow and kept snapping at both of us. I asked what was

bothering him. He said he was very nervous because he would be playing with the 5th graders. He is insecure about his playing and he didn't want to mess up in front of everyone. We told him that no one could guarantee how he or anyone else would play and he should just go and have fun. As it turned out he is bigger than most of the 5th graders and he did a really good job. There were a few snide remarks exchanged but he was not the lone target and that seemed to make him feel better. I guess misery really does love company.

Mandy's best friend spent the night Friday so they slept in and missed the game. I usually encourage Mandy to come to Ben's games but didn't push it today. The girls were up late doing teenage girl things (lots of giggling, gossiping and bonding). Mandy has been stressed lately and she needed a night to unwind and a morning to sleep in.

Ben and Mandy did their chores this afternoon without too much complaining but they sure took their time. Ben knew that as soon as his chores were done he would get his allowance. This is especially important today because he gets to go to Target and buy the bridge to the Starship Enterprise. He was thrilled to have saved enough money to finally be able to buy it. As a reward for a good report card he had a friend spend the night and we all went out to dinner and a movie (without Mandy-she was babysitting).

Saturdays have always been a struggle in our house. There always seem to be games to attend and the chores never get done. It is now a rule that the chores are to be done by 2:00 unless there are special circumstances. Since we made this decision, chores are a given. As a part of our management plan we have detailed who is to do what and how the tasks are to be performed. I took them step by step through the process and spelled out what was expected. Their weekdays are structured and we found that although they need down time on the weekends, they also need some kind of structure. Saturday chores accomplish this and give them an opportunity to be active participants in the running of the house.

#2 Thursday, February 1, 1994

I don't have classes on Tuesdays and Thursdays. In order to reduce time conflicts I set aside Tuesday as my day to study and Thursday as my day to catch up on my domestic duties. Every other Thursday the cleaning lady comes. Thursday is also my day to do volunteer work in Ben's classroom. Today, however, I am not needed at school and I have the house to myself all day. I did laundry all morning while I watered the plants and paid the bills. This afternoon I did the grocery shopping and went to Target to pick up a few things.

When I got home I started the roast for supper. I picked Mandy up at 3:30 and picked Ben up at 5:00 from basketball practice. In between the two I put my feet up and watched Oprah while I folded the laundry.

After dinner Ben and I spent 7:00 to 8:00 with the TV off. He ran through his multiplication facts and studied for his DOL test the next day. He is really coming along on those math facts.

Ben went to bed at 9:00 and Mandy and I sat in her room until almost 10:00 just talking about her day. It was nice to be able to spend some time with her and just listen to her tell me the days gossip.

Tim and I watched the news and got ready for bed and David Letterman at 10:30. Tim had had a long day and ended up falling asleep halfway through the show. Poor guy.

Since I have arranged my week to accommodate my necessary tasks, I have found that it has decreased the conflicts and stress that I was subjecting myself to. Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays are spent on campus and the kids know that if they have a problem they must deal with daddy, not me. I do not accept any invitations or obligations on Tuesdays as that day is set aside to fulfill my student obligations. Thursdays are filled with my domestic obligations. This arrangement has worked well for me for the past two semesters. By organizing my week in this way I have structured my activities in such a way that allows me to accomplish quite a bit more and weed out those activities that were just draining my time and energy. I do, without guilt or remorse, say no to many things that used to fill up my days off.

THE FAMILY SYSTEM

VIRGINIA MIKKELSEN.....40, wife, mother, CSU student

TIM MIKKELSEN.....40, husband, father, HP employee

AMANDA MIKKELSEN.....14, daughter, sister, 8th grader

BEN MIKKELSEN.....9, son, brother, 4th grader

MAX.....7, cat, loyal family pet

SPOT.....9 months, cat, rambunctious newcomer

#3 Monday, February 7, 1994

Up early today to drive the girls to school. It was below zero with the wind chill so I decided to drive them instead of making them suffer at the bus stop. Since I was already up, I showered and got dressed for the

day. Ben had a big math test and he was very nervous about it. As a special treat, I made Ben a big breakfast and served it at the table with a candle and fancy silverware. He thought it was pretty neat. I decided to take him to school to spare him from the elements. He was in a really good mood when I dropped him off and I think it helped decrease his nervousness.

I was on campus by 9:00 and went to the library for research on a paper. After my 10:00 class I went back to the library for more research. I want to finish the research this week and write the paper this weekend. I have got to get organized with all of these projects.

This is the difficult part of school. The class time really is not a time burden. It is the research and writing the papers and reading and studying for tests that are activities that cut into family time. I have a system that works really well on average weeks but there are so few average weeks. For the next week this paper will take top priority. I worked on the paper this evening after Ben went to bed but had to stop to help Mandy study for an English test that had her very stressed out. When she went to bed at 10:00, Tim and I spent an hour on the Internet trying to get some information I needed for the paper. It was really kind of pleasant to be working together with no outside distractions.

Tonight was one of those nights where our family system was interacting with and in conflict with outside systems. Mandy and her school responsibilities came into direct conflict with my school responsibilities. But my responsibility as her mother took priority. I see one of my main obligations as being available to both of the kids for any kind of help and assistance they require for school work. Many times this has meant that my school work has been done at 10:00, 11:00 and even 12:00 at night. Tim helps as much as he can but his job requires travel and a lot of time in the evening and besides, I really see it as part of my mom duties that I am not ready to give up.

#4 Friday, February 11, 1994

Today is my sister's birthday. We made arrangements last night to go to her office after I picked up the kids and then we would all go out to eat. We had to eat early because Mandy was spending the night at Sara's and going to the school's Valentine's Day dance.

This morning started out hectic and the day stayed that way. Mandy woke up complaining of the classic strep symptoms, sore throat, fever and aching all over. I called the Dr. and took her in at 8:30 for a strep test. The quick test showed negative and he looked at her and said her throat looked a little red but did not look like strep. He gave her some

lozenges and amoxicillin samples and sent us on our way. Mandy did not want to miss school so I took her home to get ready and dropped her off at 9:50. Of course, the school office couldn't make it easy and we had to fill all sorts of forms and swear on our ancestors grave that she was not playing hooky. What a pain! I can understand that they have to be careful and cautious about these absences but she was with her mother for God's sakes and she was trying to get back into school not get out. By now I was late for my class but decided to go ahead and sneak in. I was very glad that Tim was in town and could make sure that Ben was taken care of.

The weather this morning was beautiful, blue sky and sunshine and it helped to restore my mood. It is mornings like these that blow apart my carefully designed schedule. I had planned to do the readings for my 12:00 class this morning between 8:30 and 9:30 so I was not well prepared for the class discussion. By 2:00 the weather was downright nasty and by 3:00 I had my doubts that I was going to make it to my sister's office. I picked Mandy up and it took me 15 minutes to drive the 1 mile to Ben's school to get him. We finally had to give up and head home, a slippery, scary drive that took 30 minutes. My sister called as soon as I walked in the door and I told her it was so nasty that she should leave for home now and we would have to rearrange her birthday plans. I called Tim and told him the change of plans and 1 hour later he finally made it home with the news that the school dance had just been canceled. Mandy took it so well that we actually risked life and limb to take her to her friend's house to spend the night. Actually, since most of the traffic had cleared and we stayed on the main streets the drive wasn't that bad. By 7:00 we were home enjoying a cozy night by the fire with scrambled eggs and hot chocolate. Mandy was commiserating with Sara at her house and it was a pleasant evening after all. This is a classic example of how the forces of nature can impact your system and force you to reevaluate your goals. We changed our goals from enjoying a busy, social evening to being happy to be safe at home.

#5 Tuesday, February 15, 1994

I have been looking forward to this day for a week. Tuesday's are a wonderful break from the rest of the week. I stayed in my grubby clothes until 2:00. It was great. Today everything went as scheduled. The kids caught the bus on time and Tim didn't have any meetings here at the house. I actually had the place to myself all day. I didn't have to pick the kids up until 5:00 and Tim even ended up doing that. What a day!!

Tuesday is the one day of the week that I seem to most often have control over. It is my day to stay home and study and the house is quiet. It is the one day of the week that I devote fully to reaching my goal of graduating. It has always been a part of our plan that I would finish school as soon as the kids were old enough. Well, now I am a senior and that goal is well on its way to being accomplished. There are several reasons why I want to get a college degree. I was not a very dedicated student at 18 and college was really wasted on me. Now the learning process is very important to me and I have attacked my studies with a dedication and zeal that I did not think was possible. I want to be able to have a career not just a job when I do decided to go to work. I felt that this would be more likely to happen if I had a college degree. Personal satisfaction is one of the primary reasons, however. I am proud of what I have accomplished in college and this pride has given me more self-confidence. My husband and I have discussed what will happen after graduation in December. I have decided not to work full-time for awhile, until Ben is in junior high. We discussed the options and we decided that my salary would not be vital to our finances. That along with the stress of working full-time we felt would negatively affect our home life. My husband is already in a stressful job and neither one of us feel that it is fair to any of us to increase it. Besides, I am not ready to give up being a domestic goddess. I like the fact that I can volunteer at the kid's schools and drive carpool and have lunch with my friends. The decision to delay working full-time was in conflict with what Tim had expected. But after discussing it and showing him the salary ranges, he agreed with me. I do intend to get a part-time job thru one of the places where I have interned. I think this is a workable compromise for all of us.

#6 Sunday, March 27, 1994

Slept late-read the paper-enjoyed a quiet morning. We got bored around lunch time and we all piled in the car and went out for lunch. While at lunch we tried to figure out what to do with the rest of the day. Only one with an idea was Ben. So we headed for Denver and the Natural History Museum and the Star Trek exhibit. Mandy didn't want to go but she had no other ideas and didn't want to stay home--so we forced her to go.

We had a great time at the museum. Ben did all of the hands on activities. We don't fuss with Mandy-let her sulk on her own. But after awhile she started getting into it. She had a ball people watching. We went thru the other exhibits, had a snack and headed home at 5:00. Had a quiet ride home-both kids fell asleep.

We had spent the day together. It was fun but by the time we got home we all needed some time to ourselves. The signals from the kids were easy to read. They were at each other as soon as we stepped in the door. We adults had had enough and it was best to let the kids fix their own suppers and head for their separate rooms. Although we usually value our family dinners together tonight we just needed some down time away from each other. Although the day had been fun, we were all feeling the stress from having been in crowds all day and we were physically tired.

We got Ben in bed at 8:00 and Mandy squirrelled away in her room with the phone. Tim and I ordered Chinese food at 9:00 for the 2 of us and had a very nice, quiet dinner.

We had a wonderful family outing but we have learned from experience that a long day together requires down time at night. Tim and I have learned to pick up on the messages that the kids are sending. They become cranky and nasty with each other and we become the same to them. Through years of practice we have found the best solution is to let them go their separate ways. Their rooms are their sanctuaries and the time spent in them is much needed for all of us.

I really liked reading through these, because it reminds me of the way our life used to be - busy but normal. There wasn't any indication in these of any problems coming up at all. There are some funny phrases and ways of saying things - 'the family system' and so on - that relate to the class that she was writing this for. But, this is Virginia. It really speaks to me.

The next set is the second set of journal entries.

#7 Tuesday, April 5, 1994

Another Dr. appointment today. I wish they could find out what is wrong and fix it. These recent health problems have not been cut & dried. Difficult to diagnose and very frustrating. If I could just get some energy-I would feel more in control.

These health problems have made me think about something else I value-health. Mine and my family's. Because my health has been off-it has affected the whole family. I haven't had the energy to keep up my activities around the house. Tim has had to pick up the slack. It has also put a burden on Tim's freedom to switch careers. If these next tests

show something it could make us very dependent on his current health insurance. This would seriously decrease our options. Tim's dream is to start his own business in the next 4 years. We will have to rethink this and make the necessary adjustments if needed.

#8 Sunday, April 10, 1994

Spent the day studying. I have fallen behind in most of my schoolwork. Poor management skills or just plain old fashioned senioritis?!!

My 1st step was to write down and prioritize my tasks for the rest of the semester. I put in order according to due dates the projects needed to be completed and then listed them as to the amount of work needed to complete them. What resources would I need in order to complete my assignments and when and if those resources would be available. Right now my own mental and physical resources are severely depleted. Time resources are strained as well because it is the end of the semester and there is so much to be done. In order to make the most of my resources I have done a few things to reduce the stress on my resources. I use the other resources available to me. My family, my friends and my neighbors have been invaluable to me. They have been more than willing to help out when I have run out of time and steam. I avoid situations that would cause me any undo stress. I have said no to many school obligations and activities and have cut back on volunteer work. I have reduced my stress level by uncluttering life in general for right now. I have also readjusted, temporarily, my standards of cleanliness, home cooked dinner and free time. I wrestle with the kids and joke around with the family. Laughter and physical contact have been great stress relievers.

I worked on the most urgent of the projects and also the one I was least prepared for. I also gave myself my own deadlines as to how much time I could and would spend on each. This also involves a readjustment of standards. I used to spend way too much time on every project and I simply can not do that this time.

This is always a hectic time in the semester. I talked to my family and told them that I would not be available to them for the next 4 weeks. We reorganized the house duties and set up a reward system(bribes) to help motivate them.

Reducing the stress has helped my energy levels immensely. I will concentrate on getting a handle on stress from now on.

#9 Friday April 15, 1994

Today is the 22nd anniversary of our first date!! Oh and tax day. The taxes were paid last week and now it is time to celebrate. We went to dinner at the Wine Cellar. Had a late, long, expensive dinner and it was very nice. Hawaii would have been better but that's the way it goes.

The last 22 years seem to have flown by. We were both amazed at how far we have come and how much more we want to accomplish. We spent part of the evening re-evaluating our goals. #1 is to find out what is wrong with my health. #2 is to get me through this semester and the next and graduated!! #3 is to get me a job and #4 is to get Mandy's college fund built up. The financial resources have not been a problem. In fact, it has been a real impediment to our ability to think about making any career changes for Tim. We have gotten spoiled by the money he makes and we are unwilling to make any change that might risk our standard of living. We see this risk averse behavior as increasingly restraining us from what should be a logical next step. We also are very tied to this area, our friends, neighbors, and the community. This is an area where we don't seem to be flexible and where our family system is suffering from an imbalance and is hampering the growth and development of the members within the system.

#10 Thursday, April 21

More tests at the lab and then maybe some answers. At least, these early morning appointments get me out of bed and started in the morning. It is nice to get up early and get so much accomplished with all of the extra time. I was done at the lab by 10:00. I brought some of the reading that I needed to do for school and that helped pass the time and keep me from worrying about how much time it was taking.

When I was done I ran a few errands, had lunch with Tim and went home and made some phone calls about two highly possible jobs.

With these health problems that I find myself facing I have had to do some serious thinking and coping. Coping strategies are very important. There is a section in the Family Management Book that deal with coping with crisis and I have been using them in my own situation. The first step is to confront the crisis, talk about it, realize the seriousness. I have done this by talking with Tim and my friends and my sister. I haven't told by parents because they would unduly worry and until I have some answers for them I don't see the point and I don't want

to deal with the guilt I would feel for causing them such worry. #2 is to avoid giving false assurances and I think also not to blow the whole thing out of proportion. #3 Find the facts. I have been doing a lot of reading and research on my own and that has helped immensely. #4 Don't blame others. Tim and I are dealing with the possibilities head on but again we don't know yet what or if anything serious is wrong. Keep it all in proportion. #5 was surprisingly hard at first but what a help. Learn to accept help. This has been good for all of us involved. Everybody feels closer, good friends have become better friends. Just help with the small everyday things has helped me feel like I am still somewhat in control.

Learning to cope with and evaluate stress has helped us gain some control over the throughput in our system. And this increased control has actually reduced the amount of stress we are feeling.

It is startling how different these entries are from the first set. The other thing that strikes me is that I know I didn't appreciate how bad Virginia was feeling when this was going on. I know I was doing more stuff around the house but I assumed, like her, that we could find out what it was and move on. We were so wrong...

The next stuff is Virginia's write up based on her journal entries.

*Virginia Mikkelsen
HC 330- S'94*

Journal Entry Paper

I have decided to write about values in relation to the journal entries previously written. I am using the term value in a broad sense to denote what I see as desirable in my life. I see my values as the foundation for the decisions and the actions I perform in my life. It is my values that guide my actions and provide me with the sense of satisfaction and happiness that make life worthwhile and meaningful. I value my health and my family's health, both emotional and physical. I value a happy family life, those relationships are valued and cherished above all others. I value giving my children a good life, with good memories and a solid foundation for them to use to build their own lives. I value my friendships and my husband above all friends. In myself, I value, intelligence, loyalty, honesty, kindness, assertiveness, fairness, trust, reliability. It is important to me that I am someone who is perceived as

such. I value my financial status and my domestic status. I value the fact that I have stayed in school this time and have almost accomplished my goal of graduation.

After reading my journal entries, it is obvious that I value my family and the position we have in our society. We are really a throwback to the Ozzie and Harriet family system. We are a traditional family of the olden days. Not so traditional today. I value the fact that my husband is well educated and well employed. My journal discussed my family system, my husband, and two children and myself.

The changes discussed are my nearing graduation and the change I will be making from student to employee. The other changes are the maturing of our children and the parenting changes necessary. The unexpected change in my health situation is also having an effect on my family system. Most of these changes reinforce and are guided by the values I hold most dear and are intrinsic to me. I wanted a college education and the opportunities that it would open for me. I also wanted a college education just for the experience. To be able to prove to myself that I could do it. I also enjoy the fact that it has improved the way I think. I have become more open minded and aware of the complexities of issues and I value this ability.

We live in a neighborhood that is fairly traditional and our social system is also. The larger environment however is one in flux and chaos and this effects our system. Our society is in the midst of changes or adaptations that are changing our notion of normal and traditional. My children will have to be prepared for a world where the family they grew up with is not normal. How do you instill what you consider good, basic values in your children that might not be enough to help them in the future? We concentrate on the terminal values, common to our society that are relevant regardless of the current social climate. The values of respect for ourselves and others, for forming, working toward and meeting goals, and tolerance. Tolerance will be increasingly important in the future because of the diversity and interconnectedness of modern society.

Values impact others in our environment. I feel that a person's values can dictate how that person will be treated by others. I value honesty, intelligence and so forth and expect to be treated as such and will assert myself when my treatment is at odds with my values. I avoid, as much as possible, situations and people who have put me in the uncomfortable position of causing conflict with my value system.

The relationship of resources and values is an interesting concept to consider. I have noticed that the idea of resources isn't always obvious

to me. I think that is in part due to the fact that I have a lot of resources, human, environmental and economic. That coupled with the fact that most of our goals, needs and values have not severely taxed these resources. This is something that could change as we face a future that is uncertain on many levels. I am now able to achieve and attain my goal of a college degree. My next goal was to work full-time in a career. Now that has changed as the reality of that goal has become clear. I do not want to work full time until the children are a little older. I have that choice because of my husband and the financial and human resource he provides. But with today's uncertain economy I am not totally assured of the stability of that resource. I think that as time progresses and our lives continue to change at a more increased rate it will become more important to carefully manage my resources and not take them for granted. Our friends, neighbors and other family members are also resources to be cultivated and maintained for the future.

My family system is entering a time of change within itself as well as the broader environment we exist in. The flexibility and adaptability of my system will be vital to the health of the system. By defining our goals, values and identifying our resources the system can better adapt to changes, good or bad because we know what we have to work with and what is important to us.

Again, this really sounds like Virginia. It is interesting because I have been thinking over the last day or two about what it is going to take to hold us together as a family and what our goals should be. After I get through the next couple of weeks (and what is coming), I intend to spend the following couple of months thinking deeply about goals and so on. The last paragraph is a rather chilling prophecy. I believe that she meant it primarily in regard to the things we were expecting, but it does have a ring of things to come.

I really wish that Virginia had been writing during the last year and a half. I had encouraged her to do this, but she was concerned about her ability to do it. We are all going to miss her so much. Using some rather poor analogies, I feel that I was the function or base of the family and that she was the form or the spirit. While Mandy and I were talking tonight, she said that Virginia and I were the perfect couple. I told her about the 'early days' when we were still getting used to each other. But, I have to say that we got pretty close. We both grew and learned from each other and complimented and completed each other. We continued to grow together. This is all like having a part of your heart ripped out. I will survive this and do okay, but I know I have to for the kids.

Tuesday, September 12th

I got up and made sure Mandy got off okay. Lee slept with Virginia last night. I went in and it smelled a bit and it turned out that Virginia had a bowel movement (which is good). I told Lee that I was going to talk with Cindy about the stuff with Mandy. She said that she wanted to do this. Susan Ison stopped by and read a little bit to Virginia. I called Fangman's office to make sure that the Roxinol script was ready. It was and I ran over and took it to Steele's pharmacy. I had to hand carry it because the Roxinol is liquid morphine and is a class two drug. I got this and some more Depakote and some more suppositories. I don't think that Virginia will be taking many more of the Depakote (or anything by mouth). When I got back, Lee and I gave Virginia the Roxinol (under the tongue). Kathy, the nurse's aid from Hospice, came at 9:30AM. She seemed very nice. I liked her and Donna both so far - they are both personable and seem very caring. Virginia responded with a 'no' to one of Kathy's questions.

Art has been tearing down the swing set in the back yard. I have been reading a book called "Spontaneous Healing". It is an interesting book that mirrors a lot of my opinions and feelings about the traditional medical profession and its value. One of the things that it did, though, was getting me thinking about how to pull Virginia out of this. It also got me thinking about the mistakes that I made in the last year, treatment-wise. I wish I would have taken Virginia to a top-notch diagnostician after the hemorrhage, but before the radiation. I think there must be some underlying cause that could be corrected. However, I need to get over this line of thinking. Virginia is going to be dying soon. She is, I think, too weak and is ready to move on. I have done the best I could and the time for all these actions is over. I still hope that she turns around, but it is out of my hands at this point.

Paula, the nurse practitioner from Fangman's office, came over around noon. She needed to check up on Virginia since Fangman is the primary physician. (It is a part of their process.) There really isn't anything that she or Fangman's office can do at this point. Art was not impressed with her.

I took Art out to Consuelo's for lunch - but he paid. He brought back a burrito for Lee. Mandy got home at her normal time. She had a marginal day. Sarah was bugging her about what was wrong and Mandy finally came out and said "my mother is dying". At which point, Sarah promptly told a bunch of other kids. Mandy didn't want this to happen - she doesn't want these other kids coming up and talking to her about this. I understand this - it is a big part of the reason I have not been back into work. Mandy knows that the end is coming, what is really getting to her is the waiting. She would like it over. I understand this - I went through it with my folks to some extent and have a twinge of it with Virginia. But, I try to remember that Virginia is on her own schedule and this is actually a precious time - that we still have together. Cindy Hoxmeier stopped over for a few minutes. I am very glad

that Butch and Cindy told Virginia about her degree when they did. Any later and I don't know that she would have known.

Art and I went over to pick up Ben from his trip to the mountains. We had forgotten to pack sun-screen so he was a little red (but not as bad as I thought). He was very tired, but I think he had a good time. We had home-made pizzas. After supper, we all (except Mandy) went into the bedroom and watched home videos from 1984-1985 and the 1990 cruise tape ("Hurricane Heckle"). This was fun, but it was also hard. Seeing Virginia laughing and normal. She has always had a great smile and laugh and she has always been very pretty. Ben enjoyed it too. Virginia seemed to sleep through it. But, since this morning she has been very unresponsive. She did have another bowel movement, but she has not eaten at all today (and so she is not getting the Depakote and extra Decadron). It reminds me of how my dad was during his last week (in the hospital).

Thursday, September 14th

It's over now.

Wednesday started out as a pretty good day. The kids were up and moving. Ben seems to have recovered from his Eco-week experience just fine. I slept with Virginia again last night. She slept pretty well. In the morning, Lee and I were by her and she said something. I didn't understand it, and asked her to repeat it. She said "I want to roll over". So we got her on her side. Susan Ison stopped by and read some more to Virginia. The book she is reading from is Tom Robbins' "Skinny Legs and All". It is a very odd book that Virginia likes and told me about a while ago. After Susan left, I read to Virginia from the book as well. It is very odd, but I like it. About this time, Cindy Hoxmeier and Kay Godowski and Ellen Buchannan stopped by. They visited for quite a while. Virginia was not responsive. Lee did put the diploma cover, that Cindy had brought over, into Virginia's hands and Lee saw Virginia get a tiny bit of a smile.

While Virginia's friends were here, Art and I took a bike ride on the Spring Creek trail over to the Dairy Queen and back. This was a nice ride and we talked about a bunch of stuff. After we got back, I took a shower but didn't really have any lunch. I got a call from work that they were ready to get my company car back from me. Art and I ran it out to the plant. I ran in for just a second to get my mail and drop off the keys. I really didn't want to stay and talk with anybody. After this, I went shopping at Target and the grocery store. When I got home, the kids were at home. They both had a good day. For supper, I fixed up some mahi-mahi that Joe had caught and gave us. I also grilled some catfish. It was all very good.

Virginia's breathing is getting very slow and it is obvious that she is slipping. She is also staring at the ceiling a fair amount with eyes that don't respond. Art, Lee, Cindy Heckle and I spend the evening in the room with her. Ben and Mandy came in and

saw how she was breathing and they both got very emotional and were crying. I talked with both of them and I think I helped comfort them. I explained that things were getting very close - a few days or less. I really suspect that the end is very near. I called Hospice about the dosage of the Roxinol - since I don't think it is helping enough. The nurse on call told me that we were being too conservative and could increase the dosage and the frequency even at low respiration rates (down to 8 per minute). I gave her some more and followed the nurse's advice. It did mostly help. Virginia had been moving her arm - trying to get at something. I was worried about possible seizure activity as well, but I wasn't sure if she had any. She also cleared her throat and tried to say something, but I don't know what it was. During all of this, I made a point of kissing her and telling her how much I loved her.

So that we did not all get tired out, I got Art and Cindy and Lee to go get some sleep and I would take the 'first shift'. I talked to Virginia while she was sleeping, I assume, and told her, again, that I loved her but that I understood if she was too tired and that I would take care of the kids. I had started my 'shift' about 11:30PM and I was supposed to get Lee at 1:30AM. I tried to wake Lee up, but she was obviously very tired. So, I let her sleep and tried again at 2:30. She woke up then and also woke up Art. They came in and took over. While I was in there, I finished "Spontaneous Healing". I went upstairs and went to sleep. I was very tired.

On Thursday morning, I got up and took a quick shower. Virginia is slipping even more. I got the kids moving and had them go to school - since this might take several days. They both had expressed the desire to be there when Virginia was about to die. Mandy had not slept well and I let her get to school late. Art drove her part way through the morning.

Virginia had not been moving around since the middle of the night and had not had any of the Roxinol or suppositories. She was resting pretty comfortably. I had called Hospice about canceling the nurse assistant, but I did not call soon enough because she showed up. She didn't clean Virginia all the way up, but did wash her face and put on some lotion. She also was in the room while we were out doing stuff. Susan Ison stopped by and read some more to Virginia.

Cheryl stopped by. She took Virginia's vital signs and they 70 over 30 blood pressure and shallow but reasonably rapid breathing and a pulse of around 120. Virginia's eyes were unresponsive. Cheryl talked about how things were going and what was happening in the room with Virginia. I asked about this and Cheryl said that at this point, if she heard us, it would be very muffled and distant. She said that Virginia was very close - probably in the afternoon but certainly no more than a day or so. She called the eye bank and made sure that things were set up for cornea donation which I had requested. I called Warren-Bohlender, the funeral home, and told them that I would be calling soon. Apparently, that makes things go smoother. I had a hard time doing this. I got to the part where they asked Virginia's name and I got out "Virginia" but broke down crying when I tried to say "Mikkelsen". I choked out that I would call back. I got myself composed and called back and finished up

with them. Cheryl checked if there was anything else that we needed. I asked her about the kids, if I should pull them out of school. We talked about it, but she felt that Virginia wouldn't pass away until the afternoon or evening and that they had time to get home. She was, unfortunately going to be unavailable when it happened because she was going to a Hospice retreat at Snowmass. She said that she would be over next week. She also was apparently struggling with going to the meeting. She didn't want to go, I think because of Virginia. Her supervisor was encouraging her to go. When she left it sounded like she had decided not to go.

I came back in and fiddled around and I read to Virginia for a while. Then I called Vickie around 11:00AM and told her that things were very close. We didn't want to shock Vickie and wanted to give her some warning. While I was on the phone, Virginia's gaps between breathing became much longer. I came in to let Vickie talk to Lee and Cindy and Lee were standing over Virginia and checking her. She hadn't had taken a breath for a long period and they were checking. I handed the phone to Lee and checked. She didn't take another breath. I think she died peacefully. She just slowed down and stopped. This happened at like 11:05 or 11:10AM.

I called Hospice right away. They were not planning to send a nurse over. They called the funeral home. I called back and asked about getting a hold of Cheryl. They tried paging her but didn't get a hold of her. They asked about whether to send a nurse and I asked for one to come over. I called Joyce and Cindy Hoxmeier and Susan and told them. They were all very shaken - in spite of the time we have had to prepare. Joyce told me that she had gotten up around 4:00 or 4:30AM and a sort of spiritual, nature thing happen. She had been dreaming about Virginia being healthy and normal. When she woke up she heard (and saw?) an owl hooting very close to her house. Later on I found out that around the same time, Butch and Cindy heard a big bang and a picture on their wall had fallen down and shattered on them in bed. Butch got a minor scratch on his hand, but otherwise they were unscathed. Susan woke up at about the same time. I wish I had stayed awake for the entire night, in retrospect.

She looks at peace, finally. Her lips have gotten cold very quickly. Her body feels hard - not tense, but hard. And there is some purplish hue to the fingers on her right hand - but not her left.

I went to pick up Mandy. I brought the phone with me. It was part habit, but I partially was hoping that Virginia would snap out of this and come back. It was around lunch time at Mandy's school. I walked in to the cafeteria area expecting to go to the office and page her. I got there and saw her by the lunch line. She saw me and looked a little surprised. I got a sad look on my face and shook my head and walked towards her. She started crying. We headed towards the office so I could sign her out and a bunch of her friends were crying as they walked up to her - figuring out why I was there. (It turns out that Larissa had stopped by to pick Mandy up - since we hadn't called them. Art talked to her and she gave him a hug and was pretty upset. When they got to school, they talked to the counselor and

hadn't been to class - they were so upset.) While Mandy was with her friends, I headed for the office. But, one of the assistant principals who I had talked to saw me and came over. He told me he would take care Mandy getting checked out. He and another teacher offered their condolences and asked if there was anything they could do. I found out from Mandy later that quite a few people, some that Mandy didn't know that well, got very upset and were crying. Mandy and I talked as we headed over to get Ben. She said that she was doing pretty good. She did seem to be handling all of it pretty well.

I went in to the office and told them I was getting Ben. The receptionist started to call down for him, which is their policy. I told her I was going down to get Ben and didn't want him called. I got down there and went in and touched him on the shoulder. He turned around and looked at me. Again, it took a second to register why I was there. Several kids called to him and looked sad. We went out to the car and drove home. Ben was sad, but was doing pretty well.

We got home and they went in to see their mom. Most everybody was crying. They went over and touched her and looked at her. They got very sad. Joyce had picked some flowers and Virginia had a bouquet in her left hand. She looked very peaceful. Ben noticed some bugs coming off the flowers so Cindy Heckle put them in some water on the table - not crawling on Virginia. I am still half thinking that Virginia would come out of the bedroom - as a big practical joke. Obviously, this is just me doing some wishful thinking. Elizabeth Ross, another friend from Loveland, also stopped by for a few minutes. With all the stuff going on and confusion, I didn't get a chance to talk with her.

The funeral home people came by. We sat down first and I gave them the various pieces of information they needed for the death certificate and the cornea donation and the obituaries. At this point, we haven't finalized the memorial so we leave that as 'arrangements pending'. The normal process is to receive the remains in a cardboard box - disposable. I didn't really like the sound of this and Art was feeling the same thing. He spoke up and asked about what else there was. They suggested that we come down and pick one out at the funeral home.

When we are done with this, they go in and get ready to move her. I want to pick her up and put her on the stretcher, but don't. I have kissed her several times, but I do it again - kissing her goodbye on the bed before they move her. There are two of them from the funeral home and they put her on the stretcher in the hallway. Her feet have gotten crossed and I help get her feet straight and positioned on the stretcher. I want to help with stretcher, but don't. It is almost a reverse and sad variation of carrying her across the threshold. I want to do something for her at the end of her life. I kiss her again on the porch. Cindy does as well. I run in and check to see if anyone else wants any last chance to see her. In retrospect, this sounds pretty macabre. I am obviously not really ready to let her go. They get her into the Suburban (which they use instead of a Hearse). My final contact with her is here. I touch her forehead before they close the doors. I turned and walked into the house

because I really couldn't watch her be driven away. On the way into the house, I am silently saying "you didn't have to go, we had so much more to do". I called work and told Janie, my secretary, that Virginia was gone. She asked about arrangements and I told her that we would be deciding by tomorrow morning.

Later on, Art, Lee, Cindy and I went down to the funeral home. Originally, I wanted another person to go with me - Lee. I wanted to make sure I picked out an urn that Virginia would have thought was okay. Lee wanted Art along. By this time, Rick Turley was here and offered to go. I said that just a few - not a big crowd. I asked Cindy to stay. She seemed a little perturbed. When Art and Lee and I got out to the car, I asked if they thought she wanted to come along. Lee went in and checked and she came along. I need to remember that she has had a loss here too. I noticed that on the way out, I was thinking about who should stay with Virginia - even though she was already gone.

Ben went out with Joyce to stop off at school to tell his teachers what had happened. Joyce also stopped off and got him some plaster of paris. He wants to learn how to sculpt - so he can sculpt Virginia. Mandy spent the afternoon at Larissa's house with her friends. They were so upset, they didn't go to the afternoon classes. Joyce, Cindy Hoxmeier and Susan spent most of the afternoon. This was very nice. Rick and I went out for a walk (and for me to check on Mandy). I ordered pizza and the Turley's stayed and ate with us. A little after this, Ben wanted to take a bike ride. At first I said no, but then I thought about it and decided that this would be a good thing. It was a nice bike ride. We both asked how the other was doing. Ben has been concerned about not remembering what Virginia looked like before all this happened. I went through the same thing with my dad. Mandy, after supper, went over to Joe's house. She has been with her friends and Joe a lot, but I am trying to cut her some slack.

I called my Uncle Harvey, Mildred Dewaele and also my brother. He was very sorry to hear what happened and said that he and Mary Lee would be out. We called Chris and Julie and Vickie and Nick. Sunday afternoon works out well for them for a memorial I talked with Art, Lee and Joyce about the memorial arrangements. After this I was just beat and I watched a little TV - "Mad about you". Virginia really liked this show.

I am very tired. I have cried a fair amount. And that is okay. It still doesn't feel real. I am still expect her to be in the bedroom, that we need to be quiet.

Friday, September 15th

I got up somewhat late - around 8:00AM. I don't remember any dreams at all. I would sort of like some with Virginia. I looked through the paper for the obituaries, but there weren't any. Ben and Mandy both stayed home from school today. Joe did as well and was over a lot. I know that Art thinks it is all a bit much, but is trying to

hold his opinion to himself. Joe is a good kid (especially as teenage boys go) and cares for Mandy. And, most importantly, it helps Mandy having him around to talk to. Susan stopped by with rolls and bread. A lot of friends have been by all day long. Rick and Joyce and Cindy were here a lot - setting up arrangements for the memorial. Ellen Buchannan and Rob and Donna Uhlrich and Kay Godowski all were over. I got calls from Tim Tillson and Marty Osecky.

Art, Lee, Rick and I drove around looking at possible memorial sites. We went first down to Loveland and looked at the Loveland museum. While we were there we saw a little bit of the bead exhibit which Susan had been telling us about. It was interesting. The museum was a good possible place. We went next to the Lincoln Center. There weren't any inside facilities, but there was an outside sculpture garden that would work - if the weather holds. We went to the CSU Alumni Center next. This turned out to be perfect. It is an 'Ozzie and Harriet' house with a really nice back yard. We didn't even go to other places. It has space inside, kitchen facilities and outside areas. When we got there, we went upstairs to the offices and the lady we ran into asked "you're Tim Mikkelsen, aren't you?". I assumed that she knew from Joyce having called, but it turns out to be Dave Pugmire's wife (Dave works in my business team). So she just recognized me. So, I told her we were looking for facilities for the memorial. She was a bit surprised - apparently she hadn't heard that Virginia had passed away.

When we got back, I called the funeral home and told them the location and time. I found out that the obituary didn't run because of a screw up at the paper. Somebody new didn't let the funeral home person back with the information. This didn't bother me a whole lot. I also arranged for an announcement in the Loveland paper (in addition to Des Moines, Missouri Valley and here), but I'll probably have to pay extra for it. They had just gotten the death certificate around noon. So Virginia had not been cremated yet. The lady said that it should happen in the afternoon. Since she lived on this side of town, if everything went according to plan, she would drop off the death certificates and the remains after work.

Cindy Hoxmeier had arranged for a maid service to come in and clean up. Around noon they showed up. They did a nice job. I am looking for someone to replace Josie - since she has not called back (and was supposed to clean the place early in the week). We have been getting a fair number of flowers and baskets. I took Ben in for his haircut at 2:00PM. This went okay. I was kidding Ben on the new haircut - it was fun. We got home and I got a little punchy. Rick was around and he and I talked a bit. He and Joyce have been great through all of this. The house was a bit of a mess. I wanted to straighten it up the way Virginia would have wanted it. So I started a little straightening and cleaning. I warned Lee that I was getting a little jumpy in case I snapped at anybody. Mostly people stayed out of my way.

A little later, I was cleaning up my room and trying to do some book work. Lee had gone to the store with Julie and some of the other family. They came back and were fixing an early supper of deli-type stuff. Cindy Heckle came up and asked,

repeatedly, if I wanted anything to eat or drink or anything at all. I told her several times no. I got a little more tone in my voice. Then she asks me if anything is wrong. I look at her like there are bugs flying out of her nose for a second and snap at her "what do you think? I just lost my wife." At about this point, I try to regain composure and apologize and say that I'm sorry for the outbreak, but that I just need to be alone for a bit. She looked very surprised and went back downstairs. I hope that I did not hurt her feelings too much.

I worked on for a few minutes. I heard crying downstairs. I didn't go down, since I still wanted to be alone for a bit. In a few minutes I hear the kids coming downstairs. They had been out with the Turley's. At this point, Lee and Vickie come up stairs with the urn that I had picked out. Shortly after I snapped at Cindy, the urn had arrived. They hadn't gotten me because they were trying to let me be alone. But with the kids coming in, they brought it upstairs. Lee and Vickie were crying a lot as they brought it into the room. I held them both and was crying a bit. Art came up and took Lee in his arms and let her cry. Eventually, all the adults were upstairs. Ben called up and asked "is grandma okay?". He came up and I told him "these are mommy's remains". He came over and looked at the urn - not looking upset. He turned towards me and asked "can we open it? I'd want to see mom.". I started laughing lightly. I hugged him and said "that's my boy". He and Mandy are doing much better, right now than the rest of us. He is pretty matter of fact about all of this. I couldn't open the jar without a tool, and am not really ready to. Ben went back downstairs and we adults talked a little more. I asked about opinions on where to put the urn until I decide what to do with Virginia's remains. There are a couple of great spots in the living room - position-wise - but I couldn't handle looking at the urn all of the time. I suspect it will be my office, her desk or the bedroom for a while.

The kids went out with Turley's for supper. We looked through pictures to put up at the memorial gathering. I finally had a little something to eat. I have had a headache all day long and my eyes are really tired. It has been a pretty hard day. Vickie and I went down to pick up another poster from Kathy Warden for a second set of pictures. We talked about how we did everything we could. She remembered that Virginia had not wanted to have chemotherapy during the fall. I talked about how, it was Virginia's life and her choice. I also mentioned how I don't view it where it is my life for the next several years. I'd like to take flying lessons, but I won't until the kids are much older. I can't afford the risk as the one responsible for the kids. Rick was looking over the pictures and commented on how often Virginia changed her hairstyle. It had struck me earlier in the day, thinking about trying to maintain the household in her style. One of her key attributes was constant change - clothing, hairstyle, house, who she was. To keep her 'spirit' going in the house, I need to change the house. Our home has never been static - there has always been furniture and decorating transition. It is an interesting aspect. To keep the sense of her requires the changing of the instance of her expression. I think she would like and appreciate my recognition of this aspect of her personality.

Chris and Julie are going to sleep in my office, but I really want to get this written down, so I am trying to finish it up pretty quickly. In the process of writing, Mandy and Ben come in. Ben is impressed with the number of pages from yesterday's entry - the day Virginia passed away. Mandy saw my comment about Art and Joe and got a little sensitive about this. I told her it is okay. She gets worried and asks what I think and I tell her to read the rest of the entry. She finally calms down about this, but I know inside she is still going to be a little sensitive about this.

It is going to be a hard couple of days coming up. But, it is going to be even harder when we get back to 'normal', or at least what will pass for normal for a while. This is really the point at which Art and Lee head back home. It will be too quiet and I expect that we will have some bad spots in these coming months. It still seems all so unreal. While I was carrying the urn out of my office into the bedroom, I held it tight to my chest. I know the urn just contains Virginia's remains and not her spirit, but it is a focal point.

I am doing okay. I am very proud of the kids, because they are doing great.

Saturday, September 16th

I was slept through the night again and don't remember any dreams. I would really like to. I got up and got dressed. Virginia's obituary was in the Fort Collins paper. It was okay, as that sort of thing goes.

Virginia Lee Mikkelsen

Virginia Lee Mikkelsen, 42, of Fort Collins died at home on Thursday, Sept. 14, 1995.

A memorial gathering will take place from 2 to 4 p.m. Sunday at the CSU Alumni Center, 645 S. Shields St. Cremation has taken place. Warren-Bohlender Funeral Chapel is handling arrangements.

Virginia Heckle was born May 3, 1953, in St. Louis, Mo., to Art Heckle and Lee Berkley Heckle. She graduated from St. Joseph's Academy in Des Moines, Iowa, and recently received a bachelor's degree in social sciences. She lived in Des Moines from 1961 to 1977.

She married Tim I. Mikkelsen on Nov. 23, 1974, in Des Moines. They moved to

Fort Collins in 1977. She worked as an office manager for anesthesiologist's office.

Survivors include her husband, Tim I. Mikkelsen, a son, Benjamin Mikkelsen, a daughter, Amanda Mikkelsen, all of Fort Collins; her parents, Art and Lee Heckle of Des Moines; a brother, Chris Heckle of Des Moines; and two sisters, Vickie DeFino of Des Moines and Cindy Heckle of Fort Collins.

Memorial gifts may be made to the American Brain Tumor Association or Hospice of Larimer County in care of Warren- Bohlender Funeral Chapel.

It does not come anywhere near what I would like to have people know about her. But all the things I would like to say are personal and our friends know this stuff. We have been getting a fair number of flowers and things at the house. Vickie's and Chris's companies both sent something. This was very nice. Vickie and I ran out to Target to pick up some stuff. We got back and I had some lunch. I am eating, but my appetite is pretty low - compared to 'normal'. Lee and Vickie have started going through Virginia's things - clothes and jewelry. Mandy and Ben have looked through some of the jewelry. My intention is for the kids to be able to keep whatever they want, then Lee and the rest of the family. Then, I would like for Cindy, Susan and Joyce to be able to have something, if they want it. I suspect they will all like this, but Susan's sense of style and taste are the closest to Virginia's. While Lee and Vickie were going through this, I started to describe some of Virginia's jewelry that I want to hold on to - the funky pins done by Bill Amundsen (a local artist and character). I broke down describing them because they were very much Virginia. At about this time, Roger Ison called (since he was out of town). I couldn't talk to him and asked Julie to ask him to call back.

In the afternoon, Rick stopped by. He has been very compassionate. He has been around, without being annoying to talk or to not talk. Mandy needed to get out so she, Ben, Rick and I went out on some errands. Mandy drove. We stopped off at the post office and then to Wendy's. Ben was not feeling well, but this passed after he ate a little. Rick ran over to Office Depot while we were eating. It struck me that it is going to be the three of us eating together a lot over the next couple of years. After Rick came back, we headed over to Sam's (discount store) and looked around a bit. After this we headed home. I talked with Cindy and Joyce and told them I would be thrilled if they could find some of Virginia's jewelry that meant something. They looked, but really want to wait so that Mandy and Ben really have a chance to think about it. At home, Rick had bought a Damark R/C airplane. He put that together and we played with that a bit. It took about 3 trials and it was pretty trashed. It was

about what he and I expected it to be. I had been thinking about getting one, but after this, I'm glad I didn't.

When we got back from crashing the R/C plane, I went upstairs and helped Vickie print off a small memorial text that she was copying from the card from Dr. Fangman's office. It is a nice sentiment:

Togetherness

Death is nothing at all. I have only slipped away into the next room.

Whatever we were to each other, we still are. Call me by my old familiar name. Speak to me in the same easy way you always have. Laugh as we always laughed at the little jokes we enjoyed. Play, smile, think of me, pray for me.

Life means all that it ever meant. It is the same as it always was. There is absolute unbroken continuity. Why should I be out of your mind because I am out of your sight? I am but waiting for you, for an interval, somewhere very near, just around the corner.

All is well. Nothing is past. Nothing has been lost. One brief moment and all will be as it was before - only better. Infinitely happier. We will be together forever.

This really appealed to Lee and Vickie. So they typed it up and put it in a frame to have at the memorial gathering. I am pretty emotional, what a surprise, and things like this get to me. It struck me that what I really wanted, from the poem I had talked about before, is to grow old with Virginia. We didn't have that chance. That is what makes me sad. We had a great life together, but I wanted the next part of it as well.

Roger called back and we talked for a bit. He was explaining why he couldn't come back (his mother). I really do understand. I actually really appreciated one comment he made - that he wouldn't try to say how sorry he was because it just wouldn't come close. Susan stopped by after he called. She and India brought some chili and some other food. We were cooking tandoori chicken, but we ended up eating the chili (it was buffalo chili). It was very good. While she was here, she went through and found a few pieces that really meant something. This actually makes me very happy.

Tom, my brother, called. He and Mary Lee were in Denver. They had arranged to stay down there both nights so they could catch an early flight on Monday. This works fine for me. He was asking about the final details. I told him just to come over to the house around noon and he could come over with us. In a lot of ways, this is working out better. I would have a real problem with Mary Lee, I think. I am worried about her saying something stupid and insensitive to the kids. (She did at my mother's funeral.)

After supper, we just sort of hung around. Nick and Angela had shown up right about the time we were eating. Mandy had gone over to Joe's house for supper (which is fine). I asked Julie about Ben and Mandy. I have seen Ben cycle through emotions - which is fine. I haven't seen this in Mandy - which would be okay, but I want to make sure she is not bottling them up inside. Julie said that Mandy does her emotional stuff late at night (which is why she has trouble sleeping).

In the middle of the evening, I went through a couple of Virginia's storage boxes down in the basement. I found the fuzzy blue pants suit that were in some of the pictures up on the board. I also found some poetry that I had written her as well as all my letters to her when we were first dating. While I was doing this, I took out a shell owl that Virginia's grandmother, Tootsie, had made for her. (Tootsie had made these for all of Lee's kids. They were pretty, um, distinctive. It was the start of why we always exchange ugly shell things with Vickie.) While I was looking through this, I cut myself on the owl. It struck me that Joyce's experience was owl related as well. I would really like to think that this is Virginia's spirit making an appearance. I wonder what the picture that fell down on Hoxmeier's had on it. After this, Ben and I played on the computer for a little bit. I showed him how to play a helicopter game.

I am very tired and this all seems unreal. Everybody is doing okay, but emotions are right on the surface. After the memorial gathering, the plan is to come home for a while and then to go to the Rio for the 'real service' - all drinking a margarita toast to Virginia. I hope that the gathering goes well. Before I go to bed, I think I'll go for a walk around the neighborhood.

Wednesday, September 20th

Sunday was the planned day for the memorial gathering. I got up pretty early on Sunday and took a bike ride. The weather was nice. When I was riding through the neighborhood, I felt sort of angry, not a huge amount, but a little. When I got back I had a little cereal and showered. I got dressed, but not in good clothes yet because we had to get stuff ready for the memorial. I picked up the house a little. Lee and Julie and Vickie also were picking things up - they understand that it is important to me. Virginia would want the house picked up - especially with Mary Lee coming. Mandy and Ben got up, but they were moving sort of slow, but that is okay. I picked out a handful of CDs - Dan Fogelberg's "Innocent Age" and "Greatest Hits"; Go West; and three Enya CDs "Enya", "Shepherd Moons" and "Watermark". I thought about closing with the Scottish bagpipes version of Amazing Grace, but I suspected that this would be too much for me and others. We all ate some brunch, a breakfast fritatta from Elizabeth Ross. I got stuff ready to go and Chris and Nick and Rick and I took it over to the alumni center. On the way back, Chris and I picked up some batteries for the boom boxes for the music.

I got back and Tom and Mary Lee had arrived. Tom was genuinely sorry about all of this. Mary Lee strikes me as being insincere and snotty most of the time. She was okay during the day. I did not, however, interact much with either of them. I had also asked Virginia's family to block Mary Lee from the kids - because she can say pretty thoughtless things. In talking with Lee and Vickie later, Mary Lee did not go beyond the kitchen and the bathroom next to it. She annoys me. But, in all likelihood, I won't be seeing her much from this point on.

Mandy and Ben were dressed when I got home. They looked very nice. Mandy wore a black dress and looked very pretty. Ben wore nice slacks and a cream-colored shirt. We all headed over in a couple of cars. I had planned on getting there early and timed it that way - before people got there. We got over to the center at 1:50, but there were a bunch of people there already - it was relatively busy.

The memorial was nice and went very well. I think Virginia would have been satisfied with the choices. It had rained a little before the memorial, but the weather cleared and it was a little overcast to partly sunny during the entire gathering. There was a good sized crowd there. I was working to control my emotions. I did pretty well, but I did get a little teary-eyed a few times. The kids did fine too and I am very proud of them. Mandy had a lot of her friends and teachers over. Ben played in the back yard most of the time. Chris had set up the two boom boxes, one inside and one outside, and was playing Dan Fogelberg and Enya. There was a broad cross section of people: there were a lot of friends and colleagues from work, there was a good sized neighborhood contingent, all of the kids' friends, the kids' current and previous teachers, and some old friends. Doctor Merkel showed up briefly. Doctor Pierson (Virginia's old boss) also came as did Marilyn Radford (the lady Virginia worked with). Art kept an eye on Tom and Mary Lee. They didn't seem to talk with the kids at all. I asked later about my reaction and apparently, I came across as distant but not rude to them - which is good. Art had also gone over to help a woman who was crying. It was Cinderella. She apparently told Art very glowing things about Virginia.

It felt very strange at the gathering. It seemed that Virginia was there, just like at our normal parties at home. At these parties, for part of the time, I would work one end of the house and she would work the other. But we would always end up together holding each other's hands or touching somehow. But, she wasn't. The time went by very quickly. People were there through 4:30PM or so. We cleaned up and got out of there around 5:00PM. Lots of people commented about how nice the memorial was - consistent with Virginia.

We went back home for a minute and then the close circle of friends and relatives headed back out for supper at the Rio Grande restaurant. This included: Rick and Joyce; Cindy and Butch; Susan Ison and Elizabeth Ross; Tom and Mel Huibregtse; Art and Lee; Vickie and Nick; Chris and Julie; Cindy Heckle; and Tom and Mary Lee. The kids were tired and just wanted to stay home. When most of us had gotten there, I made a toast to Virginia. Everyone, except Julie, had margaritas - including myself. I

would like to have said a lot of things, but all I could say is "To Virginia". Even with that I got teary eyed - thinking about all that she meant to me and feeling more than a bit adrift. I actually had a few sips of the margarita. I got this in honor of Virginia, but it tasted terrible to me. Susan didn't see me take my first sip and requested that she see me drink some. I did and then gave my remaining drink to Rick and Joyce. It was very nice, and we talked a lot about Virginia. Tom and Mary Lee were very nice and she did not seem to cause any real trouble. I asked Cindy Hoxmeier about the picture that fell - asking what it was. It was a Santa Fe picture. (Not an owl picture.) Art drank a fair amount, but he is entitled. Butch had a hard time talking with Vickie because she reminded him personality-wise of Virginia so much. Tom Huibregtse came down at one point and talked to me about all the things that Virginia (and I) had done. He offered to help anyway he could and offered to take the kids if anything should happen to me. When we were about to go home, Art and Chris went off to an alley. I went down to get them and he got emotional, and again he is entitled. He kept telling me how I kept my commitment. It was good he had this release. All of these close friends and family felt that the Rio was the perfect celebration of Virginia.

We got back home. Tom and Mary Lee headed out shortly after we got back. Mandy was cleaning up, almost frantically. I told her I would finish up but she kept going. I tried to get her to settle down. This was probably very similar to some of the emotional reactions I have had. She got most of the garbage out, and I finished up the rest. I went down and talked with Ben and got him to bed. I sat down and talked with him and rubbed his back. Mandy finally relaxed and took a bit of a bath.

I am very tired, and things seem very unreal. I didn't get up to do the journal fully, just jot down some notes. I didn't want to keep Julie up too late.

On Monday, I got the kids up and moving. I got Mandy off to school. Vickie, Nick and Angela headed out around 8:00AM. After they left, I had a little discussion with Ben about toilet habits (because of some stains). This didn't go real well, but I felt I needed to get things back to normal. I took him to school and then dropped off the picture easels at the rental store. I got back home and made up a list of all the things that I needed to be working on. At 1:00PM, I went down and talked with our insurance agent. This went pretty well. He did make the comment about at some point, I may find someone else. It is possible, but it seems so odd to hear this. I was wondering who would be the first to make this comment. On the way back, I stopped and paid off the funeral home bill. I also stopped off and set up an appointment at the Social Security office. It felt very strange, and somehow wrong, to set this up. But, Virginia paid into this and the kids deserve what benefits I can get for them.

The kids had a pretty good day. Mandy wanted to go to Target, so we did. I picked up some storage boxes while we were there. After supper, we started going through pictures. This has turned out to be a Herculean task.

It was good going through the photos. It was also sort of bothersome. On the good side, I saw all the pictures of the good and 'normal' times. It distanced me from the last 16 months of illness and struggle. This was nice, remembering how things should be. But, the bad side was that it made Virginia's death seem even less real. It really felt as if she should be upstairs, cleaning or doing something. It was very odd. Lee mentioned the next day that she had a similar reaction.

On Tuesday, I got up and exercised and drove Mandy and Larissa and Anika (the German foreign exchange student living with Larissa) to school. Susan stopped by and we all were looking at pictures. I almost didn't get Ben off to school on time because of this. After this, I ran off to my dentist appointment. I was going in for a filling, but it turned into a long 2 and a half hour crown preparation and the Novocain was ineffective. The dentist was surprised I came in - he had seen the announcement. We talked about Virginia and aspects of all this for a while. I got done and was very tired and sore.

In the afternoon, I set up an appointment with a lawyer to set up a trust for the kids. I also tried to get in touch with a financial advisor. In the afternoon, I was pretty tired and needed some mental health time and so I baked a chocolate sheet cake. But this was an experiment, where I tried to make it healthier - without buttermilk or much butter (replacing the butter with olive oil and applesauce). It turned out very well. I was surprised. I got the girls back from school. They were in a good mood. Anika had been asked to the homecoming dance. Larissa and Mandy said they would tell the other's boyfriend that they should do something nice and ask their girlfriend out for the dance. It was cute to watch. Virginia would have really like listening to them. After this, I went on a bike ride with Art. This was nice. The weather is starting to turn gray and cold. Art went out a little later with Julie and they both got rained on.

We looked at pictures for a while. Mandy went over to Joe's for supper. We were going to eat later after I got back from parent-teacher night at Ben's school. The back to school night went okay - I was just in Ben's class area with the 3 sixth grade teachers. I got sad a few times during this at the mention of "parents" at various points. I am now a single parent or a widower. Cripes. At one point, the teachers mentioned they were looking for cheap Macintoshes (all three of them). I talked to them saying to call me about this. I will probably sell the Macs to the teachers - if they want them. I had a twinge at the thought of selling Virginia's Mac Plus. It doesn't make sense to keep it and I will get all Virginia's files off of it, but it still struck me funny.

On the way home I picked up Chinese food and we ate very late. Everybody was in a strange mood and sort of grumpy, hungry and tired. Ben was very talkative. During the day, Lee and Julie had cleaned out Virginia's closet. This caught me more than anything, seeing her closet empty. I hate this. Lee had the same reaction. I will start putting my stuff in Virginia's side, but it won't feel right.

On Wednesday, I took Mandy and Anika off to school. When I got back, I made sure Ben got off to school. Then Art and Lee and I took Chris and Julie to the Marriott to catch the bus to the airport. We went out for breakfast after this at the Egg and I. While we were there we discussed how to set things up for the kids if anything should happen to me. I feel that I have to do this to protect them. I don't trust that everything will be okay. In talking through, there are several people who I would be happy with watching the kids. But, there are issues and it is rather time dependent. I don't want the kids to move (to live with Vickie and Nick as was set up in our original will if we both died) and I don't want them split up. As we talked about this, what I want is not a static statement of wishes, but a situational mechanism. It really depends on the kids and their ages and situation. Mandy is close to college and just needs a small amount of guidance. Ben is in a critical stage with junior high coming up. What I ended up asking was that Art and Lee be the decision makers who decide, based on the situation, what is the best thing to do. They might arrange for local friends to take the kids. Or they might move out here themselves for a few years. This seems to be a good compromise.

After breakfast, we went back home and did a bunch more cleaning up and sorting. Lee had checked into getting Virginia's wedding dress cleaned. It has a big wine stain from our wedding reception on the front. I said to go ahead and give it a shot (at cleaning it). In the afternoon, Art and Lee and I went around and got documents out of the safety deposit box, transferred accounts and cars. I set up for Art and Lee to be joint owners. I also set up for a living will. It is very strange to be planning for my early death. I hope it doesn't come to that, obviously, but I have a responsibility to our kids. We all picked up Mandy and Anika from school.

I am finding that I am having trouble remembering what I am doing and getting organized. I have lost my train of thought a bunch of times. I have started several things, but wasn't finishing any of them. I suspect it is all related to the emotions of grief. Art and Lee will be heading out on Sunday. I am not looking forward to this, but it will probably be good. It is about time to get back to what will become 'normal'.

It started snowing late in the afternoon. To be on the safe side, I flushed the sprinklers. Lee fixed waffles for supper. Joe came over around supper time. Mandy forgot to ask me about driving him home until later in the evening. Ben spent almost all of the evening doing homework. He had finished his current book before supper (and I gave him his \$10). He is getting very close to where I will kick in the rest of the money. He is doing okay. I want to spend a lot of time with him and help him over the next year (because junior high is so much worse). I talked to Joyce a little bit on the phone about the lawyer. She is obviously still struggling with grieving (like all of us). There is getting to be quite an accumulation of snow. After I took Joe home (late - around 9:30PM), Cindy packed up to go home. She went out and her windshield wipers broke. Art and I looked at them, but it wasn't a simple temporary thing (like they were hung up mechanically). Art was going to drive her car and Lee and Cindy were going to take Lee's car to get her home. (The snow was

pretty bad - in terms of visibility.) I suggested that they let Cindy drive Lee's car. Art thought about this and came back with letting Cindy drive the Probe. I agreed to it, but I was annoyed by it. It shouldn't, because we don't need it right now. However, I get pretty twitchy about Cindy because she has known for years that her car is falling apart - it has 180,000 miles on it. She can't afford a different car on her salary, but this gets to me because she could have been working a second job or working herself up to a better job. But she hasn't. Probably with Virginia's death, this bothers me even more.

I am very tired, but I do a little more straightening and cleaning up and wanted to get this diary entry done. While I was doing this, I ran across Virginia's folk religion handouts ("A Dictionary of Superstitions" by Sophie Lasne). I skimmed it a bit and then looked in the front. There on the table of contents, Virginia had noted read 1st on the chapter called "The Great Stages of Life". I thought that was sort of interesting and went to that chapter. I skimmed through to the section on death. There was a paragraph that included:

Animals and insects can see or smell approaching death and announce it by their cries or behavior. The hooting of screech owls and wood owls in the proximity of a house, a hen that crows in front of a rooster or like a rooster, or a dog that howls without reason are all bad omens. A horse that whinnies in front of a house, the strange noise of a fish boiling, and the grating sound of furniture gnawed on by woodworms are all called "death clocks" and signal the presence of the spectre lying in wait. If a weasel crosses your path, a bird gets into the house or taps at the window, a mole digs under the house, or you encounter a moth or white hair, death will come knocking shortly. (Sometimes objects crack or move themselves without reason; bells toll or glasses break on their own or trees blossom out of season.)
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This is very weird because we have had the owl and the objects moving/glass breaking events happen.

Friday, September 22nd

The days all seem to flow together.

It had snowed a lot during the night - between 3 and 5 inches. So on Thursday morning, we woke up to a winter wonderland. We had power and phones, but two of the trees in the back were damaged - broken branches. I got up and drove Mandy and her friends to school. Susan stopped by with India. Roger and Susan didn't have phone service, so I lent them my cellular phone. I dropped Ben off as well and then went on to the grocery store. Art and Lee slept pretty late. I spent a good chunk of Thursday trying to clean things up a bit. I got a reasonable start getting my stuff moved into Virginia's closet and getting the bathroom stuff arranged. It feels so strange and the bathroom and bedroom feel very sparse and empty without Virginia and her clothes and things. A lot of stuff is still around, of course, but it feels different. We also got some of the small furniture shifted around.

I also told Lee about the passage in the book and she told me that when Chris had come out, he had told her that a mole had just moved into their yard. Very strange. Joyce came down in the afternoon. They had lost power, but their phone still worked. She did a little laundry (getting Rick and Jeff ready for their trip to England). She was there when Cheryl, the hospice nurse, came over for a follow-up visit. After talking with us for a while, she said that we were doing fine. It doesn't always feel fine, but I have to go on. We talked about the owl and stuff. She told us a couple of stories from her experience. The first was about an older lady who died. Her husband was 90 and they had been married 67 years. He was devastated. While he was very upset, the funeral home took his wife's body out. As they did, a rocking chair started moving in the living room. The husband calmed down. At the time Cheryl chalked it up to the wind, but there wasn't any and nothing else in the room had moved. The other story was about a elderly man who was dying. A cousin had died and the man's daughter decided not to upset him by telling him. After a week or two, he was very agitated. He had been having dreams where all of his relatives who had died were visiting him. Except his cousin was in them, so he didn't know what to think except that he was going crazy. The daughter called Cheryl and told her about this. Cheryl told her to tell him what was going on. This allowed him to relax and let him know that he wasn't crazy.

Art had been out during the day and had picked out a car for Cindy. It is a 1985 Buick Town Car with 70,000. It is apparently immaculate. Actually, this makes me happy because that means that Cindy won't be calling for help with a dead car some day soon during the winter.

For supper, we used the raclette pan and made a small sandwich type of meal, heated under the pan. Art and Lee and Cindy seemed to really enjoy this. Mandy had gone over to Joe's for supper. She is spending a lot of time away, but I think it is okay. Ben spent a lot of time doing his book project (the book sandwich). He seems to be doing much better. I looked over his work and it was pretty good. I am proud of how he has come up in his school work.

On Friday, I got the girls to school. Susan came over and dropped off the phone. She stayed around for a little while because she was going shopping with Lee. Lee was still going to, but I wanted some help with buying the new couch. Susan left, but was going to meet Lee for lunch and shopping. Art took off to buy the car for Cindy. Joyce came down and Cindy came over. I told Cindy about the book and all the new stuff. She looked at it and mentioned that Kathy Warden's clock had stopped on Thursday morning at 6:00AM. This was mentioned in the book as well. In talking with the kids last night, Ben had woken up that night at 4-4:30AM. Mandy said the cats had woken her up at about the same time and she had to put Spot into the bathroom. Max just sat in the room and meowed at the ceiling. So the key unusual events the night and morning before Virginia died include:

1. Joyce woken up at ~4AM and hears an owl.

2. Susan woken up at ~4AM.
3. Hoxmeier's woken up at ~4AM by falling picture and broken glass, but not hurt.
4. Mandy woken up at ~4AM by the cats meowing oddly.
5. Ben woken up at ~4AM.
6. Kathy Warden's clock stops at ~6AM.
7. A mole in Chris and Julie's yard.
8. I call Vickie at the exact time so that she is on the phone when Virginia dies.

It all seems pretty strange. I actually think that something was going on and Virginia's spirit was doing something. Lee said that Virginia quieted down finally around 4:00AM. I have to admit that I am less afraid of dying than I have been. But I am still mad that our life together was cut short. I also really wish that Virginia would have woken me up or made some sort of sign. It would have meant a lot to me. I wonder (worry) if I was just in too deep of a sleep. Cheryl says that she would have been able to wake me up and that she had already said her good-byes to me. Or it could have been, like the last several weeks, she had trouble letting go of me.

So, Lee, Cindy, Joyce, Nate and I go to Ethan Allen. We worked with the lady that Virginia had worked with. I ended up getting the couch that Virginia wanted, I think with the fabric that she wanted. The lady who we worked with lives in the neighborhood and is married to a man who lost his first wife to cancer several years ago (and was left with kids who were in the same age spread as ours). She mentioned this because she had seen the obituary in the paper and had recognized the name.

Joyce and Cindy took off and Lee went down for her lunch date with Susan and Elizabeth Ross. I had some lunch and continued cleaning up. I ran out with Art in the afternoon to get a bow saw to cut down some of the limbs that were broken. I fixed burgers on the grill for supper. Ben went to a church kids' event with Matt. He is the son of one of the Hospice people (Kathy Taylor) and was Ben's bunk-mate at Eco-week. Mandy, Cindy and Lee took off to go shopping at the mall for a homecoming dress. While I was finishing up the bedroom, Vickie called. We talked for a long time. This was very nice. We talked about Cindy a bit, as well as the weird stuff that went on. I also told her about something Art had said. I had been encouraging him to have an explicit mechanism to encourage Cindy to go back to school (i.e. no car payments while she is taking classes). He doesn't want to do this - he feels that she will do it without anything like this. However, in the discussion about school, one of the things that Cindy said had prevented her from classes recently was Virginia's illness. This pissed me off. She had been over here at the start and at the end, but primarily she was around when Art and Lee were around. And when she was around, most of the time I don't think that she was all that helpful. Mandy didn't come right home, she went over to Larissa's to watch a movie. When she did, we had a long talk about several things. We sort of got into a tiff over supper on Saturday (before Art and Lee leave). It got all blown out of proportion

and it made me realize that we (Mandy and I) are both very sensitive and punchy about things. I need to calm down about a lot of stuff. I think I am coming across mad.

Sunday, September 24th

On Saturday, I got the kids up at a reasonable time and got them doing their chores. I dropped Mandy off at school for a game where the pep band was playing. Joyce had called and she and Kim were going. It turned out that Kim had been in a cheerleader seminar and Kim and other little girls were in the half-time program. While Mandy was out at this, Art, Lee, Ben and I went out for a bike ride. We went down Spring-Creek trail over to College Avenue (by the Dairy Queen). We went down to Bennigan's for lunch. It was a nice ride, but it did get a little cool on the way back. When we got back, Cindy was there with her new car.

I went out with Lee later in the afternoon to look at hot tubs. For some reason, I have been very interested in getting one. It seems to be a strange thing to want right now. Mandy went down, after all sorts of emotional gyrations, to Denver with her friends. She came back with a very nice looking dress. We all went out to Bisetti's for supper. Art, Lee, Cindy, Ben, Joyce and I went. I was planning on paying, but Art picked up the bill. I noticed that I was rather quiet during the meal. I have also noticed that a fair number of my comments refer to things that Virginia and I did or Virginia's comments or opinions. I guess I need to start letting go, as much as I don't want to. When we got back, we sat down and watched "LA Story". Joyce didn't remember it, but probably saw it. Art and Lee hadn't seen it. I enjoyed watching it again - it is one of my favorite movies. But, it caught me a few times because it is about love conquering all. At times I catch myself feeling that I could have done more to keep Virginia. I know this is a reaction and I will get over it, but it still gets me. At the end of the movie, the sign (a major character in the movie) plays "Amazing Grace" (it is actually the version I have on a CD). For the memorial, I had a momentary desire to play this at the end of the memorial. My mother and grandmother had it at their funerals. But it sort of signaled a transition for me.

On Sunday, Art and Lee got up and headed back to Des Moines around 8:30AM. I am really sorry to see them go. I didn't let them leaving get to me too badly, but it has been a huge help. But, I know it is time to regroup and figure out what normal is. I let the kids lounge around a bit. I fixed Ben and myself a breakfast burrito. He really likes them (I had fixed him one the previous day). I also fixed muffins for Mandy. Around noon, Ben's Macintosh was going buggy - repeatedly typing "7". It looks like a RAM or motherboard problem. I made a comment to Ben that Virginia knows how much I like to buy new computers and is giving me a push. Ben and I spent the bulk of the day working on the downstairs closet. We got started and made a dent in it, but only a dent. We all took a break and went out to Wendy's for lunch. I got sort of testy and upset a few times. I suspect it is a combination of dealing with the cleaning chore, the stress and being down to the three of us. While Ben was doing

his stuff, I went through and did some reorganizing of Virginia's and my stuff. I was looking through some old letters. During the day, I got calls from Mrs. Madden and Mrs. Cox. It looks like I have two out of three old machines sold. I need to go through all my stuff and get rid of the old junk that we don't use. I intend to get down to three main machines (an LC475 for Ben, my 610 for Mandy, something new for me, and a file server using Mandy's old LCII).

At times I have felt overwhelmed today. I really feel alone and the responsibility for the kids. I know I'll do fine and they will do fine, but I need to develop some new skills. I also have to remember to have fun with them, every day. They don't need me constantly cracking the whip. They deserve some fun and need it. I guess so do I.

I fixed home made pizza for supper (and Joe came over). Cindy did not show up at all today. This is what I expected. I suspect that she will drop over every now and then, but not a lot. I talked to Julie for a few minutes. I tried to get the kids to talk with her, but they weren't all that interested. She said she will try to call them on Wednesday and see how they are doing. I also vented about Cindy for a while. She commented that she has not seen the two sides of Cindy (but it is not that different from her brother). In talking about this, Julie only sees Cindy with other family around (i.e. Art and Lee). I got the kids into bed pretty late. I am going to have to start watching that for all of us (I am getting to bed way too late).

I think I am doing okay. I haven't been crying or anything, but I am very sad. I feel very adrift. I know I will go back to work, but I wouldn't mind some changes at work. I suspect I will get through the key things I need to this next week and I can start getting back into work over the following weeks.

Tuesday, September 26th

Monday was the start of our new 'normal' life - at least for the kids. I took the girls to school, because I am trying to 'get ahead' on car-pooling since I might not always have the flexibility as I get back to work. It is Ben's picture day, so I help him pick out his clothes. After I get Ben off, I exercise on the Nordic Track. After this and my shower, I head out and do some errands. The first stop is to Best to see about getting Virginia's diamond ring fixed. One of the stones (a small one) has fallen out. They didn't give me any trouble at all. The young lady who helped me started checking for a replacement ring. I asked to have Virginia's repaired. This wasn't a problem, but it will take a few weeks. She remembered Virginia and I coming in and deciding on the ring. She asked if Virginia still likes the ring. I got choked up, but told her that Virginia had died. After this I got over to another jewelry store to get all the rest of the rings appraised. After this, I head home and have lunch. I work around the house trying to sort through things in the afternoon. After the kids get home, I headed back to Ben's school for a parent/teacher conference. I was very happy about the conference. Ben is doing fine and keeping up. He could improve,

but is at grade level and is getting good grades. He also seems to be handling time pressure and stress well at school. The special education teacher seems almost disappointed that Ben is doing well. I stopped off at the grocery store for a few things and then head home and fix spaghetti for supper. After supper, I fixed the keyboard on Ben's machine - Spot had dumped a filled water glass into it and had really mucked it up. I got it most of the way back, but a few keys still don't work quite right. I work with the kids on their homework. After they are in bed, I exercise and then take a bath. This is the first bath I have had in a long time.

On Tuesday, I had a busy day. Susan stopped off for a few minutes on her way to work and we talked. I had to run off to get Ben to school. I was taking him because I needed to go to the insurance agent for some new life insurance. I am going from \$130,000 to \$500,000. Even though there are a fair number of assets, I want to make sure that the kids are covered in case anything happens to me. After the application, I needed to get a blood work up and some medical background taken (as well as pee in a cup). I shopped for a few minutes in old-town since the nurse wasn't ready for me. After this, I ran down to the Egg and I to have lunch with Joyce. It felt very odd having lunch with Joyce - it was something that Virginia should be doing. We talked about various things including parenting. She feels that Virginia and I did a great job. She also said that I have a good handle on the household and nurturing side of things. I suppose so, but I still feel inadequate. I tried to reassure her that she and Rick were doing a good job. After lunch, I headed down to the lawyer's office. I had a good discussion with him about setting up a trust and new will. It is surprising how much the estate would be worth - it should be a bit over a million dollars. This really drives me crazy because Virginia and I were really ready to start enjoying things. After this was over, I headed down to pick Mandy up from school. After everybody got home, I answered a bunch of phone messages. I fixed barbecued chicken for supper. Joe was around, coming home with Mandy. After supper, I got started re-organizing all of the files and moved them all upstairs. Tonight, I called Vickie and Art and Lee about the trust stuff. I still need to call Chris about this (since he is a successor for some of the stuff). It feels weird and surreal - re-organizing and taking apart our life bit by bit. It isn't as bad as the feeling of ripping my mother's home apart when she died, but it isn't great. The other night, I looked at the card Virginia got me last year for my birthday. In it she had written:

*You have made my days extraordinary!!
I love you Tim. I'm so sorry about all of this but I am so
proud of you and I can never thank you enough. Hang in
there!! I will get better & life will be good again. I
promise
- Junie*

This really caught me, reading this again. I know she tried hard to beat the tumor, but she didn't. I actually found some other notes that she had written (and dated from January 25, 1995). In that she had written some notes about the next

treatments that included the sentence: "I will try anything!!". Part of me still can't believe that we didn't beat it.

Wednesday, September 27th

Mandy came up in the middle of the night with a sore throat. I fixed her some tea with honey and had her take some ibuprofen. I took Mandy and Anika to school and came back and got Ben off to school. I am continuing to get things organized. I sorted through Virginia's desk in the sunken living room. At times it feels like the house is mined with emotional mines. Going through the desk, it was mostly filled with cards. There were several father's day cards Virginia had bought for Art. There were also 'from the two of us' sorts of cards (mostly anniversary). The two that really got me were anniversary cards that Virginia had gotten for me. These really ripped me up emotionally because they were based on the Browning poem "grow old with me, the best is yet to come". While I was doing this, I had some music on. Ironically, I was looking at a Laura Branigan CD and the last cut on the album was titled "the best was yet to come".

I got a birthday card sent off to my brother while I was doing this. In one of Virginia's notebooks, there were Virginia's notes from a discussion with Dr. Cohn - the Denver second opinion clinic oncologist. On the notes were a list of some of the possible chemotherapy and towards the bottom of the page is Virginia's notation of "can't cure but will shrink".

Going through my stuff, I found some poems that I had written Virginia. I had put out of my mind that I did write some (bad) poetry once upon a time. The first one, I think I had written for Virginia on her birthday right around the time we were moving out to Colorado.

<p>Virginia,</p> <p>Roses are red, violets are blue pookie, pookie blue eyes, here's to you.</p> <p>As you get older, day by day it doesn't matter as long as you stay</p> <p>with me through all my life, my loved, but older, wife.</p> <p>Happy Birthday, Tim</p>
--

The other one, I had written shortly before Mandy was born:

The roses aren't red this is now true
But the violets are alive and still blue.

Time has passed swiftly over the years
not without shedding a few tears.

For some time it has been just us two
but soon there'll be more than just me and you.

Roses are again red, violets are still blue.
A long and happy life to me, the baby, and you.

The poetry is obviously simplistic, but is intended to tie in to some earlier poems where I used the 'roses...' lead-in. In retrospect, I continue to be somewhat surprised at how much this sort of stuff comes up in these things. The key thing I really wanted was to have a long and happy life with Virginia. In the process of going through things I came across a medical supplies bag that had Virginia's hair from the original surgery in May of 1994. I put this in with the rest of Virginia's things. It still has her scent. I was a bit surprised at myself, but I found that this was oddly comforting. I have noticed that some of the strongest and most emotional responses I have come from either a smell or from a sense or emotion. It is difficult to describe the sense or emotion as a trigger.

After I got the girls home from school, Janet, a Hospice bereavement counselor, stopped over for a scheduled visit. I had the kids there during the discussion. We all sat together on the couch and talked with her. She described a series of group sessions that were starting tonight. The kids seemed to have some interest in going. I asked Janet to describe them. They seemed okay. Janet also asked about the general sequence of events. The kids did very well. She asked what were the major challenges that I was facing. The key one that I came up with is trying to fulfill both the structure and nurture sides of the parental roles. I also mentioned that I was concerned about being lonely after the kids were out of the house. Mandy chimed in and said that she would be her for me. I know she will, but at some point (probably pretty soon), she will need to move on with her own life. When we got done, I talked to Janet and she said that they seemed to be doing fine. She also commented about how they come from a loving environment and how they seemed to have been involved in the whole process. I also mentioned that another challenge I faced was dealing with Mandy's normal teenage emotional cycles and the difficulty in determining what is normal and what is related to Virginia's death. When she left, I asked them again and they were not particularly enthusiastic about going to the sessions. I left it up to them and tried to give mild encouragement. They both said

that they didn't want to go. I worry that they are doing what they think I want them to do. If they need to go, I really want them to, but I struggle with how to deal with this without unduly pressuring them.

After this, Joe came over for a while. I called Chris, at work, and asked him about being a back up personal representative in the trust. He was fine with this. We all went out for oriental food and then did a little bit of shopping at Target. After all this we got back and I tried to get them ready and in bed. Julie called while we were out. I called her back so that she could talk with the kids.

I am doing okay, but I still feel the profound loss welling up around me. I have been thinking about these diary entries. I have gotten used to doing them and they have helped, but I think I need to finish the diary up at some point. Another aspect of moving on. I will go through to the end of the end of the year with at least some entries. I will probably put some things in this up until May of 1996. At that point, I want to put this all in a printed form and put it away for the kids.

Thursday, September 28th

I finished cleaning up my office upstairs today. So, this is getting pretty presentable. The house is finally starting to look normal - before all this happened. There are no wheelchairs or commodes. There still are the added handrails on the steps and the pull-bars in two of the bathrooms. I ordered Ben's Apple Newton. I hope that he gets a lot of use out of this. I had lunch with Roger. He took me out to Pelican Fish to thank me for the loan of the cellular phone. He asked what I was thinking about doing. This is a hard question that I haven't really thought about yet. I would like to be able to work on my own terms and be able to work part of the year. I would also like to write I think. He also mentioned that Susan was still having trouble sleeping - as a result of Virginia's death. We also talked about trusts and finances for children. He had put a small amount of money in India's name (around \$15,000). The intention is that India will not touch this until later in life. With growth and compounding, it will end up being on the order of one to two million dollars. This seems like a reasonable thing to do for Ben and Mandy.

After lunch, I called the lawyer about the trust discussion. I was wondering about the nature of the trust - where it was going to get hit with estate taxes. His justification was that the combination of low probability of needing it (i.e. I probably won't die soon), and high probability of changes a few years down the road, and coupled with the difficulty of administration and set up meant that it really wasn't worth the effort. I will proceed with this approach, but want to talk with Cheedle and the financial advisor.

I got the girls home from school and then took Mandy directly over to see Dr. Merkel. Mandy has not been feeling well and is getting some sort of cold. So, I had her in for a strep test. Merkel stuck his head in and talked to us for a little bit. We

all bantered a little bit (about Mandy and boyfriends). Ben was watching Nate Turley for Joyce at home while Mandy and I were gone. He seemed to do pretty well with this.

Mandy fixed her own supper. I fixed grilled pork chops for Ben and I. I am trying to make sure they both eat reasonably well. Ben spent most of the night working on homework. I spent most of the evening working on bills and the check book. All of us took a bath tonight - Mandy and then Ben and then me. I can see that trying to keep up on the kids, their school, the household and my job is going to be a real tough nut.

Saturday, September 30th

Well, it is the end of the month. Finally. Trying to rebuild our life without Virginia is going to be hard. We, Mandy, Ben and I, can do it, but it will be hard.

On Friday, Mandy wasn't feeling too well in the morning so she slept in. I drove Ben to school first and a little early so that he could get some homework done. (He had forgotten some of it Thursday night.) I ran a bunch of errands including picking up the jewelry that was appraised. I had lunch with Robert Heckendorn. (I ate out with friends 3 out of 5 days this week.) I asked Robert how things went and how he dealt with the loss of his father when he was about Ben's age. He mentioned that he was really kept in the dark - isolated. I really should talk in more depth with Robert about how this all went.

After lunch, I did some more shopping. I picked up a garage door opener for the 3rd garage door (for the company car). I also got some candy for Halloween and some birthday and anniversary cards. This is part of my responsibility now. I ended up doing the grocery shopping right before I picked Mandy up at school. I find that middle of the day or very late are the best times - right after work is a very bad time. After school, Mrs. Cox and Mrs. Madden both came over and bought two of the computers I have been trying to sell. I think I sold these at a very reasonable price. Mrs. Cox (who is Ben's primary teacher) came back later because she forgot one of the cables. There is one more machine - which was Virginia's MacPlus. It makes no sense to keep it and I have copied the files from the hard drive onto my machine. But even though it makes no sense to keep it, I have a hard time parting with anything because it is one more step along the road of 'putting Virginia away'. I know this is not what is happening for the kids or I, but all the emotional stuff that goes on is very hard. We had pizza, like a normal Friday night. Mandy went off to play at a game and didn't get home until around 10:30PM. She had stopped off afterwards at a coffee shop. Ben did his chores, pretty quickly, on Friday night. I called both Lee and Vickie. Lee sounded okay, but sounded 'flat' or tired. Vickie and I talked for a long time. I am hoping that she and I develop a similar sort of

relationship that she and Virginia had. I really need that to keep contact with the family. During the phone call, Vickie did get emotional at one point.

On Saturday, we got up and headed down to Denver for the HP day at Elitch's (an amusement park). We picked up Joe on the way. We were going to take Charlie as well, but he had a football game. It started out cool and rainy, but warmed up. I let Mandy and Joe head off on their own, but we ended up running into them all day long. A lot of people came up and asked how I was doing - around 15-20. I do appreciate the concern. But Mandy and I were talking about this on the way home. Lots of the time, both of us just want to come back and say "how do you think I'm doing...". But we don't. We had a good time. Ben and I got on the roller coaster twice, the water ride and a loop-the-loop. Ben did the water ride another time and the tilt-a-whirl. It was nice. It seems like everybody knows. On the way out of the park, Ben was a little sad and we talked for a bit. I tried to remind him that Virginia wouldn't want us to always be sad thinking about her death, but would want us to remember her and the good times and all the good things that she did for us and with us.

We got back and I picked up a birthday present for Rick. He is having his 40th birthday on Sunday. I got him a clear P-51 Mustang model because he had mentioned that he had it as a kid. I want to head towards 'recapturing youth' as a present theme for friends rather than the classical black and coffins and so on. (For obvious reasons.) After we got home, I fixed supper and finished doing my laundry. I also took a first shot at sorting through the sympathy cards and memorial donations. I need to get moving on this stuff.

I'm very tired again tonight. I'm pretty sore - I think I hurt my ribs on the roller coaster. I think I'm also coming down with Mandy's cold. I don't know how things are going to go together as I get back to work. I really miss Virginia.

October 1995

Monday, October 2nd

Well, it is the start of a new month. Things are still very strange, things still feel very surreal. I have noticed that I have been dreaming some, but I don't remember the dreams. I really want to have some dreams - to be able to see and talk with Virginia, if only in my dreams.

On Sunday, we all got up relatively late - which is nice for a change. I fixed the kids breakfast - breakfast burritos. I got dressed to go out for Rick's birthday. Mandy wrapped the present for Rick. She is being very helpful. I took off, with the cellular phone, to meet with the other folks for Rick's birthday. I met up with Joe and Karen Gersch and with Rob and Donna Uhrich. We went over to the Carousel Dinner Theatre to surprise Rick. The people there let it slip about the 'rest of your party'. (But Rick had an idea anyway.) The play we saw was "Do black patent leather shoes really reflect up?". It is a play about growing up Catholic. It was a cute play although the production values were pretty 'low key'. (Joyce asked me during the play if this was normal for the place, since she hadn't been before. I told her it was.) Virginia would have enjoyed the play. It turned out that the couples were all one Catholic and one Protestant (and Virginia and I would have been as well). It was very odd being there without Virginia. She should have been there. Some of the lines were about what is supposed to happen to couples - growing old and so on. These bothered me some - reminding me of what Virginia and I are going to miss out on. I also noticed that some of our party would occasionally look at me during the play (the curse of good peripheral vision). I felt at a few points like a 'fifth wheel'.

I got home after the play and checked on how the kids were doing. Mandy had gotten her homework done. Ben had gotten sidetracked when Charlie came over. So he hadn't done all he needed (he was almost half way). So, Ben stayed home, while Mandy and I went out to the mall and Target for a few things. Ben got his stuff done by the time we got back (and was in a better mood too). We headed out together for a family meeting at Olive Garden. We talked about what the kids want to be (long term goals). Mandy wants to be either an archeologist or a zoologist. Ben wants to be an artist or an engineer. It was good to hear them vocalize their desires. We talked about responsibilities and the help I need. We talked about wanting to do fun stuff (snow-boarding, vacations, and so on). The discussion went very well and I know that there will be some rough spots, but that the kids will be fine. We got back and did chores and homework and watched a little TV. We all got to bed at a reasonable time.

On Monday, Larissa's mom picked Mandy up for school. (She will take the girls in all this week and I will pick them up. After I figure out my schedule, I will work out our

arrangements for car-pooling.) After I got Ben off for school, I got dressed and started working (for the first time in two and a half months). I am planning on working half time this month. I worked at home, getting through the backlog of voice mail and email. I had less than expected on voice mail (probably because of the full mail box) with just 30 pieces. Some of them were notices about Virginia dying. I had a pile of email - around 250 pieces. This was in the ballpark of what I expected, but it could have been a lot more (people must have slowed down on stuff to me). One of the pieces was a piece of obscene character graphics that was intended for someone else. I got my voice mail cleaned out. I got down to around 40 pieces of email. I need to write up a small note thanking people in the division for their support (as well as thanking senior staff for theirs).

In the afternoon, I went to get Mandy. After Ben got home, Mandy and I went out to get her flute fixed and to pick up her ID bracelet for Joe at the mall. We got this done and got back home. I fixed supper. Ben studied a lot tonight and is doing well. He draws really well - I am impressed with his artistic skills. He keeps asking about me kicking in the rest of the money for the Newton (which I have already ordered). I spent a good chunk of the evening getting started on the thank you notes - getting all of it entered into a computer contact data base. I am doing this because it will help me keep track of everything and who to send a card to.

Thursday, October 5th

On Tuesday morning, after I got the kids off for school, I finished entering sympathy cards into the contact tracking program on the computer. This didn't take very long. I spent the rest of the morning working at home. There was a potential trip on Thursday to California. I didn't want to go, but I set up possible travel plans. While I was talking with Janie, my secretary, the O.J. Simpson verdict was announced - not guilty. It is amazing the number of people who have been sucked into the trial. Talking with the kids, they both heard or saw it at school. Not that it matters much, but I think he probably did kill his wife, but there was reasonable doubt. I was surprised at how fast they came in with a verdict. The installer came for the new garage door opener (which took about 3 hours) and a separate guy for the estimate for a deck for a hot tub. I got the girls from school. A little later, a single mom who got my name from Cindy Cox (Ben's teacher) stopped by to look at Virginia's computer. I sold Virginia's computer to her. This felt very odd - especially when I backspaced over Virginia's name in the system. I didn't like doing this. After this, I went out to supper with Rick at a Japanese restaurant and out to see "The Net". The movie was okay. On the way back I forgot that Rick's car was at my house. I still am somewhat fuzzy. The kids did fine while I was at the movie. I am really struggling with my future - I am not sure what I want to do.

On Wednesday, I exercised in the morning while Ben went through his spelling list. I got the kids off and Susan stopped by. She dropped off some banana bread. She told about something strange that just happened to her. She had been keeping an

old voice mail message from Virginia that Virginia had left in May of 1995. It was a message with reasonably good news and Virginia sounded 'up'. It disappeared from her mail box on Tuesday. I was sorry to hear this, because I would liked to have heard it. I got dressed after she was gone. I noticed that Ben forgot one of his assignments - the bloomsball - so I dropped it off on my way into work. This was my first day in for a long time. I got there and there was somebody else's car in my parking place. This really didn't bother much except that I thought I was running late. It felt very odd being in at work. I had a meeting with my boss - Jim Davis. I told him that my priorities are the kids. He is being very understanding. He opened the door to a range of options that include something part time or job sharing. I am heading towards some option that allows me to work 30 hours per week or job sharing with limited travel. I think I need this. I had a short meeting with Beiser and Carol McKennan about the Thursday trip and we arranged for Ian Fuller (one of my reports) to go. I talked briefly with Beiser about work, but not much. It all seems really silly. I got around and thanked most of senior staff for their help and support. I also talked with Linda Beardsley about job sharing. I will get the numbers on the financial implications of doing this. I also talked with Jack Walicki. All of the folks are wondering how I am doing. I understand their compassion and concern, but it feels odd. I encouraged Jack to get insurance on Anna. I have been doing this with a lot of folks. I got out and went to get the girls. When we got home, I got a call from Ben - he had missed the bus. I went to get him, and this makes it more obvious that I do need some time to support the kids. I went out with Ben to Young's for supper. I then took Mandy to school for practice. Ben had to read with no TV since he forgot some homework. I called Loretta Madden and the other lady about their computers. Everything seems okay. I got a call from Cindy Cox and helped her do installation and then went over to finish getting the printer installed. I picked up Mandy on the way back. When I got back, Ben had finished his entire book - in one evening (55 pages). I was very impressed. I spent the rest of the evening getting a new remote access script written for a change in slip access at work. I can see that life is going to be very different, and that I need to recognize that I am going to be scaling back from the path I was on. This is okay, but I am of two minds, one part is dealing with the impending changes, but part of me still wants to keep on like I had been. I miss Virginia very much. Everybody says I am doing so well, but it doesn't feel that way inside of me.

I got up and got Mandy off to school and then took Ben to school. I was supposed to have a 9:00AM meeting, but it got canceled (and no one warned me). I spent from 9AM until around 12:30 cleaning up my desk. I had my desk swapped out while I was gone, so I needed to go through and get the new one arranged. During this, a few people stopped by including Gretchen Tobin (a peer) and Steph Daniel (who worked for Gretchen, but is leaving). I got home and fixed some lunch and puttered a little. I also sorted some pictures. I went out and looked at storage shelves for the garage (trying to get ready for the new car). After I got Mandy home, I picked Ben up and we headed over to Greeley for an HP auction. I got a few things and Ben did fine. We were going to get home too late, so I had Mandy eat before she went to play at the homecoming game. Ben and I ate pizza at Pulcinella's on the way home. On

the way home, Ben saw Virginia's face in some bushes on the side of the road. When we got home, I started Ben on his homework. He got pretty stressed out about some fractions, but overall did fine. I cleaned up a couple of computers (Mac SE's) that I got at the auction. Vicky called later in the evening and we talked for a bit. Mandy got home later. Someone had thrown a water balloon at her and had messed up her flute. Apparently, someone else stepped on it. I will need to rethink her being in band, if this is what is going to happen.

In some ways it was nice to get back into work, but I am having a big problem figuring out what I want to do. It is going to take me a while to get where I care about a lot of this stuff, but I need to.

Sunday, October 8th

Early Friday morning, Mandy woke up in the night with a dream about going to and from the hospital. In the dream, one of the trips was when we were picking up ashes. At this point she knew what the trips were about. Apparently, Ben and I were mean to her in the dream. I had a dream as well. In it, Virginia was still alive and we were going to try the mushrooms. After this, I ended up crawling under cars or some sort of machinery for what seemed like days. I think I remembered this dream because Mandy woke me up with her dream. I have, over the last few days, been having dreams with Virginia in them. I think this is good. One of them was mildly sensual and romantic which was nice. Because of her dream, I let Mandy sleep in and I took her to school late. I worked at home, reading for a while. It is tough getting back into work. I went out to have lunch with Ben and then went into work. I got Mandy at school. She had been crying and upset - because of her dream. She had left a message at home, but I had already taken off. After school, Mandy and I went over to get her flute fixed. I was not amused about the damage. She and I went grocery shopping on way back. We got home and had Rick and his boys were over for supper. I fixed chicken and hot dogs. Lee called and it sounds like they are doing okay - I could tell that she is still struggling with all of this. She mentioned that being back home, she sometimes thinks that Virginia is still here. Rick and I watched "Buffy the Vampire Killer". After the Turley's left, I worked on putting a file server together using the one of the Macintosh SE's that I had bought at the auction.

On Saturday, the kids got the chores done (mostly) early in the day. I went out and bought some shelving for the garage (trying to clean things up. Ben, Mandy, Brittany (Mandy's friend) and I went out to the mall. I dropped Mandy and Brittany off at the mall and Ben and I went off to get our hair cut. After this, Ben and I came back to the mall and had lunch and took Mandy and Brittany to get her hair cut (for the homecoming dance). Ben and I went to Barnes and Noble (a new book store in town). I ran into some friends - the Sandberg's. It is strange talking to people, because they all ask how I'm doing or how are things going. After we picked Mandy and Brittany up again, we went off to Best - Mandy was trying to find an ID bracelet for Joe (for homecoming). We couldn't find one. While we were there, the lady who

has helped me with Virginia's ring recognized me and got the ring (Mandy commented on how she remembered my name). We got home and Mandy got ready for the dance. Ben and I took Mandy, Joe and Brittany and dropped them off at a restaurant. He and I went out and tried "Wok and Roll" - a Japanese fast food place. It was okay. We spent the rest of the evening cleaning out the garage. Mandy called a little past midnight from the friend's house she was staying at.

Ben has mentioned that he keeps seeing Virginia's image in lots of places. Once in some bushes, once by a video store and others. I think this is good. One of these instances, Virginia didn't look happy. He was wondering what he had done wrong. We talked about this. I told him there were at least two explanations for seeing his mom - he missed her and his mind was letting him see her, the other is that she was showing herself in a spirit sense. I told him either was fine and good (and that I hoped for the latter). I also told him that Virginia was not mad at him - she was very proud of him. I made some comment that she might be mad at me. Ben told me that I was doing great and that Virginia would not be mad at me. We are both trying to support each other.

On Sunday, I kept working on the garage and got Ben and Mandy started on the toy closet in the basement. This took all day. The closet is in good shape, but I'm only about two-thirds done on the garage. Things will be a lot more organized when I'm done with all of this. In the last year and a half, things have gotten pretty messy. We went out to Boston Market for supper, and brought it home. During the day, a couple things have really caught me about Virginia being gone - one during a movie that Mandy and Joe were watching ("Four Weddings and a Funeral") and later in the day on television ("Mad About You"). I really miss her. I'll get through, but I notice that currently I am running in an 'endurance' mode. I am not a whole lot of fun (for the kids) and I am acting rather driven about getting things sorted out and cleaned up. I suspect that I'll have another period of emotional lows or depression after I get things in shape. I really hate not having Virginia here. When I think back to my life goals, I talked about family, but most times I didn't explicitly mention Virginia. This was not because I didn't want and need her, but because I always expected her to live longer than I did.

Thursday, October 12th

On Monday, I started out the day by reading at home a bit. I did go in to work for a couple of hours. While I was in, I signed some of the change of record and insurance forms. All of this stuff feels so wrong and strange. After I got home, I finally talked with Josie (the cleaning lady) - she quit before I could fire her. She apologized (of course), but she had gotten a job (as a flagger). I don't know why she couldn't have called and left a message. I worked on a sheet talking about Virginia until very late. I talked to Lee about it a little bit before I started. I wanted to write something up because a lot of the people who gave donations didn't really know who she was. This was pretty hard to do and I got a little emotional at a few parts. It was very

hard trying to figure out what to say and how to make it fit on the front and back of a single sheet. I was a little worried it would come across as the memorial equivalent of one of the Christmas letters that some people send.

On Tuesday, I worked on cleaning things up a little. I was trying to get into work but I am having a tough time going in. I went out for lunch with Joyce to Deli Works. We used to go there a lot. The owners hadn't heard that Virginia had died, but knew that she had been sick. They were very sorry. Joyce and I had a nice lunch, but it feels very strange going out to lunch with her. This is something that Virginia should be doing. Joyce is 'checking up' on me to make sure that I am doing okay. I did get in to work and I talked with Jim Davis. I indicated to him that I was heading toward part time and this is okay with him. He is being very understanding. He commented on giving the company car back. For the most part, this doesn't bother me but I recognize that making this sort of job change is going to be hard, because it is another change (even if it is a good one). I left work and got Mandy. After Ben came home, I went to get the oil changed in the mini-van because it had been too long. I stopped off to get Virginia's wedding dress. I was surprised because it might be recoverable. There is a stain, but it is much better. I let the kids fix supper and clean up and they did okay.

Ben was upset by a memory of not eating a pop tart that Virginia had fixed for him while she was sick. This really bothered him and we talked about it a bit. Part of it was that he remembered how hard Virginia had worked to get it ready for him. He also mentioned that some kids had asked him if I was going to remarry or if he was going to get a new mom. This really upset him a lot. I got a call from Dennis Vetter. This was good because I had been wanting to talk with him, but I didn't want to call him so soon after his wedding. We talked about the difficulty we have both had in getting back into work. (He took off three months.) I also talked to him about my disliking being alone, but feeling bad about thinking about possibly finding somebody. I also have the sense of not wanting to chance going through this all again. I also have the normal (I think) nagging concern about not having done all that I could have. Dennis reassured me on this, but it still sits there in the back of my mind. He and his new wife invited us over for supper. I talked to Lee and she liked the draft of the sheet.

On Wednesday, I spent most of the day cleaning up the garage. I just couldn't get excited about going to work - so I didn't. I got a lot done of the garage and it is pretty close. I made a few minor changes to the sheet. I think I'm done with it.

I spent the evening getting ready for discussion with the financial advisor - filling out the questionnaire. I have a lot of concern about the Paris trip. I got a call and the organizers are thinking about London instead. Mandy is not excited about the trip, so I think we will go to Disney World. I called and talked to the organizer. She seems like a nice lady who is married to a head-injury survivor (but is primarily her husband's guardian). She had some less than pleasant experiences with Dr. Macintosh and his partner (Tamara?). She mentioned that Macintosh is having an

affair with one of her friends, a nurse, whose husband is dying of lung cancer. I don't think Virginia would be surprised about this. It does strike me that Virginia would prefer to have died than to have lived an extended period in a state like that. We might get our deposit back, but there is some chance we would lose it.

I slept down in the 'fish room' (where Virginia spent her last weeks). I wanted to do this because I was hoping to dream about Virginia or in some fashion be closer to her. I got downstairs around 12:30. It was very strange because the radio was on and playing a Madonna song - "Live to Tell". The alarm had apparently been set. I checked with the kids the next day and Ben had played with the 'alarm 1, 2 or both' switch, but not with the alarm on settings. It was strange, but I liked the idea of there being some chance that Virginia's spirit was still around. There are any number of normal event explanations, but I hope that isn't what caused it. I don't find this scary, but comforting. If anything, I am less scared of death and dying.

On Thursday, I got up a little early and got Ben off to an early computer class. I then ran off to my meeting with Social Security. I met with Jaco (the benefits clerk). I was shocked and amazed to find out that each of the kids get \$382 each per month. I was figuring that they might get \$100 or less. This will last, as long as they are in school, until they are 18. For Mandy, this is about \$10,000. For Ben it amounts to around \$30,000. I was surprised. After this, I went to meet with the financial advisor. This went well. It appears that things are pretty well set up. She agreed with the lawyer about the trust stuff - that at this point, keeping control was more appropriate (over trying to reduce taxes). She is after me using a consolidated fund management firm. I will probably not use this part of the service, but will check in with her twice a year. She said that I am well positioned for financial matters and complimented me on the various things and having thought through all of this.

I went on into work after the financial advisor. There was a staff meeting. This was okay and I was reasonably well engaged. After work, I didn't get Mandy because I had arranged for Jan Schendel's to pick the girls up (because I expected the meeting to run longer). On the way out, I saw my company car. It looks very nice. Virginia picked out a nice color. On the way home, I stopped off at the mall and talked with a travel agent. I wasn't able to get a Christmas trip to Disney World. I did tentatively set up to go over Thanksgiving. I got home and talked to the kids. After discussing this, they didn't want to do the Thanksgiving one. So we decided to go skiing (more accurately, snow-boarding) over Christmas and to go back to Iowa over Thanksgiving. I do want to get the three of us out for a nice vacation by summer. We need it.

I was going to grill chicken, but it was too windy. So, I picked up carry-out Chinese. Rick stopped over and we talked for a while. I am getting close to getting things straightened up and organized - at home and legally and financially. Cindy called tonight to check to see how things were going with us.

Sunday, October, 15th

It's been a pretty long weekend. I'm pretty tired and I'm not getting a lot of the things done that I want to get done.

On Friday, Susan stopped by for a little bit. We talked some and she picked up Virginia's "Colorado Homes and Lifestyles" magazines. Virginia had most of these back to the first issue in 1982. The new cleaning company stopped by for an estimate. It seems pretty expensive (around \$85 every two weeks), but it beats doing it myself or trying to hassle with the kids doing it. I will give it a shot and see how they do. They have done a good job the two times that they were here before. I made calls to a couple trust departments. I finally picked one (based on my talking with them and some comments from my accountant).

I still want to say "our accountant" and be including Virginia, so it catches me when I say "we" or "our". I ran into work and picked up change of beneficiary forms. But, I can't do them until the trust is finished. I called the lawyer and told him how I wanted the final wording on the trust. Marty Osecky took Ben to climbing class. I forgot to tell him to bring sweat pants so I ran a pair over and watched him climb for a while. He had a good time. During the day I also did some laundry. After I had watched Ben at the climbing class, I went out and did grocery shopping. Mandy was sleeping over at a friends house. They apparently had this little get together for Mandy. Ben and I went out to see the Disney cartoon "Pocahontas". It was pretty good.

On Saturday, we did chores. I did a fair amount of baking - bread, muffins, custard, pumpkin pie. Mandy talked to me for a bit how she thinks that I like Ben better than her - that I do more things with him. We talked about this for a while. I tried to reassure her. It strikes me that I am really trying to spend time with her, but she doesn't want to do the things that I try to set up and won't tell me the things she wants to do. I have tried to tell her that I want to go shopping, but I don't think she believes me. This is going to be very hard for the next couple of years. It is probably going to tough for both Mandy and me, but we will get through it. I printed up envelopes for the thank you notes.

During the day I also made reservations for our trip back to Iowa over Thanksgiving and for a ski condo over Christmas in Keystone. I made, at Art and Lee's request, the reservations for Cindy for these things as well. They will be paying for Cindy for both of these things. I know that Cindy gets on my nerves about this stuff, but my reaction to her (primarily during times I am talking with Vickie) is out of proportion. Thinking about this, I think a big part of it is tied up with my emotions around Virginia dying. I think it has to do with my loss and the feeling that Cindy isn't doing much with her life. I recognize that this is Cindy's life to do with as she pleases and I have to get over this, but it is hard.

The kids didn't really want to go down to the Ison's, but I made them. I had made a normal and an experimental pumpkin pie to take down. I let Mandy drive - down and back. We had a nice time. They seemed to like the pumpkin pies. It feels strange going out without Virginia. It also feels strange having friends 'watching out' for me, because I know that they are doing this. I was up very late working on putting different, better photos in the note about Virginia - I guess it is a eulogy.

On Sunday, I was trying to get the kids up to the mountains to see the aspens turning yellow. Like several times over the last couple of years, this was like pulling teeth. Mandy didn't want to go. I finally gave up and let her stay home. Ben and I went up and had a picnic lunch and sat on rocks and drew for a while. It was very nice. When we got back, around 3PM, things didn't go so well. I wanted to get him out for a passport photo - so that we could be ready for a trip to Europe or someplace interesting. He whined about this and I got rather upset. I finally really finished the note about Virginia. (It is possible for an engineer fiddle with something for a long time...)

Virginia Lee Heckle Mikkelsen

I have been thinking that many of you who have helped us did not know Virginia or only knew one part of who she was. Although impossible, I want to at least try to communicate a sense of Virginia.

Virginia was born May 3rd, 1953 to Art and Lee Heckle in St. Louis. Her father, Art, was away in the army in Korea at the time. He was worried about not being able to get back and see his new baby. After the war, Art and Lee had two more girls - Vickie and Cindy. After a few years, when Virginia was 6, they moved from St. Louis to Des Moines, Iowa. 6 years later, Chris, Virginia's brother was born.

Virginia went to Catholic primary school and an all girls Catholic high school (St. Joseph's Academy). In junior high school, she was class president. At this time she got in an interesting struggle because she followed her conscience about an issue - and was at odds with the rest of her class. (Virginia was not easily swayed by external pressures - she followed her internal compass.) She always said that she got a good education from Catholic school. She also said that she was a recovering Catholic because of it, too. As a teenager, she was a big Paul Revere and the Raiders fan (especially Mark Lindsay).



After she graduated, she went up to Ames where I met her. I commented that all the good ones were taken. She was dating someone in

my dormitory house - I was in the room next to his. Virginia, her boy friend and I started to see a lot of each other as friends. Years later, Art and Lee both commented that letters from Virginia started to mention some guy named Tim. After we were married she admitted to me that she had gotten my schedule and started showing up after my classes because she felt something special, too.

Our first date was on April 15th, 1972. We went to see an old movie in Des Moines. We came back up to Ames, and I kissed her - I can still remember the exact place - a stop sign behind C.Y. Stephens auditorium. After this we went to a restaurant and just looked into each others eyes. Virginia moved back to Des Moines after her freshman year because she didn't know what she wanted to do quite yet. She went to work for an insurance company. We dated for a year or two. I put a lot of miles on the car and time on the phone. We had started out as best friends and quickly fell in love - true love. I can't imagine anything better.

Early in 1974, she told me that she had bought a wedding dress (I hadn't asked yet, though we both knew it was going to happen.) I asked her that spring on the anniversary of our first date. We got married on November 23rd, 1974 - right after my finals. We went to Omaha for a few days for our honeymoon. We could not afford a fancy honeymoon, but it was nice.



We moved into married student housing and I finished my last two quarters and got my degree in computer science. Virginia worked in Ames for the city and at the hospital in various jobs until I was out of school.

In 1976, we went out to Oregon for 6 months as part of a work study program during my masters. Virginia had gone out with the idea that she would be able to relax and have sort of a vacation. She got a clue the first day when she went out to sun-bathe. It started to rain. She came in. It cleared up. She went out. It started to rain. This went on for a while and then she noticed that all the other people just stayed out in the rain. We found that Virginia needed the sun.

Fortunately, after graduation in 1977, I got a great job offer from HP in Fort Collins (which is sunny). We made a lot of great friends and enjoyed our new employed life-style (going out with our friends, skiing, hiking, dancing, skating). We loved to go to movies. Virginia really liked "The Way We Were" and we both liked old movies (like "Philadelphia Story" and "The Thin Man"). She read voraciously - ranging from classics to contemporary. She enjoyed Thomas Hardy through to Tom Robbins, John Grisham, Tony Hillerman, Anne Tyler, Anne Rice and Orson Scott Card.

Virginia started going to school a little and got back into working. She ended up working as the office manager for a group of anesthesiologists. We moved out of our apartment and into our first house in 1978. Virginia did a great job at getting us into great houses. She also had a flair for interior design - which she got from her mom.

She always seemed to be ahead of the next fashion or design trend. In the last 10 years, almost every year, she would go down to Santa Fe with her girl friends on a major shopping expedition - and come back laden with southwestern pots and art and accessories. This was another aspect of Virginia - she loved to shop and was very good at it. She was an aggressive, careful shopper and always got great value - she took a lot of pride in this.

Virginia was pregnant early in 1979. We moved into a bigger house in July - getting ready for the big event. And on December 27th 1979, Amanda was born. Mandy's head wouldn't fit and had to be delivered by C-section. But, Mandy was fine - and gorgeous. We were both incredibly proud and happy.



Ben was born on March 28th, 1984. Virginia was sick with morning sickness a good part of pregnancy. Just like Mandy, his head was too big to fit. But, since we were ready for it, the C-section went very smoothly. Ben was another great looking baby.



Our life changed drastically with children and the responsibility that they brought, but we still had a lot of fun with the two of us, with the four of us and with our friends. We went on various vacations (including Disney-world), trips (like Europe) and cruises (to the Caribbean).



We had always had lots of parties. Sometimes there was a theme (bad movie, event, holiday), sometimes not. Virginia would always get a little nervous right before the party, but things would always go great. We had a great life. Virginia would comment at times that things were too good - she almost seemed to be expecting something. Virginia had gone back to school to get her degree in 1990. With the kids school and my going back as well, the entire family was in school.

In early 1994, Virginia was almost done with her sociology degree. But, she was starting to feel tired and having headaches. On May 13th, after her finals, she collapsed with a hemorrhage from a lemon-sized high-grade brain tumor. The doctor did not paint a positive outlook -

only a year or two with probable mental dysfunction and left side paralysis. She briefly regained consciousness and I asked if she wanted the time. Virginia said "Yes, I want the one to two years." As bad as all this was, Virginia did come out of the operation quickly and regained use of all but her left arm. She had all of her memories and mental skills. We went in to this knowing the range of outcomes and kept a hopeful and positive approach. Virginia underwent radiation which seemed to help. By the end of the year, she was doing well. The remaining tumor had shrunk and she was driving and fully functional. We had our 20th wedding anniversary at Rick and Joyce Turley's (our friends) house.

At the start of 1995, things took a turn for the worse and the tumor grew again. We were able to slow the growth, but over the course of the year, things got worse. Through all of this, she was the same person. She kept doing things with the kids. She kept in close contact with her friends. Even in July, she went out with Susan Ison (another friend) to see the wild-flowers at Pawnee Buttes.

Around August, Virginia was sleeping most of the time. (However, even when you thought she was sleeping, she would often chime in with a usually humorous comment.) Early in September, our friends, Cindy and John Hoxmeier, had arranged for Virginia's few remaining graduation requirements to be waived. We told her that she had gotten her degree and she responded, in her normal humor, with "no way". Virginia died on September 14th. She had not been in pain and retained her sense of humor and sense of self until the end.

In early 1994, she wrote the following about her values: *"I value my health and my family's health, both emotional and physical. I value a happy family life, those relationships are valued and cherished above all others. I value giving my children a good life, with good memories and a solid foundation for them to use to build their own lives. I value my friendships and my husband above all friends. In myself, I value, intelligence, loyalty, honesty, kindness, assertiveness, fairness, trust, reliability."* She followed these values all through her life.



She was my love, a great mother, a great friend and a caring, intelligent, wonderful and funny person. Virginia should have had more time, but she still had a great life - if only in 42 years. She will leave an immense emptiness in our lives but not in our hearts.

Tim Mikkelsen
October 15th, 1995

I'm trying to get things finished up. Besides the thank you notes, which I'm behind on, is getting the donations sent in. I was going through the guest book from the memorial gathering in the evening and found the memories that people had written:

I'm thankful, as I know that you are, that Virginia is now free from pain. I'm also thankful for the opportunity to have known her. I can still remember some of the hilarious stories she used tell at "Taft Canyon Ladies' Night Out", way back when, when it still existed. She always spoke of all of you with a great deal of pride and happiness. I'll always remember her fabulous sense of humor and her love of people. And I'll always remember one particular scene, etched in my mind from 5 1/2 years ago, when Camille was just a tiny baby and I, a new and very self-conscious mother, was taking her out for a walk in the stroller. You were all in the driveway and Virginia came out to the street to "ooh and aah" over Camille. She told me to enjoy her while I could. One of the children told me -- delightedly -- that you were all headed out to see a drive-in movie... and I thought: "that's so neat -- they all enjoy being together so much." I'm thankful that you all enjoyed Virginia -- and that she enjoyed you all ... while she could.

Martha (and John and Camille and Carl) Marvin

Memories of Virginia

For many seasons, Virginia took care of my office and fortunes. We always had a congenial competent relationship.

The memory that I cherish is the delivery (OB) of her son. I was available and requested. In the delivery room Virginia was smiling and trusting and her confidence gave me assurance. The anesthetic (spinal) worked very well. She seemed very happy and as delighted as any mother could be with the birth of her son. Tim was there for "bonding" too and both were genuinely happy and thankful. It was wonder for me to have been present.

Allen Pierson

9/7/95

Virginia was such a kind, personable and friendly person. When I first moved to Ft. Collins, she and Tim did their best to make me feel at home and to welcome me as their friend. I will always be thankful.

As the years passed my respect for Virginia grew as I could see what a loving wife, mother and person she was.

She also had a great sense of humor and a sincere interest in the lives of others. Sharing stories about our common hometown, Des Moines, and high school, Dowling/St. Joseph's Academy was always fun.

I am thankful for having known Virginia. She made my life and the lives of others brighter.

John Dutton

I will never forget the night in Santa Fe that Cindy Hoxmeier, Virginia + I put our pajamas on with cowboy hats + took pictures in our hotel room. Virginia wore a hat five sizes too small.

Sylvia Thomas

Dear Tim, Mandy, and Ben,

I remember Virginia and her smile and laugh. I have fun memories of the Taft Canyon Gals Nights out and of our parties and exchanging of recipes. She has been an inspiration to us all.

I also remember the wonderful meal she brought our family after I had had surgery. Thank you , Virginia for being my friend!

God Bless you all. Love,

Donna Newlands

Virginia adored her family! Her children were always at the top of her list of what was important.

Lynn Bogard

The first time I met Virginia - she already knew my name because a mutual friend, Janet Beyers, had given her one of my recipes - Taffy apple pie. It was a warm and welcoming feeling when Virginia shared that with me!

Carolyn Porter

I'll miss seeing Virginia in the back yard. She would be out in her yard and I would be cutting roses in my back yard and we would stop and chat about things. Her sense of humor always added to the talks.

Judy Grim

Words that come to mind when we think of Virginia: Hospitality - Virginia was the hostess with the mostest - and always knew how to help her guests feel at home so they would enjoy themselves. Humor - sometimes sarcastic and always present. One time Tom saw a picture of Madonna in a bustiere (one of those crazy bras) that she wears. He asked Virginia how to pronounce "bustiere". Virginia replied, "It's 'boo - stee - yay' ... that's cause you need it to boost yer yays!"

How much she loved Tim. "I met him and I fell like a rock" .. then she told the story of the dead fish handshake!

How much she loved Mandy. "She was this fuzzy haired little thing with big blue eyes (as a baby). She was so cute. I remember Tim asking me if I loved Mandy more

than him and I said, 'Well.... for right now I do.' and Tim looked so sad."

Babies: "I just love the back of a little baby's head ... it fits in your palm and it is so fuzzy and warm."

Pregnancy: "I was so sick the whole pregnancy with Ben ... couldn't eat very much. I was so glad to see him when he finally arrived. I was so thin after that I fit into my regular (pre-pregnancy) jeans. Benny was beautiful."

Quotes from Movies: "Taffeta, Darling!"

Tom and Mel Huibregtse

Tuesday, October 17th

It has been a somewhat busy week so far. After I got the kids off to school, I went over to Kinko's and got the sheet about Virginia printed up. It turned out very well. I came back home and got some lunch. I went in to work for a little bit. I needed to help coordinate the annual stock options. I did this for my business team and also for Patty Azzarello's team as well (since she is on vacation). This went smoothly and I am ready for the division wide discussion on Wednesday. Monday evening, I went through and started doing the thank you letters. I got about one third of the way through them. I did these downstairs so that I could be nearer to the kids - and especially Mandy. I rubbed her back in bed to help her go to sleep.

On Tuesday, I spent most of the day working on thank you notes. I ended up sending 76 thank you notes. I did run out at 11AM to Mandy's school. I checked about an attendance problem - a teacher had erroneously marked her absent. She seems to live in mortal fear of an 'un-excused absence' - like it was a scarlet letter. In a brief discussion with Miss Chappel, the counselor, she wants to talk with me about Mandy. She apparently has some concerns. I will try to schedule some time. Chappel also asked about family counseling. I am not too enamored with this, but I will consider it. I took Mandy out to Consuelo's for lunch. I had to pick up some more groceries and some more thank you cards and stamps.

Dennis and Sheila Vetter invited us over for supper. They had gotten Pulcinella's pizza. I brought some ice cream deserts. Sheila seems very nice. She is Mike Bacco's sister-in-law (Kathy Bacco's sister). She is a weaver. Dennis and she seem very happy. The kids had a good time. They liked the house and the African artifacts that Dennis had around the house. Ben was a little wound up, but both of the kids were fine and I was proud of them. I got them home around 8:40PM since it is a school night.

I talked with each of them for a bit. They seem to be doing okay. Mandy is too busy and is stressed out, but the stress is internally generated for the most part. Ben has been bugged by people asking him if I am going to re-marry. So, he and I talked about this. I told him that I am not looking to do this. I still miss Virginia and love her. But at some point, I might date someone. But this won't affect how I feel about Virginia. I will always love her. Nothing is going to change that. And if I date someone, that doesn't mean that I will marry them. He asked if this someone would be like Virginia. I told him that I don't know, but that I don't think that anyone will be like his mom. There may be aspects, but I don't know that I would or could try to date someone like Virginia. This conversation seemed to help. I need to remember to sit down with the kids each evening for a while to give them a chance to talk. We all need this.

Saturday, October 21st

Things are starting to get into a routine. I can't say that things are normal - without Virginia it can't be. On Wednesday, I went into work again. I am talking with Carol McKennan about job sharing. After work, Ben's Apple Newton (a pen-based, palm computer) came. I was able to control myself and I didn't open it. I let him open it. He had saved up the money for a long time. I am very proud of his ability to do this. He was thrilled, although I did make him finish his homework before I let him play with it much. That evening, I went out to a movie with Rick Turley and Paul Bame. We ate at a Japanese restaurant and went to see "Strange Days". This was an okay movie.

Thursday rolled around. It has been 5 weeks since Virginia died. It seems less real in some ways. Last night I had two dreams. The first was strange and consistent with my sense of Virginia's death being less real. I dreamt that Virginia was fine, but was in Des Moines. The second was a pretty classic dream. I dreamt that I was taking some black shoes of Virginia's to a shoe repair shop. I was having them let out so I could wear and use them. (In other words, I am trying to fill Virginia's shoes! Pretty obvious.)

On Thursday morning, the appraiser for the house came. He walked through and around the house. I think the place was in pretty good shape. I called CSU to find out about graduation. It sounds like it shouldn't be a problem for someone to go up for Virginia. However, I am still waiting for a call back from them. Graduation will be on December 16th and Art and Lee won't be able to make it out for this. This is too bad. Part of me would like to push for this for and pay for their trip, but most of me wants to let them deal with this the way that they want. It does sound like Vickie will be out for it. I went into work again. I am not doing a lot, but am starting to get back into things. I had another meeting with Carol and another with Jack Cooley - who works for me. In the evening, the kids and I put up Halloween decorations. I also got Chris's birthday present and Angela's Halloween box ready to send to

Vickie. At the end of the evening, I created a Web page based on the note I sent out about Virginia. I have been trying to think through what I want to do. This is very hard.

On Friday, I mailed the package to Vickie. I had a review meeting most of the time at work. It was sort of nice to feel like I was making some form of contribution. Janie, my secretary, said that my card had made some of the secretaries cry. Marian came over during the day and told me that she was sorry about Virginia and that I was doing the right thing with my job and the kids. After work, I ran around getting Mandy to driving lessons and Ben to the post office (for his passport). We had a quick dinner and Mandy was off again - for band at a game. Ben and I stayed home and watched TV. I got my laundry done and went out for the groceries.

Saturday morning, Mandy went out to take P-SATs to practice for next year when she will take them again. Ben did his chores. I ran out and tried to see a sample of the library tiles that we are thinking about getting at the CSU library as a memorial to Virginia. They didn't have any examples. Cindy came over in the afternoon. Vickie called. She shared with me that one of her coworkers was wondering who the guy with the sexy voice who called was - that being me. She got a real kick out of this. While we were talking, we talked about the radio turning on. She hadn't told anybody, but she had a related experience. She was at home cleaning some chicken. Her hands were in the sink. This was about the time that the O.J. trial was coming to a close. She said out loud that she had wished that she would have turned the TV on. It turned on. Vickie and I talked about this and we both feel that this is probably Virginia's way of letting us know that she's around. I hope it is her.

Ben had gotten sort of scared last night because he thought he saw a dark figure in the door of his room. I told him that either it was his imagination or it was something spiritual. If it was his imagination, he didn't need to worry about it. If it was a 'spirit', I asked him if Virginia would protect him. He said that she would. I told him that if it was a spirit, it would be Virginia because she would protect him no matter what and she wouldn't let any bad spirits get to him. He seemed to like this idea - as did I.

We went out to buy pumpkins. I wanted to go out for supper and a movie with the kids, but Mandy wanted to go to Joe's for supper. And she didn't decide until late in the afternoon. I talked with her about this. I told her that I was confused about her. She commented previously that I spend all my time with Ben. I told her that I have been trying to do things with her and that she seems not to be interested in it. I told her I was having a hard time reconciling her words and actions. She felt bad, I think. This is not what I'm after - I just want to understand what she wants. I tried to ask her. The only thing she said was that she wanted Ben and I not to fight. We talked about this, because a lot of the time, I am trying to ensure Ben becomes more responsible. She seems to understand this, but still wants to see us get along better. Again, I don't know how to proceed.

So, Mandy went to Joe's. Cindy dropped her off. Cindy drove the Probe to do this and then came back and went home. Ben and I went out to the same Japanese restaurant that I was just at. Ben really liked the food. We had a nice time. We came back and watched Dick Tracy.

Friday, October 27th

It has been an okay week. I am trying to get back into work, but it is very hard. I would just as soon stay home. Everything still feels very unreal. I am not crying, but I do get very sad and melancholy on a fairly regular basis. I am really struggling with what I want to do and what I care about. I am also feeling the crush of responsibility for the kids - emotional, physical, financial and so on. I will do fine and over-all, we are in good shape, but I do worry about messing up. I have the general sense that almost everything triggers some sort of memory or emotion about Virginia.

Last Sunday, Mandy went down to Denver with Joe's family. So, Ben and I went out for lunch and did a little shopping. It was nice. I stripped the beds and washed all of the sheets. It had been a while for me and I can't remember when the kids beds were last washed. When Mandy got back, we went out shopping for a little while. Ben got a little worried when we didn't get back right away and called us on the cellular phone. It is very nice having that. It makes things, logistically, a lot easier. I made pizza and started a fire. It was a cozy evening. I set up with the kids to do something with each of them every weekend - reading, shopping, biking, swimming, whatever. I have been trying to do things with Mandy, but she never seems to want to. I am hoping that by doing this with her in control of the activity, we might have more time together. The day turned very cold and it started snowing. During supper, with the cold weather coming in, Mandy said that it was 'a titty-bit-nipply' out. I thought this was hilarious. It is apparently a private phrase that Mandy and her friends use.

On Monday, the weather cleared up but was a little cold. I wrote a draft of a letter to the health insurance company trying to appeal their non-payment of the last chemotherapy treatment. I also stopped by and picked up the insurance payment from Virginia's life insurance policy. This felt very strange. I was a little depressed, but mostly I felt rather flat and empty. The concept of payment for this sort of loss feels wrong somehow because no amount of money can really make up for this. I went into work after I deposited the check. Work doesn't feel the same at all. Part of it is the transition that I am going through, but part of it is that many people are gone from the early days. After supper and homework, I got out some old audio tapes of Virginia. One was with Mandy in 1982. The other was Virginia's class project in 1993 (I think). The kids and I really liked listening to these - hearing her voice and her laugh and her personality.

On Tuesday, I got Ben into a computer lab and then into work early for staff. Work seemed to last forever even though it was only about six hours. I went to Mandy's school and talked to her counselor - Miss Chappel about Mandy. She is worried about Mandy and her sleeping. She is really trying to help, but hasn't been through a similar loss. She mentioned that the kids have been hitting each other. I had noticed this a little, but I need to talk with them and tell them that this is unacceptable behavior. I did this during the week and the punishment for hitting is being grounded - for both of them. Mandy had communicated to Miss Chappel that she feels the need to be the 'good kid' and won't tell me things because she feels I am dealing with too much already. I talked to Mandy about this and told her that I had noticed this and that I am more stressed out by her not telling me than I would be by anything else that she would tell me. I hope this helps. Joe ate with us again. After supper, Mandy went with Joyce to do a little shopping and had a very good time.

Wednesday was another full day at work. I drove Ben to school on the way in. Most of the day was spent talking with a consultant. Again, the six hours felt like an eternity. I took the kids out for supper to the Salad Company a little early. Mandy had to get back because she went out with Sarah to some church youth group. I talked to Lee and Vickie on the phone. They both seem to be doing okay, but are obviously still working through the emotions. It helps me talking with them - it is a connection to Virginia. I offered to fly Art and Lee out for Virginia's graduation ceremony.

I have gotten the thank you notes done and out and people have been commenting on how nice the note and cards have been. I heard this from folks in Fort Collins and also from Lee about folks in Des Moines. Cindy Hoxmeier said it took her 3 days to read it because she would get started and start crying, but she really liked it. Kay Godowski read it to her family out loud. One of the secretaries at work started by reading the last paragraph and started crying. She then turned it over and saw my side-burns and started laughing. I knew it would make people sad, but I wanted it to make them smile and to think about Virginia.

Thursday was the six week mark since Virginia died. It seems like a long time. Mandy had bad dreams during the night and came up in the middle of the night. Her dream was that we were on a trip, with Cindy, back to Iowa. Part way, we stopped and Virginia ran out into a field and wouldn't stop. She fell down part way into the field and disappeared and we couldn't find her. This is very clearly a dream about Mandy's loss of Virginia. I talked to Ben and he had a dream as well. His was somewhat similar. In his, he and Virginia were trying to get through a tunnel. He had been hit in the head with a baseball and it was still lodged in his head (a metaphor for his wanting to have gotten the tumor instead of Virginia). Virginia got through the tunnel. He tried but couldn't get through.

On Thursday morning, I went into talk with the trust department at one of the banks. This was a weird process. I was being explicit about my preparations for dying. Oddly, this didn't bother me or make me depressed, it was just strange. Since

Mandy hadn't slept well because of her dream, I let her sleep in. After the discussion with the trust department, I took her out to lunch at Mount Fuji. She liked it a lot. So, I now have a nice restaurant that they both like! I worked at home the rest of the day. I actually sent the letter off to the health insurance company - after review by one of the HP benefits people. Ben 'cooked' supper with my help. Mandy was doing some homework and came up with a question. She was trying to spell 'assassinator'. I would have expected Ben to come up with this - along the lines of the 'terminator'. But Ben said, "Oh, you mean assassin." I started giggling and laughed. I think this hurt Mandy's feelings, which I wasn't trying to do, but it was very cute. Before bedtime, I wrote up my wishes on what I want to happen for my death - with cremation and memorial service and so on. This was also strange. But if it is ever needed, it will help because I was able to include information (like when my folks died) which would be tough for the kids to track down. In the process of looking this stuff up, I found out that Dad, Mom and Virginia all died on Thursdays - early morning. As I think about it, even my Dad's Aunt Lena died on a Thursday (since she died the same day as my dad).

I worked at home on Friday. This actually went okay. I was starting to make a dent in some of the reading I needed to do. I also actually got a little interested in some of the stuff as well. I picked Ben up and we went out for lunch. The Turley's came over after work and had supper (pizza) and then we all went out to see "The Canterville Ghost". This was a production with all kids - with Larissa in one of the lead roles. They did an excellent job and Mandy, Ben and the Turley kids seemed to enjoy it. After the Turley's left, I was watching a few minutes of "Raising Arizona" - a movie that Virginia and I both liked a lot. At the end of it, there was the scene with the main characters as old people having a family dinner (like Thanksgiving). This triggered me again on what Virginia are going to miss - growing old together. I really did want that - growing old together.

Tuesday, October 31st

Over the weekend, I took the kids down to Denver to have some fun. On Saturday morning, before we left, I had the kids do their chores. We got a fairly late start and left around 2:30PM. We stopped and had lunch on the way down and went first to the 16th Street Mall in downtown Denver. Virginia and I had gone there a while ago and had a good time. It was not quite as interesting a place this time around. We walked around and found some interesting things, but all three of us were ready to go on. We headed out to the Cherry Creek Mall. This was a lot better and we shopped, but they closed a bit earlier than I had hoped. We headed over to the hotel. This was the Scanticon - but it has changed names to the Inverness. This was where Virginia and I went last year as part of the present from our friends for our 20th wedding anniversary. This seems like decades ago. We got checked in and then went out to a Chinese restaurant that was very good. Ben was very tired. We got back late and went swimming around 11PM. The kids seemed to enjoy this while I sat in the hot tub. There were several couples there with me. (When I first wrote

this, I wrote 'there were several *other* couples'. I still think in those terms.) Some of the people were from IBM, but they were all involved with computers or high-technology. Sort of strange. In talking with one couple, I had a nice conversation about computers, home schooling and HP. The husband was looking around at jobs. I had talked about how good HP has been and the different things I have done, they asked me what I was going to do next. I ended up using the phrase 'I just recently lost my wife'. I hate that phrase. I didn't lose her, she died. I told them that my kids were my priority and focus now.

We slept in on Sunday, somewhat. It was also the night to turn clocks back for daylight savings time - so we got an extra hour. Ben had slept with me and I let Mandy sleep by herself. I figured this would be a lot better way to do this. We went down and had breakfast and checked out. We went back to Cherry Creek since we had run out of time. I had hoped to go to the Natural History Museum and the IMAX theatre there, but Mandy didn't want to go. We got a fair amount of shopping in and Mandy was starting to get touchy about Ben and I being a little tired. We stopped off at a laser disc store before we left Denver. I had been letting Mandy drive the entire time and she did really well. On the way back we stopped at the outlet mall and we got some more clothes. It is very strange that both the kids like to borrow a bunch of my clothes. We got home and I ran out and did the grocery shopping and then fixed supper - marinated chicken.

The kids had Monday off, so I took it off as well. This is my plan - to take off days that they have off - at least for a while. We all slept late. I took them out to Wendy's for lunch and then we finished getting stuff for their Halloween costumes.

Tuesday was Halloween. I went in early for staff (at 8:30AM). Ben got off to school just fine. I put in a pretty full day - 6 hours. My new company car came in - the lighter green Taurus wagon. This is a very nice car. Virginia had done a good job on the color because the lighter green looks a lot better, to me, than the darker green that I was thinking about. I drove home around 2:30PM and worked on Ben's costume - a sword through his chest. I spilled a little glue on my hands in the process and got a couple of small blisters. I went and picked up Ben at school and took him to HP. He scared Carol McKennan's daughter again this year. (His costume last year had done the same thing.) Mandy was off with a friend and a teacher from junior high school. Ben and I got home and he headed out with Charlie. Mandy got dressed and went to Larissa's house for a party. Ben came back with a pretty good haul. Cindy Heckle stopped over - with some cookies for the kids - around 8:00PM.

I put on a laser disc that I had rented - "The Crow". Cindy and I watched this. It was a good, if very dark, movie. One of the story aspects was that a couple in true love but separated by death will still be together. I have been struggling with this a bit. I love Virginia so much, and miss her so much. I still talk to her, around the house. Today, when I got home with the new car, I was nearly running into the house to say 'hi' and tell her that she had done a great job on the car color. So, I feel both her presence and her absence as the other half of who I am and who we were. I still feel

like part of a couple. I have been wearing her 'Taos' bear necklace during the day - since she died. I have just started to wear my wedding ring again, but just when I go to bed. But, I feel very lonely and wonder if I will get involved with anyone else. I do feel less lonely than I have - I think I am getting used to my new life. But, I really struggle with these emotions and feelings.

November 1995

Saturday, November 4th

It's the start of another month. It has been a little over seven weeks now and coming up on two months since Virginia died. I can't say that it is getting any easier. Of course, I didn't really expect it to get easier. I've been getting back to work about three-quarters time.

On Wednesday, I got in to work early again. This is because I need to get Ben to computer club around 8AM. I had a pretty busy day at work. I am starting to feel a little engaged, making some small contributions. But it still doesn't feel normal and I don't feel fully engaged. For supper, I got rambunctious and fixed a pork picata meal based on a veal picata recipe in the Colorado Cache cookbook. I was pretty surprised because it was very good, both Mandy and Ben liked it. This is a real accomplishment. Joe ate with us as well. My arms are still hurting - particularly the joints and muscles around the elbows. But I am sure that this is stress related because I got upset at Ben recently. And right when I was getting upset, they started throbbing. I need to relax, but it is pretty hard.

I worked at home on Thursday. Early in the morning, I talked with Susan Ison for a while. Roger and India are back at his parents for a week or so. She sounded okay, but is obviously still affected by all this. She like the note I had sent out and thanked me for mentioning her in it.

I went over to talk with my financial advisor in the afternoon. This has been interesting. In general we are doing very well and I have a good chunk of money. She suggested a portfolio of investments for the insurance money. With this, I should be able to get both the kids through college and probably still have most of the original money left. She was discouraging me from paying off the house - which I know is the wise thing to do. The loan is for a low interest rate - 7%. It is better to pay this mortgage than to take money from 10-20% return investments. Further, by paying it off, I would lose a tax benefit. Also, if I decide to change careers or jobs or go back to school, I might drop my income. I would be better off paying it off then. (But actually, I would still be better off keeping it and making the payments from the investments.) It is very ironic that, to a great extent, money is not an issue or problem.

On Thursday evening, I called a forensic anthropologist that Susan knew to find out what Mandy might be able to do this summer. She, Diane France, was very nice and offered to talk to Mandy in a month or so.

On Friday, I got Ben to his early class and got into work. I talked with Carol about job sharing and I don't think this is going to work out. It might and we would work well together, but she wants a very different type of job than I do. She is looking for a more field or customer relations type of job. I get the impression that she really wants out of the division. I went out for lunch with Mandy - she had asked to go out for Japanese. Tim Tillson wanted to come along, so I invited him. After I got Tim back to work and Mandy back to school, I went over to the lawyer's office. I signed my new will and durable power of attorney. It is good to get this over and done with. I will be glad when I get the investments stuff done as well. My guess is that each of the lawyer and financial advisor will end up costing me around \$500 to \$1000. After we all got home, we ordered pizza and just vegged out at home. We were all very tired. I did my laundry and sat around in my bathrobe. It was sort of nice.

On Saturday, the kids got their chores done. Ben and I went out for our haircuts. We came back and got Mandy to eat at Consuelo's. Mandy took off after this for Joe's - for the afternoon, supper and a movie. I went out and did some grocery and general shopping. My electric razor, that I've had for decades, was starting to give out so I needed a new one. Ben and I went out to see a new movie - "Powder". We both liked it, but there was a part with a man's wife who was terminally ill. The main character allowed her and her husband to communicate so she could let go and die. This was very close to home for me. After the movie, Ben and I went out for a burger. We got home and watched some TV together. He asks how I am doing and if I am thinking about Virginia. I know he thinks about it a lot. I wonder if I look really sad most of the time. This is okay for a while - but I know we need to go on.

The other night I thought about how things used to be. I remembered that a lot of weekends, Virginia would get really wound up and rambunctious on Sunday nights when we were in bed - and I was trying to get to sleep. I called what she had her "Sunday night feisties". We would wrestle and rough-house - tickling each other. On occasion, it would degenerate into actual tongue wrestling. On occasion she would catch me wrong and I would actually hurt her a little - which I always felt bad about. Sometimes we would get 'romantic', but sometimes not. It was fun. This is an aspect of Virginia - the fun-loving part of her - that I miss that makes me feel lonely.

Saturday, November 11th

It has been a pretty long week. I have been in to work all week long - working around 3/4 time. I am getting back into a sort of routine at work. It is going okay but I am very, very far behind. I am also really tired at night and I don't really wake up refreshed. My arms are still hurting me a bit, although they feel a little better.

Last Sunday, I got the garage finished up by putting up some hanging hooks for bike storage. During the middle of the day, I went out to the mall with Mandy - this was what she wanted to do with her weekend time with me. We had an okay time, but

she seemed to be in a bad mood and was acting sort of rude. She did get over it. Later on in the day, we all went out to the outlet mall. Joe came along. We did some shopping for clothes.

On Monday, I talked with Carol and it seemed that we were not heading in the same direction - job-wise. I did want this to work out, but I wasn't going to lose sleep over it. I had invited Susan Ison over for supper. I fixed pork-chops piccata-style. The meal turned out pretty well. It felt very strange having someone over, but not having Virginia there to help entertain. Later in the evening, Julie called and talked with the kids. The loss is still hitting us.

On Tuesday, on the way in to work, I stopped off and voted. I saw Virginia's name still on the voter registration list. I didn't prepare as much for the election (reading up) as I should have. Previously, I would always ask Virginia about the issues and she was very up on the issues and people running for local office. Laura Harris (Jim Davis's secretary), helped me shuttle the van home. (I sort of want to say my van, but it still feels like Virginia's van to me.) I took Laura Harris out to Red Robin for lunch to thank her for the help. We talked about work a bit and Jim. This felt even more strange than Susan being over - being out with someone. I actually felt a little uncomfortable - and I don't know why. After work, I took Ben to Dr. Merkel to look at his toes. I had been soaking Ben's feet and had asked about his shoes. He said they were long enough. Merkel looked at them and asked if his shoes were too tight on the sides. Ben said yes! I did ask about fit and then explicitly asked about length. I didn't even think it would be necessary to ask about width. Oh well... In the evening, Ben had a bunch of homework and ended up spending most of the evening doing it.

On Wednesday, I called a head-hunter back with the names of some people for a job he had called me about. I like being contacted for stuff like this. It is also good because it gives you a sense of what is going on in industry. In the evening, Mandy had trouble going to sleep so we talked for about an hour on the couch. She seems to be doing okay, but we are all working our way through this. Ben had a dream the night before. In it, Virginia was talking with him in his bed. It sounded like a very nice dream. He said the only bad part was when she left.

On Friday, I talked with Jim Davis and Carol about our proposed job share. I had talked a lot with Carol during the week and had gotten back to where we both thought it made sense to do a job share. We were shooting for doing a 'web' investigation project. On Thursday, Jim had indicated that this was fine (but I would be in my current job until replaced - i.e. January). On Friday, he wanted us to do a visual programming investigation. This is fine, but a second choice. But, the change is immediate (or nearly so). In some ways I am relieved, but I still have this small pang of apprehension or disappointment about the change. During the afternoon, I talked with Doug Johnson. He is a mid-level manager whose wife died in August from breast cancer. He has two boys - 8 and 10 years old. We are going through similar experiences. He has decided to get a live-in nanny, and is using the social

security money to pay for it. This is just about the right amount of money. I thought about this and I don't think I could go the nanny route. This is as much for me as for the kids. I don't want to focus on work - I want to enjoy my kids right now - this is a prime time with both of them.

Ben was off to Jeff Turley's birthday party on Friday night. Rick brought him back and then Rick and I talked about investments. I wanted another opinion on how to best invest Virginia's insurance money.

Saturday morning, Ben scurried around and got his chores done in record time so that he could go with Charlie to a football game and then up to the cabin for the night. I took Mandy to her last driving lesson (before her test) and then we went out to eat. After this we did grocery shopping. While we were out, one of Mandy's friends' mother saw us and said hello. While we were talking she told another person that was there that Mandy's mom had just died. She added as an afterthought that, of course, therefore my wife had died. She asked the standard question of 'how are you doing'. I got us moving on pretty quickly, but the more I thought about this, the more rude it seemed to me. It strikes me as being on the caliber of saying 'oh, look at the little orphan'. Most people really do want to help. Most don't know how. But some people are just downright stupid, insensitive and rude. Mandy went out to see a movie with Joe after supper. I worked on paper work and some investment planning and insurance planning. This is one of the first times I have been alone like this. I still have a couple more thank-you notes to do.

Sunday, November 19th

Things are seeming to get back to normal a little bit more with the passing weeks. I haven't seen or talked with Cindy Heckle at all this week. I've noticed that there is getting to be less contact with everyone in Des Moines. I have also noticed that people are not checking up as much. Turley's have not been by as much. This isn't bad and I think it is pretty normal. I do recognize that the impact will be here with Mandy, Ben and I long after people want or expect it to be around.

Last Sunday, I fixed breakfast for Mandy and I - breakfast burritos. Ben was still up in the mountains with Hoxmeier's. Mandy and I had a nice time. We did some shopping during the day. Ben got home around 4:30PM and had a good time. I fixed scalloped potatoes and ham rather than our usual home-made pizza. It was a cold evening and the casserole sounded good.

Monday was a busy day at work. I got in relatively early and had field event reviews most of the day. Towards the end of the day, I went to senior staff and we talked about impending reorganization. Because of all of this, I got home late. But, I had made prior arrangements with Jan Schendel's to pick up the girls.

Tuesday was a pretty busy day. I had several meetings and did some thinking about possible organizational implications. Ben had a lot of homework and we worked on that when we got home. Mandy had a concert at school. She and I went, but Ben stayed at home because of the homework. Mary Balza sat behind me and talked with me during the breaks in the concert. Of course, Mandy's was last. She still sounds good, but the high school band doesn't sound as good as the junior high band. I asked Mandy about this and she agrees - she says the conductor in high school is much nicer - but doesn't enforce the necessary discipline. Mandy expressed some interest in changing instruments. I am for this. She seemed most interested in drums.

On Tuesday, it was 2 months since Virginia died. Like all of this, the time scale is all screwy. But it feels mostly like longer ago than that.

Wednesday was another pretty busy day at work. After school, I had Joe and Mandy and Ben help move the couch upstairs. I spent a fair amount of time re-arranging things. The upstairs furniture is older, but it is very comfortable. The gray couch looks much smaller upstairs than it did on the main floor. I stayed up pretty late (past 2:00AM), but I hit my stride and made some progress on the strategy pitch that I have been struggling with. In thinking about this, normal work days were always meetings and talking with people. I did my paper-work, reading and creation efforts at home in the late evening (between 9 and midnight - after I got Virginia and the kids into bed). I haven't had the energy to get anything done. Once I broke through the sleepiness, I actually did pretty well.

Thursday morning, I woke up and snapped at Mandy. There was no good reason except that maybe I didn't get enough sleep! I went into work for a while. I came home around noon to sign for the new couch. They came on time. The delivery guys came in with the first piece. It looked very nice with the herringbone-ish pattern in beige. They started to unwrap the next piece and the bright, ugly plaid looked a little odd. They had screwed up the order with someone from Greeley named Mikkesel. They got it delivered later that afternoon, but it was a hassle. In between the deliveries, there was a coffee-talk and celebration at the division. It was okay.

I called CSU and made final arrangements for the kids to accept Virginia's diploma. I also called the new therapist with my concerns and perceptions about the kids. I left a message with my thoughts. I have general concerns about both kids in terms of the impact of the stresses that Virginia's death causes. I want to make sure that I am getting them out for fun stuff and that I am adequately supporting them emotionally. I also wonder about long term impact of the loss. I see how Joyce still struggles with the loss of her mother a long time ago. For Mandy, I worry about her sleeping and eating (i.e. not enough). She has my martyr syndrome and she seems overly concerned about money. I also see her worrying about me a lot. For Ben, I see that he doesn't have a strong peer group that supports him and he doesn't have a counselor that he is comfortable with. There is also the issue of the ongoing stress and conflict between us. We both over-react. I am very worried about his lack of an

outlet for his emotions (especially anger) - which I try to get him to control. I also want to make sure that he is making good progress at school.

Friday was a weird day at work. Jim Davis was in a weird mood. He was telling Carol and I that we are marketing people in our new job. This matters because in the probable re-organization, being in R&D is a better place in terms of job stability. We had set expectations that we were a joint Product Team Manager - i.e. somewhat like R&D project managers. He said no. I don't know if he is pulling our leg or what. I hope so. This little exchange caused me some stress. But, I need to recognize that it isn't all that big of a deal. Profit sharing was announced - and I think it was a record - 11.46%. Mandy was out at Joe's house for supper. Ben and I went out for pizza and then stopped for groceries. We went out to see a movie 'Ace Ventura - when nature calls'. Ben really liked it and I thought it was sort of marginal.

Saturday, I spent a lot of the day cleaning up and getting ready for the couch warming party that I threw. I did drop off my wedding ring to get it resized. It feels odd in some ways, but I want to wear it from time to time and it hasn't fit in a long time. Mandy was gone to a Sadie Hawkins dance. Ben was around, but wasn't feeling too well. There was a nice turn-out: Turley's, Osecky's, Uhlrich's, Pherigo's, Walicki's, Ison's, Godowski's and Heckendorn's. It was a nice crowd. I had baked and made some stuff and people brought a lot more. It was nice - we talked for a while and then watched 'The Princess Bride'. Susan and Kay wanted to talk - which was okay. But I think that Susan was upset about this. The original crowd stuck around a while - Osecky's, Uhlrich's and Turley's. Rick and Joyce stayed late - after everyone else had left. They talked and helped clean up. I think this helped me. I was wondering about how it would be after the party. This was always when Virginia and I would talk about the party. I'm glad Rick and Joyce stuck around. (But boy, they were tired when they left!)

Sunday was when Mandy had her final driving test. She passed it just fine. While she was gone, I video-taped the contents of the house for insurance purposes. In the afternoon, we shopped for some CDs and also went to the mall and Target. While we were at the mall, I helped the kids pick out the names of some underprivileged children, to buy them presents. We went out for supper to the new Italian restaurant. After I got the kids into bed, I was up working late. I watched a bit of 'Them' (one of the classic 'B' grade sci-fi movies while I was sorting through my work. Ben mentioned that he had his dream again (with the tunnel and baseball in his head), but this time he was able to hug Virginia. He also mentioned having conversations with Virginia - in his head. I talked with him about this to be sure and it was obvious that he was just using this as a vehicle to remember Virginia.

Sunday, November 26th

This has been Thanksgiving week, so it has been pretty busy. Thanksgiving this year fell on the 23rd - Virginia's and my wedding anniversary. It would have been 21

years this year. It still doesn't seem possible that Virginia is gone, but I know that she is. I was trying to take the entire week off from work, but that didn't happen. My arms are feeling a little better now (from the pain that I have had in my elbows) - I think a slow week helped.

Monday, I let the kids sleep and miss half of their school day because we had an appointment with a different therapist. This therapist is a child psychologist (with a doctorate in education). She, Rachael Moriarity, was a former neighbor of Rick and Joyce Turley. She had all three of us come up for this initial session. It went reasonably well. The kids were able to talk about things. As has happened before, Mandy was really willing to talk and Ben didn't want to talk. I found it interesting that I got some emotional benefit from talking through some of this again. After the session, the three of us went out to lunch at Mt. Fuji (the Japanese restaurant that they both like). We talked about the session for a bit. (Mandy worked on some language homework.) Ben doesn't want to talk to 'strangers'. I think what he means is that he only wants to talk with people in the family. I don't know if I should encourage or push him to get over this barrier. It is a real struggle for me. I think I understand how he feels, since I don't really want to talk to a therapist. But, I worry about Ben doing this because he is trying to emulate me. After I got the kids to school, I did some errands - including dropping off wall hangings for re-framing. I spent some time in the afternoon going through some of the stacked up reading and mail.

Tuesday morning I got some more work done - catching up. I went into work. I got through a pile of email and filing. Linda Beardsley, our division personnel contact, asked how things were going - so I told her - I was not thrilled with the discussion that I had with Davis last Friday. This was not a very satisfying conversation. She did not see my concern about the job - which is okay. But she didn't try very hard either - which I don't think is okay. But, I am not going to go weird about it. After work, Cindy Hoxmeier and Joyce Turley stopped by for a bit. Cindy hadn't seen the couch. We had a nice chat, but I needed to run out and do some errands - primarily picking up my resized rings and to drop off presents for underprivileged kids. I fixed chicken picata for supper (and Joe was over). The chicken picata was good. I talked to Shirley Nash, a friend of Mel's, whose husband has a similar tumor - in the left temporal lobe. While I was talking, both of the kids interrupted me and I snapped at them. I was a bit quick to snap, but I don't know why they were interrupting - it may have had something to do with the conversation about brain tumors. During the conversation, I recognized (again) that I have some unresolved emotions about Virginia not starting chemotherapy. I feel upset at myself for not having pushed Virginia more. I went back and looked at these diary entries and saw that it came up some, but not a lot. I remember that several of the times that we discussed it, Virginia didn't want to have to deal with MRIs and treatment. In retrospect, I think she was in some sort of denial. But this is only part of it, since the results kept coming back good - until things went bad in January. I think I want to be upset at Virginia, but I don't think that it is fair - she was tired even last fall. I talked to Roger Ison briefly about one of the possible therapies for Shirley's

husband. I asked if Susan had a good time at the recent party - she seemed upset. Roger said that this reaction was Susan's way of dealing with Virginia being gone. Since we were leaving on Wednesday morning, Cindy Heckle came over and borrowed some luggage.

I was up pretty late Tuesday night getting some last minute paperwork done as well as packing. The kids got themselves packed. It is helpful that they are older and mature. We got up early on Wednesday and got dressed. Cindy came over in plenty of time - I was impressed. We headed down to the airport and caught our flight. The flight went through Kansas City, where Art and Chris had previously had trouble. We got to Des Moines without a hitch. Cindy had bought the kids some candy - a nice touch.

The time in Des Moines was fine. We saw most everyone - except 'new grandma' (Virginia Scher) - because she stays at the nursing home all the time. We had turkey on Thanksgiving that Lee had bought from the local grocery store. It was good. We really didn't do anything while we were there except sleep, eat, watch some videos and play cards. This was okay. We were all pretty subdued. I was really missing Virginia and needed something to remind me, so I listened to an audio tape of Virginia. This was the one she recorded in January of 1993 for one of her classes - involving urban legends and story-telling I think. She told the story about Ben at Epic (walking up to a young lady - with both of them naked) and a few others. She also told a story about Mandy and Virginia at church back in Des Moines (about the holy water). It was good to hear her voice and manner, I miss it so much. Lee and Vickie both listened to the tape as well. I know that this is all pretty hard on them. I know that Art struggles with it as well. He, Lee and I talked one night and he mentioned that he had been able to 'control' thinking and memories of Virginia. But recently, something, anything, will trigger memories of Virginia and they will fly in and out. I know that Nick and Julie and Chris are sad about all of this, but I think that it more directly affects the kids and I and Lee and Vickie and Art. I don't know what goes through Cindy's mind about all of this.

Friday, Mandy went over to Julie's baby shower. I had gotten a small present, beside going in on a high chair. Mandy did not really have a very good time. I think it really brought out how much she missed Virginia. In thinking about this, this was a 'Virginia' thing to do and having Mandy go reinforced Virginia's absence and also reinforced Mandy being thrust into some of Virginia's roles. I need to watch out for this. We (Art, Chris, Ben, Nick and I) went out shopping some on Friday. On Saturday, the whole set of us went out to the mall for lunch and to do some shopping. We got back and had some leftovers and watched 'The Santa Clause'. I don't think there is a movie out there without something to catch me. In this one, Tim Allen thinks he is hallucinating and says "when I wake up, I'm getting a CAT scan".

We got up early on Sunday and Art and Lee took us to the airport. Our flight back was uneventful. I let Mandy drive back home and we got in around noon. We did

some chores in the afternoon. Mandy called Joe right away and he came over. Rick and Joyce stopped by and gave me a T-shirt they had bought for me while they were down in Pueblo (with a B-24 on it). They had a classic Turley trip - Kim had gotten pink-eye, they had a small fender-bender and Joyce had her wallet stolen. Mandy, Joe and I went out to the grocery store. We went out to a movie around 4:30PM. I had snapped at Ben because he didn't do what I had repeatedly asked him to do (put on his shoes). I think the main problem was that I was tired. We went out and Ben and I met up with Robert Heckendorn and some of his friends to watch "Toy Story". Mandy and Joe went to see Ace Ventura II again. Rick and his kids showed up at "Toy Story". It was a good movie. Ben and I went out with the Turley's to have supper at Amigo's. When we were done, we went to get Mandy and Joe and I got them Wendy's drive-through. It has been a long day and I tried to get the kids to bed early - with some success.

I have been wearing my wedding ring since I got it. I have been trying it on both my left and right hand. It feels best (emotionally and size-wise) on my left hand. But it is also a reminder that I am 'officially' single. I struggle with my feelings for Virginia and the reality that I will love her forever and in some sense be married to her forever. But that is countered with how lonely I feel without her. Again, half of me is missing. On the plane back I read "Couplehood" by Paul Reiser. Vickie had given it to Virginia last year and Virginia had read part of it, at least. I like his writing style and the content. But, it also reminded me of all the things that I had with Virginia and what I am missing now - being part of a couple.

Thursday, November 30th

It has been another busy week. I know most of it is self-imposed. But, I wonder if things will ever settle down were I can relax. Maybe it is not in my make-up to settle down.

Work has been pretty busy. I have been getting the division strategy slides done for the customer presentation. I haven't done a great job of this, but it is okay. I have also been getting my business team ranking done as well as some budgeting things (making adjustments (i.e. cuts) and getting the money correctly distributed). The end of the week was quarterly review. Paul Beiser was still laid up at home with his feet (bunion surgery) and so I did the business team presentation. There is a bunch of stuff going on at work, but I am not getting too worked up about a lot of it (politics and organization shifts).

The kids have been pretty good this week. Ben and I had some stress on Tuesday. I have been working with him to make sure he is up on his homework. I needed to pick him up on Tuesday because he had missed the bus. He was getting homework. I have told him to get what he needs and if he misses the bus, I will come to get him. I got there and talked with his teacher. He got his midterms and got 3 F's (out of 6 or 7 grades total). The low grades were entirely due to not handing in homework.

This upset me, given the amount of attention I have been trying to give him. So, we stayed at school and went through his desk. He and I stopped at Target and then picked up take-out Chinese food. When we got home we cleaned out his back pack and the 3 different folders that he was using. In this entire cleaning process, we found a bunch of the overdue assignments. He got pretty upset, but we got him organized. He has a single folder and won't use the back pack. I also made up some folders for his 'trapper-keeper' for each subject with a pocket for homework and one for work to turn in at school. It seems to have helped some.

Mandy has been bothered by a skin rash. So I made an appointment for her. I think that it is just eczema - which I have had for most of my adult life (made visible by the dry climate here). I also made an appointment for her at the child psychologist - Rachael. She wants to talk with her again. I have not been able to get Ben interested in going. He says that he wants to talk to Aunt Julie. He does seem able to talk about Virginia. I also took Ben out for lunch on Wednesday.

I had a dream during the week. It is a bit fuzzy now, but Virginia was in it. She had, in the dream, the brain tumor. She seemed to be in some sort of nursing home (it wasn't home or the hospital). I went over to see her. She was in a hospital bed, but was talking. She told me that she wanted stay around and see me graduate with my law degree. This is weird. Neither of us are enamored with lawyers so I don't know where this came from. I want to 'get control' in my dreams so I can touch, kiss and talk to Virginia. I haven't been able to do this.

I had offered earlier in the week to watch the kids on Wednesday night so Joyce and Rick could get together down in Denver. This didn't work out. I talked to Joyce for quite a while on Thursday night. Joyce has been missing Virginia a lot this week and so we talked about Virginia and a lot of things. I was probably overstepping my bounds, but I told Joyce I noticed that she and Rick were 'getting after each other'. We talked about this for a while. I am really sensitized to this because I want so much to still have Virginia. When I see people who let opportunities slip away from them, it gets to me. I don't know if I helped or not, but I needed to try. I probably won't bring up again, unless Rick or Joyce bring it up with me. During the talk with Joyce, I mentioned that I miss the romance with Virginia. I am thinking about buying a Christmas present for Virginia - a water-color painting by an artist she liked. In some ways this seems sort of weird, but I can't just turn off our life together.

It is the end of another month, and it is going on two and a half months since Virginia died. I still remember her during her illness a lot. I was looking at the family picture from July where we were ready to go down to Kelly's wedding. I look at a lot of her pictures. In this one, she looks pretty and is smiling. But I looked closely at her face. She seemed, from her eyes somehow, to be in some pain or distress. I didn't like seeing this. I do wish I hadn't taken the business team manager job and that I had been better about the anniversary ring last year. But, I've done the best I can and I can't go back and change any of this.

December 1995

Sunday, December 3rd

It's Sunday night and I am really beat.

On Friday, I got Ben into his computer club early and I went in for the last day of the division quarterly review. I actually left the meeting and took Mandy out for lunch - since I had told her that I would take her out. We went to Wendy's. We don't talk about deep stuff most of the time, but I still think it is important to have one-on-one time. It is also good to just go out for lunch and have fun. Not everything needs to be a big deal. (Although during recent times I think I approach things that way.) After work, we had the normal pizza delivered. I took Mandy out to her band concert and then did grocery shopping. When I got home, I spent a good chunk of the evening rebuilding an old toy box I had built in 1980. I re-cut the doors and white-washed it. It felt really good to be busy on a project with some tangible results. I got to bed very late (around 3AM).

On Saturday, Mandy came up and gave me a kiss goodbye before she went down to Denver. I got up pretty late, but still felt tired. I started some soup and then went out for a bunch of errands. Mandy got back and had found a Christmas CD that I had been looking for (with John Denver and the Muppets). I was listening to it and one song got to me for some reason. I think it was about the meaning of the song ("Have yourself a merry little Christmas"). I went in to the 'fish' bedroom and started to cry a little. I had thought I was doing okay, but I am obviously still working through this. I went out with Rick and Joyce to see the new James Bond movie ("Golden-eye"). It was fun. It still doesn't feel right, going out without Virginia. We stopped off for some desert afterwards. Rick seemed rather tired or subdued. Ben took all day and still didn't get his chores all done. I wish he would because I wanted to do something fun with him. I replaced the litter-box fan and got that working. The new one is okay, but it is very noisy. Again, I got to bed pretty late.

On Sunday, I got up and fixed muffins. Rick and Joyce had invited us out for lunch, but the kids didn't get moving very early. I started getting out Christmas decorations. In the process I found some more of Virginia's and the kids' papers. I got the Christmas lights up on the outside of the house. They look pretty good. I know that Virginia is not around to ask how to set things up. We have a lot of Christmas decorations. While I was getting stuff out, Ben saw Mandy get a little artificial tree and take it to her room. He hassled her about it (i.e. why did she get this...). I got very upset about this. I called them both over and unloaded a bit. I asked Ben if this was about the tree. He said it was. I handed him the second small tree. I asked him if Virginia or I had ever denied him anything. He said no. I asked him if there was a better way to approach this. He sheepishly said "just ask". It

really bugs me when they get upset about inequalities (who gets what or how much) because we have enough time and resources for them to each get as much as they want. This is apparently a difficult concept for kids. I tried to get Ben to settle down after this and I got him to laugh and relax.

In the afternoon, I got a big meal ready - ham, baked potatoes, orange sherbet and jello, peas, ... It turned out pretty well. I had invited Cindy over and I let the kids have someone over. Obviously, Mandy had Joe over. Ben asked Charlie over. Everybody seemed to like the meal. I sat down and watched a half hour of TV ("Mad about You"). I then had to run off to a business meeting at the Marriott hotel at 8PM. I dropped Joe off on the way there. Cindy had left a bit earlier. The meeting was okay - the sales reps are pretty upset about the division dropping a product. My boss caught me before it started and asked what I was going to be doing. He said he was confused and wanted my proposal. This confused me because Carol and I had given him our proposal and he changed the problem domain. I don't know what he is after. It stresses me a bit, but I am surprised that it doesn't bother me more. I got back around 9:30PM and Ben hadn't finished some homework. I got a bit upset at him especially after he started to unwrap a nativity scene a little after 10PM - when he was supposed to be getting ready for bed. It has been a long weekend and I wanted to have more fun with both of the kids. I don't think I am a lot of fun for anybody these days.

Sunday, December 10th

We are coming up on three months since Virginia died. Things don't seem a lot better - we are still dealing with her death. I think we are in more of a routine, but I am still at a pretty low energy level. I'm getting by, but there is no spare time and I don't feel that I take much time for myself.

This last week has been the training event for the division's world-wide sales force. There are all sorts of rumors about the impending re-organization. The field event started out okay, but it is not a particularly high-energy group. After work on Monday, I ran Mandy over to her session with the new therapist. Ben wasn't home and I left him a message. After I got Mandy to her session, I tried to call Ben. He wasn't home and I wasn't able to find a message on the answering machine at home. I got pretty worried and called school and then went over to school and then home. I finally stopped at Hoxmeier's and they had seen him at James' house. I found him there. I was relieved - because I had gotten so worried. He had tried to leave a message, so I didn't get too upset with him. I was a little upset because he had homework, but went to play. The new rule is that he has to be home or he has to talk with me in person. After I got Mandy, the therapist was suggesting that I see if Mandy should take anti-depression medication. I have really mixed emotions about this. If she needs them, I want her to get them. But, I don't like the idea of medication. After all of this, I needed to run back out to work. I had missed dinner. I ended up talking with a salesman about a potential big deal.

The week also involved lunch sessions with each of the key geographic regions (US, European and Japanese). There was also a bunch of discussion with the field and internal division people about our plans to shut down one of the projects - DST. I think I was doing okay with this, but the product team manager in my business team responsible for this is really struggling with the change. I am trying to help, but he is very emotional about it. On Wednesday, I got the kids home and then ran out for a dinner in Greeley. I was in a chorus line behind the other business team manager, Patty. She sang a work-related variation of "New York, New York". This was, in spite of being pretty cheesy, reasonably fun. I called the kids a couple of times to make sure they were okay.

On Thursday, we finally heard about the re-organization. The first meeting was just with functional management from the Software Business Unit (where SESD reported into) and our executive VP - Wim Roelandts. It was very odd, and not helped by the beef I had for lunch. I very nearly fell asleep - because of the beef. After the management round, there was an announcement for all business unit employees. The announcement was very strange - incomplete. It is clear that there is more coming. Part of it has to do with the old SBU boss (Tillman Schad), I don't think he has a job for much longer (as indicated by the style of the announcement, Wim's comments and Tillman's body language). At a staff meeting on Friday, we talked about potential new organizations for the division. And again, Jim Davis's view of my new job changed again.

During the week I canceled the nursing home insurance that I had signed up for. It was just a knee-jerk reaction to the situation. I also added HP life-insurance and cut the amount of my term life-insurance in half (making them each around \$250,000). Part of the reason is that I had mis-understood the cost of the insurance. I had thought that the rates were annual and not monthly. I also did a gift-trust for the kids (at \$3,500 each). Mandy's should be worth over \$20,000 in 10 years (on her 26th birthday). Ben's should be worth around \$44,000 on his 26th birthday. This felt good, getting that set up. I figure that they can use it for a house down-payment or something for their lives. I hope they spend most, but not all, wisely. (I want them to have some fun too.)

The weekend was pretty slow. I was up late on Friday working on paper work and checking out mutual funds. Saturday, we just did chores and errands and Ben and I got our hair cut. I rented "Pulp Fiction" and Mandy, Ben, Joe and I watched it. It was interesting, but I don't think I should have let Ben watch it. On Sunday, Ben got into big trouble by eating downstairs. So, I had to punish him somewhat. I don't like this, but I think it is very important to make sure he understands the consequences. The main problem was not the food, but that I didn't feel that I could trust him. I did let him go to a birthday party, but he can't watch TV in his room until Christmas. I hope he gets the idea of all this. For supper, Ben and I ate with Turley's at a restaurant up by their house. We were all pretty tired.

Saturday, December 16th

This has been an incredibly full week - packed. I am doing okay, but there has been a lot going on - event-wise and emotion-wise. I actually feel a little numb right now. Part of it had to do with Virginia's graduation, part with Mandy's stress and part with my job.

The division manager (Jim Davis) had been changing what he wanted me to do every time I talked with him. He was getting upset at me for 'not logging back in'. Last week, it ended up where I would take Tim Tillson's place as a project manager. This was just fine. However, on Monday he changed his mind and wanted me to report to Tillson as a senior technical contributor. He is pretty obvious in wanting me to get back into work. This is okay, but he has previously also said that he knows that it can take a year to work through this type of loss. So, on one hand he understands, but on the other he doesn't. I had been finishing up some of my previous job and had been working on a new 'Visual Plus' working group. Carol and I were scheduled to head out for a meeting on Thursday and Friday in California. I had been doing some preparation work for this - because it had been what I was supposed to work on (from the previous week). On Tuesday, Jim sent me some voice mail - where he sounded rather annoyed. He said that he would put me at a 63TC. I wasn't supposed to come to senior staff and I wasn't supposed to go to California. Working for Tim Tillson is okay, but I don't think it is the best use of my skills. But it seems that Jim Davis is pretty down on me. I also expect that things will change again by the middle of January. Both Patty Azzarello and Tim Tillson seem to want me to do Tim Tillson's current management job. And I know I can do it - even at three-quarter time. So, by the end of the week, I transferred Janie to Paul Beiser (at least until the major division re-organization) and the rest of the folks over to other people. I don't like this change. It makes me question my value and worth. I know it will end up okay, but it is a surprisingly difficult transition. I was able to work through it and it has gotten almost funny - at least ludicrous. I spent most of Thursday and Friday trying to get back up on programming in C++ which is part of my new job (at least this week). I also ordered a new computer - capable of being a decent development machine.

On Tuesday, I took Mandy to see Dr. Merkel about her depression - and taking an anti-depressant. I wasn't in the office when Dr. Merkel talked to Mandy - I was taking the other girls in the car pool home from school. When I got back I found out that she had been prescribed Prozac. This came as a bit of a surprise and I was able to get back in and talk with Merkel. I have a personal prejudice against medication. In talking with Merkel, he indicated that her depression was situational - not medical. But, he expected that the medication would help her sleep better and get back on track. I was still unsure. I tried talking with Mandy about this. Unfortunately, she interpreted this as me saying "don't take the medication". I was really trying to have a discussion with her, and it didn't go well. I called Joyce Turley's pediatrician to get a second opinion. I was able to get in with Mandy on

Friday - in great part because Joyce had talked with Dr. Elliott about us. Mandy and I talked with him about the situation. He also looked Mandy over for her current cold. He thought that it was a reasonable thing to do the Prozac. I feel better, if not great, about doing this after the second opinion. He was a nice guy and seemed to be a good doctor.

During the week, I also arranged for Ben to talk with Julie. He did this and Julie said that he seemed to be doing okay. I don't know what else to do with Ben, but I think he is dealing with all of this pretty well.

On Friday, I received a letter from the eye bank thanking me for the donation of Virginia's corneas. The letter I received said:

December 12, 1995

Dear Mr. Mikkelson:

Your kindness in providing the precious legacy of sight left by your wife is truly appreciated. For you to think of others at such a difficult time is a very benevolent gesture. Both of her corneas have been transplanted. One recipient is an 82 year-old woman who lives in Landsdale, Pennsylvania. The other is in a program for the indigent in New Orleans, Louisiana. Also, Virginia's sclera was preserved, thus benefiting four glaucoma surgery patients.

Because of thoughtfulness such as yours, the hope of many is realized through corneal transplantation and important investigations into ways to overcome blindness. We hope you find some measure of comfort in the knowledge that your generosity has made such a difference in the lives of others. On behalf of the Rocky Mountain Lions Eye Bank and those waiting for sight restoration through eye donation, please accept our heartfelt sympathies and gratitude.

Sincerely,
Edmund Jacobs

It was nice to get the letter and I think I liked knowing what happened. (Even if they did mis-spell our name.) I did have a small reaction to the letter since I expected the people who received the corneas would be comparable in age. I got over this pretty quickly. I didn't realize that they did more than corneas. I had to look up sclera - it is the fibrous white material that connects to the corneas. Mandy and Ben saw the letter. Mandy wanted to know when I decided to do this and if Virginia knew. I told her that she didn't and that I had talked with the nurse about this about a week or so before Virginia died. It might have been longer. I also got the rejection from First Health for my appeal about the Taxol treatment. It is what I expected, but it still upset me a bit.

This weekend was also Virginia's graduation. I had picked up the diploma and the cap and gown on Thursday. The people at CSU have all been very nice about all of

this. The cap and gown people even gave me my money back on the rental. Art and Lee and Vickie got in Friday night around 8PM. I was just going to pick them up at the airport as I flew in (at about the same time). But since my trip was canceled, I let them take the bus up. I picked up oriental food when they got in and we ate back at the house. Mandy was not very thrilled about the graduation, but Ben seemed okay. We got up and got dressed on Saturday. Ben got nervous about the graduation, but I was able to calm him down. We got over to Moby Gym and went through the ceremony. Mandy and Ben carried the cap and gown and received the degree. They did really well. There was a lot of clapping for Virginia - more than I expected. Rick and Joyce were there as well as Susan and India and Butch and Cindy. I think that Larissa was there too. Mandy said that she almost started crying, but didn't. I almost started crying myself. They did great. During the ceremony, there was a small bird flying around in the auditorium. It was like a sign that Virginia was still around, somehow. We went up to Rick and Joyce's and had a small party (with Susan and India and Butch and Cindy). It was very low key and nice. After this, the girls went shopping, Ben stayed at the Turley's to play and Art and I went out and did some shopping. When we all got back, we went back out for supper at Red Robin and then went to the late show of Golden-Eye (the new James Bond movie).

Friday, December 22nd

I am really tired - it has been a very busy week. On Sunday, I took Art and Lee and Vickie down to the airport - Ben and Cindy rode along. I did some paperwork that evening and got things ready for the kids college investments - at least getting started. The first step was moving \$100,000 into a money market fund (so that I can slowly move most of it out into other funds during approximately 6 months). It was very strange writing a check for that much money. I hope that I don't screw it up (investment-wise). I have some concerns about the stock market and don't want to lose money. It is a tough balancing act - trying to get some return while minimizing risk. I am investing in a range of funds so this should be okay. I will also be getting approximately \$10,000 for Mandy and \$30,000 for Ben from their social security survivor's benefits. This will help.

I went into work on Monday - even though I was trying to take the week off. I talked with various people in the new team and got a better understanding of what I am going to be working on. After school, the kids and I went out and bought a Christmas tree. All these things feel strange - doing them without Virginia. It is also a real challenge trying to get the kids involved in this stuff in a fun way. In some ways they want to do this stuff, but, it seems, in more ways they view things like this as a real pain. At times, I think they do it just to humor me. Mandy had a therapist appointment, but decided she wanted to cancel it. I rescheduled it for early January. I got a Lyle Lovett CD from Laura - Jim Davis's administrative assistant. She has been very nice and supportive. I think she is a major reason that I was allowed to stay at a 63TC level.

On Tuesday, I spent most of the day finishing up presents and getting the kitchen cleaned out for the floor re-finishing. I took Ben out to lunch. I talked with each of his teachers to see how he was doing. They all seemed to think he was doing fine. Emotionally he seemed okay and he was getting his homework turned - at least most of the time. It was a lot of work getting stuff cleaned out of the kitchen area. Ben and Mandy helped some with the furniture. The guys came on Wednesday - very early. I had put up plastic sheets to keep the dust contained. This helped a lot, but there was still some dust and it was tough getting around the house. I took Mandy out for lunch. I did some reading while the floor was being refinished. We ate at Amigo's for supper. Mandy started her Prozac today. She seems to be in a better mood, but I think that this is just a placebo effect (it should take a couple of weeks to make a difference).

On Thursday, I ran out to work for a bit and gave Laura and Janie their presents. I also bought some cookies for the goodie table. I would have preferred to make something but I couldn't with the floor. The floor has turned out nice. I picked Mandy up at noon and we went out and did some errands. We ate at the Salad Company. After this, I dropped off some memorial notes at Dr. Lim's and Dr. Fangman's offices. The staff had been very nice. And since I had talked to one of the nurses last week, I thought they might like to see the memorial note. I picked Ben up after school - so that he could give Mrs. Cox a small present. We all went to Fort Ram for a birthday party for Mandy and Jerrod (who has the same birthday). Fort Ram was pretty much empty except for us. I ran out for some minor shopping and the weather was turning very bad. It took a long time to get back (I was gone a little over an hour) and the kids had gotten a little worried. I had missed Mandy opening presents and had also missed pizza. I ordered a burger. I had forgotten how good their burgers are at Fort Ram. I called Cindy about the weather and she still headed down to DIA to pick up Art and Lee. I arranged for her to call to make sure that she got there okay. Art and Lee got in late - around 10:30 and they had some weather trouble that slowed them down getting up to Fort Collins. They got in around 2:15AM. They were beat. I had been doing some chores (i.e. laundry) waiting for them. Both of the kids had gotten very tired and went to bed early.

I went into work on Friday to do a little work and to attend our division Christmas party. We had a catered brunch at the plant. It was okay. After work, I spent most of the afternoon fixing the refrigerator. Since it was moved it had been screeching - a blower was going bad. I was able to get replacement motor. After this, Mandy, Ben and I headed up to Turley's to exchange presents for the kids. Joyce got me some art supplies - which was very nice, but I felt bad for not having gotten them something. After this, Lee, Ben and I went to Ison's for dinner. Art and Mandy didn't go because of their cold and flu symptoms - we didn't want to get Vera (Susan's mom) sick. We got back and opened Christmas presents. Ben had been bugging me all day about this. All of this felt very hollow - without Virginia. I was a little annoyed at myself for feeling sorry for myself since I didn't get many presents - Mandy got me two CDs as did Chris and Julie. Cindy got me some chocolate - which was nice. I feel relatively alone tonight.

Saturday, December 30th

We, Art and Lee and Cindy and Ben and Mandy and I, headed up to the mountains last Saturday. I was able to get everything packed into the mini-van so we only had to take one vehicle, but we were pretty crammed in. We got a pretty late start. We stopped at Mount Fuji for lunch. Art, Lee and Cindy all seemed to like it - which was good. The waiter was friendly and talked with us a bit. He, at one point, identified Cindy as the wife of our family. This sort of bothered me. I asked Mandy about it later and it had caught her as well.

I had forgotten the reservation information at home and went back to get it after lunch. The drive up was pretty uneventful. The resort had down "Virginia and Tim Mikkelsen" in their records. After I got us checked in, I asked the clerk to take Virginia's name off - and gave her an explanation. I don't like catching people, but I guess I am a bit sensitive about aspects of this. Part of it may have been with people assuming that Cindy is Virginia. The condominium was nice. Art and Lee got the master bedroom. Ben and I shared a bedroom and Cindy and Mandy slept on the fold out couch. I felt sorry for Mandy - because the couch wasn't very comfortable and because Cindy snores. Cindy was also feeling poorly - the flu. We went out to the outlet mall and the grocery store after we were settled. We had sandwiches in the condo.

The skiing stuff went okay. All three days of skiing, we got very late starts which was just fine with everybody. I took Art and Lee over to Keystone on Sunday since I had to redeem a form for the actual lift tickets. After I got them set up, Mandy and Ben and I went over to Breckenridge for snow-boarding. I parked the car and we took the shuttle to the mountain. The first order of business was to get lessons arranged - they started at 1:30PM. Then we had to rent equipment. The place near the slope was out of our sizes so we had to walk part way back to town. We rented the equipment and headed back. The equipment had taken a while so we were running a little late - and we hadn't had lunch. Ben can get grumpy if he doesn't eat (of course, so can I). We made it. However, Ben's equipment hadn't been adjusted right and the instructor got it adjusted, but it took time. We were all falling down, but it was okay. Ben finally got very frustrated and he and I dropped out and I got him over to the lodge. Mandy stayed on and did okay, but her equipment wasn't adjusted correctly either. So, when we got done, I asked the rental place for another day. They didn't complain and adjusted the equipment properly. That night we ordered pizza in at the condo.

The next day, I got up early and put out stocking stuffers for the kids - a bear for Mandy and a LEGO kit for Ben as well as some candy. When we all really got up, I went skiing with Mandy and Art and Lee in the morning. Unfortunately, Virginia's boots had been in the car and Mandy couldn't get them on. So, I rented Mandy some equipment for a couple of runs at Keystone. The line took forever. But the skiing

was fun. After a couple of runs with Art and Lee, we headed off to get Ben and resume our lessons. They hadn't taken our slips, so we could get in another set of lessons. I dropped the kids off and parked the car. Mandy was doing great and Ben was doing pretty well - much better than Sunday. I thought my presence might be part of the problem, so I didn't take the lessons again. I went off and skied on my own. I took some pictures of the kids when I stopped by them. Later in the afternoon, I went back and they were gone - up the mountain. I caught up with them part way up the mountain. Ben had apparently hit his limit and I joined up with him and helped him down the mountain. He rode his board - by sitting on it. His rear got very cold and he got in a very bad mood. We got down and he did okay once he went in the lodge. I actually went back and skied some more. I felt bad about this, letting Ben sit in the lodge on his own. He gets so frustrated that I am not able to help him much - even though I want to. As we were returning the gear, Ben slipped on the steps and fell very hard. I was parking the car at the time and was very scared when Mandy ran out to me saying "Ben fell down the stairs". Fortunately, he was just fine. We went out for dinner. We tried looking around, but ended up at Denny's for Christmas dinner. Ben's and my meal were okay, but most of the rest of the food was just awful. The weather was very nice, during the day, but it got pretty cold at night. It certainly doesn't feel like Christmas.

Early on Tuesday, I was awakened because Ben got sick and threw up. I cleaned up the floor - since he hadn't made it to the bathroom. I think it was a combination of the flu, the food, the stress and the altitude. I wanted to comfort him, but I also needed to clean up the mess. I miss having Virginia as my partner and help-mate. Most people say that I am doing a great job with the kids, but it doesn't touch what we once had - even when Virginia was sick. Mandy and Art and Lee and I went off skiing on Tuesday. Ben stayed in with Cindy. This was just as well - he hadn't had a lot of fun so far and was sick. The skiing was a lot of fun. Afterwards, we went to the resort area for supper and ate at one of the pond-side restaurants. After supper, we looked around the area. Art got short of breath and not feeling well. We decided to head on down, although later on, Art said that he was fine. Mandy was disappointed. We packed up and left around 9PM. We pulled in at home around 11PM. It was a very quiet ride.

Wednesday, I got out and did grocery shopping and picked up Mandy's cake. I took her out to get her driver's license. It is very odd that she is so grown up. We went out to Bisetti's for her birthday supper. We stopped on the way back and picked up a movie and I bought her "Baron Munchausen". She opened presents at home and was very surprised by the contacts. We watched the rental movie - "IQ". Everyone liked it. We started watching "Baron..." but Cindy started snoring and so it ended up to be just Mandy, Ben and I.

I got up on Thursday and took Art and Lee out for brunch before their bus. (Mandy and Ben got up to say good-bye, but didn't come along.) It was nice having them out, but I don't know how good of a time they had. During the visit, I noticed Ben was really trying to talk with Art. Art didn't really respond very much - that I saw. I

hope it was mostly because of his not feeling well. Art would also get wound up about various things. His views and mine are a bit different, but I tried to moderate my responses. I thought about how Virginia might have responded to some of them - she used to get into some pretty heavy discussions with him. I just wasn't up for it. After they got off, I got back home and started re-arranging the kitchen. It took most of the day. Mandy got out and drove on her own on Thursday - to the mall. This was very strange. I can see that she is going to be growing up very fast. Part of her is still very "little girl"-like, but there is this other young woman part. I need to keep my balance and not over-react as she grows up on me.

On Friday, I spent most of the day getting the Christmas stuff put away and organized. This was a major feat. During the process, I found various things of Virginia's. It was not as bad as when I first went through her things, but some of the things caught me, emotionally. On Saturday, I took Ben out to see the new movie "Jumanji". We both liked it. Mandy drove over to pick up Joe and see another movie and have supper at his house. She left around 2:30PM and got back around 9PM. This is very strange. I spent most of the rest of the day going through bills, paper work and getting Christmas cards out (just a little late).

Sunday, December 31st

I hope that 1996 is a good year. We all could use it. The day was relatively uneventful. I got up and did some reading in the morning, upstairs on the old gray couch - it is very comfortable and pleasant. I can picture that Virginia would have done this. I fixed the kids breakfast. I tried to get them out and do a little shopping - just for fun. Unfortunately, Mandy didn't really want to and was sort of sullen. This put me in a bad mood and I cut the trip short so she could get together with Joe. It just wasn't worth the effort when she didn't want to do this. So, Ben and I went out a little later. He has been buying several books at a discount book sale - I think he is really ready to jump into liking to read. This would be really neat.

I fixed chicken piccata for supper - and invited Joe over. I fixed way too much food - especially given that Joe was very sick. I eventually got Mandy to take him home. She went over to Larissa's for a New Years' eve party. Ben and I stayed home and watched TV. A bad movie ("The Queen of Outer Space" starring Zsa Zsa Gabor) was on - but Ben didn't want to watch it. This was a movie that we had a party around a long time ago - maybe 12 to 15 years ago. Ben got "2001" and put it on. This was a movie that Virginia didn't really like because her old boy friend Bruce used to take her to it all of the time - especially at New Years. Ben did get a little bored with it. Rick and Joyce had invited us up, but I was pretty tired and just wanted to stay home. Ben and I toasted the new year with sparkling apple cider. Right at midnight, the group of "Forever Plaid" sang "Auld Ange Syne". They were the same people we (Roger, Susan, Ben, Virginia and I) had gone to see in Denver while Virginia was sick. She really liked the show. It was sort of fitting to close out the year like that. Ben

said that his resolution was that he would not get snippy and would do stuff when I asked him. I said that I would spend more time with him.

The start of another new year - 1996

This has been an incredibly long, hard year. Things are going okay. I worry about both of the kids, but I think they are doing all right. Mandy seems to be okay. I don't see a lot of difference with the Prozac, but I hope that it is helping her some. She feels that it does help. I continue to worry about her weight - I think that it is too low. Ben seems to be okay as well. I don't know what the differences are that are at play here - age, gender, personality or whatever. Whatever is going on, he seems to be okay and working through this. He talks about Virginia and is sad at times, but mostly he does okay. I think I am working through this as well. But it is very hard. I am tired a lot of the time and I still don't know what I want to do longer term. I have been rather sad today. Some of this, I suspect, is just that I'm feeling sorry for myself.

I am going to continue writing entries in this journal, but I will do it less frequently. I do continue to get value out of it, but I plan on stopping in May of 1996.

I hope that 1996 is a good year. We all could use it.

Tim Mikkelsen
December 31, 1995

January 1996

Sunday, January 7th

It's been a pretty good week. (It helps having been a short week.) I have been getting into my new job. I actually had fun on Friday at work and I am looking forward to work on Monday. I still don't know what I want to do long-term.

It has been very strange now that Mandy is driving. She couldn't drive until Thursday when she got a parking permit sticker. This turned out to be a horrendous first day to drive. The day was cold, but clear when she went to school. It started snowing in the morning and was pretty sloppy by the time school was out. She did great and drove very carefully. She had an eye appointment and got there right after school. She is very mature and conscientious because she knew that I would be worried so she tried to call me at work and at home. When I wasn't at either place she called me on the work cellular phone. If they take away the work cellular phone, I will probably get another so that both she and I can have one - for emergencies. I am very proud of Mandy.

Mandy says that she feels better with the Prozac. She seems a little better, but I don't see a huge difference. If she thinks it helps, it is worth it. However, I don't want her to stay on it too long. Mandy complained over the weekend of some small bumps under her skin in the region of her underarms. I looked it up in a medical reference CD and it is probably nothing - just her body reacting to an infection. But, some of the illness that had this symptom were not good and I am going to ask Merkel about it on Tuesday when she is in for her Prozac checkup.

Ben has been good this week. We get after each other a bit, but on the whole, things are going well. He made a comment tonight that really got my attention. He said that school was too easy. I hadn't expected this because of how much he grouses about homework. I think he might be really hitting his stride in school now. I am expecting him to get good grades and will make a big deal about them - to reinforce that this is a good thing.

I talked to Mandy and warned her that I would make a big deal (so she wouldn't feel bad). She mentioned that she felt like Virginia and I hadn't been proud of her and had gotten to expect good grades. We did get to expect them, but both of us had been extremely proud of them. Mandy and I talked for a while about this - both Ben's and her perceptions of things. I mentioned the characteristic that both Rick and I have been aware of for a long time - "there is no reality, only perception". She thought that this was a pretty cool concept.

I have not been wearing my wedding ring since the 1st. I still wear Virginia's Taos bear pendant. Things feel okay and I am working through the loss, but it is

something I will never 'get over'. I worry about forgetting about important parts of our life together. I will be trying to figure out what to do with Virginia's remains. I suspect I will spread them in the local area, Des Moines and either Hawaii or the Caribbean. I miss her a great deal, but I am, I guess the phrase for it would be, "at peace" with all of this. I love our kids and am proud of them. We are a solid family and will do fine.

I have been getting the rest of the investment stuff set up and have made 3 initial investments. It is very strange writing \$3000 to \$5000 checks and hoping that I get something back. I think it will take me through the summer to get all of the stuff set up (so that I do dollar-cost-averaging, a way to not get screwed up by fluctuations in the stock market).

Sunday, January 14th

It's been another good week - relatively speaking. It has been 4 months now since Virginia died. I was going to say that it felt both longer and shorter than that, but it doesn't. It just feels mostly like it was longer ago than that. It is very odd to me that this all started in 1994.

The kids seem to be doing pretty well. They both did really well on grades. Mandy got 2 A's and 2 B's. I think one of the teachers is being a bit unfair about this and Mandy says she will talk to him. But she doesn't like conflict. Ben did really well. He got an A and 4 B's. Talking with him about this, I think one of the B's will come up to an A. (The teacher graded, but forgot to include one of his assignments. Her desk is pretty messy and some of the kids assignments get lost.) He is reading a lot more and a lot faster and is really starting to hit his stride in school - I think. I am glad that he doesn't receive much special education support in class because I think that teachers build in a lot of expectations like this. And I think Ben is beyond that now. I have told the kids that if they get a B average (3.0), I'll get them one CD. If they get a 3.5 or better, I'll get them 2 CDs. If they get a 4.0, I'll do something more. I'm not using this to bribe them, but I want to give them a tangible sign that I am proud of them and recognize their efforts.

Mandy seems to be doing okay on Prozac. She is still seeing the therapist. Ben still doesn't want to talk to anybody else. When Mandy came back from the therapist, she noticed that there was a big gash in the passenger door on the Probe. Somebody probably got her in the school parking lot. We went back in to see Merkel for a check up on the Prozac. We also asked about the bumps under her arms. It wasn't anything - just normal fat deposits.

I have been doing pretty well at work. I am getting into programming again. It is a strange transition, but I think I am, at most levels, less stressed with this. I feel that the stress level is about both who you work for and what level or type of job you have. Actually, it also includes a big component of how you react to situations as

well (i.e. stress really is internal). I continue to struggle with thinking about what I want to do longer term.

I went out to see "12 Monkeys" with the 'bad movie' crowd. It was a pretty good movie. I also read a really great book - "Ishmael" - a fairly different environmental-oriented piece of fiction. I read it over two evenings (about 3-4 hours). I worked at home on Friday - which was pretty nice. I am exercising, but I am not getting to bed early enough most nights. I heard from Tim Tillson (my current boss) that Jim Davis finally announced the functional organization change (with Gretchen as marketing manager and Patty as lab manager). There was also some silliness about all Patty's reports being 62 level managers (just a few who are heavily loaded). They would have 62TCs report to them as leads. This implies that they want to step me down from my 63TC job to a 62TC lead. I am not really happy about this and I don't think it is stable anyway. If I feel really dumped on out of this, I'll look around. But I probably won't move to another job until the summer (when I have gotten through the first release of the product that I am on). I am also trying to resubmit the final chemotherapy bill. I don't expect much, but it is worth a shot.

The weekend has been pretty uneventful. I did get a new Macintosh (6220CD), but its performance is worse than the Centris 610 I have now. I will be sending it back. Ben and I saw the "12 Monkeys". He liked it. Mandy has had a pretty full dance card (i.e. she had a lot of parties and activities over the weekend). Ben had a birthday party to go to as well. Mandy and I have been doing body work on the Probe. We should be done on Monday. I am taking Monday off.

I miss Virginia and feel very lonely during the evenings. It all seems unreal. I worry about forgetting aspects of her. I did have a dream with her in it. I don't remember much of it, but I do remember, at one point in the dream, she gave me her 'sweet/coy/trouble-maker' smile. I liked seeing her again, if only in my dreams. I did go through a bunch of pictures tonight (Sunday) and got quite a few of them dated and labeled. She was very pretty. Ben and I went walking around the neighborhood tonight. While we were out, asked "What if Mom was Madonna?" What he was getting at was what if Mom had been a rich or 'public' or 'important' woman. He and I talked about this and I told him that if there had been something out there that would have made a difference, Virginia would have had it. Money was not the issue. I thought we had talked about all this before, but apparently, Ben had been thinking that we didn't do everything we could. I told him that I would have done things differently, but it wasn't because of money - it was because it looked like things were getting better and Virginia didn't want to undergo chemotherapy during the end of 1994.

Sunday, January 21st

I took Monday off of work since both the kids had the day off. I had a tough time remembering what we did. Mostly we finished up the first pass painting the Probe. This has been sort of fun - doing something with Mandy like this. I know she is not overly thrilled doing this, but I have liked spending the time with her.

Work has been going reasonably well. I am getting into the technical stuff again. I will eventually get back into management, but this current period will help me. Most important, it gives me a broader understanding of single parents and mothers and also different work schedules. It will also help me get up on the current round of technology. The general manager decided on the form of the re-organization. He has decided everybody is either a 62 level manager or lead or a 60 engineer (except for his functional staff). This is really pretty silly because several of the '62s' are really section managers. It will end up causing some strife, stress and attrition. Maybe this is what he wants. He stopped by and told me that I wouldn't be a 63 because of this. Quite honestly, I don't care much. For the next year or two, I wasn't expecting any raises and they can't affect my salary downward.

I did have a dream with Virginia. In the dream, Virginia was coming up and waking me up in the morning. She was making some comments to me about not having been sleeping together for a week. It was nice to have Virginia in a dream. All this week, it seemed like I should be able to turn around and see Virginia standing somewhere. Later in the week, I had another dream - but very different in type - it was just auditory. In the dream, I thought I heard someone (I think it was Virginia) whispering 'wake up, Tim'. Mandy has very long intricate dreams with Virginia in them. I tend to be portrayed as a disciplinarian or a lout. I try not to let this bother me since I do have to be a balanced parent and do the discipline 'thing'. Mandy said that the Prozac has had an effect on her dreams - making them less emotionally dark.

Friday night, I was in a very bad mood. I recognized it and apologized to the kids when I snapped at them. It seemed to bother Ben a lot and I told him that I thought I had been doing very well and was entitled to one bad mood. I went out and did some grocery shopping and stopped at a book store and a computer store on the way. What I think I needed was some time off as a parent. I recognize that I feel the need to be 'on' with the kids all the time. I do have to be here for them, but it is not as enveloping as I think it is and I should schedule time for me to be away from them. I suspect that I am going through a lot of the 'super-parent' feelings - trying to do it all. I wonder if this is a normal reaction of widowed parents.

Chris and Julie had their baby on the 19th. They named him Michael Anthony. We are all really excited for them. Chris sounded very tired on the phone. We will go back soon to see the baby (but it might be spring break for this). I am really glad to have some fun and upbeat news in the family and to have a baby. But, it also reminds me of how much I have lost and how much Virginia is going to miss (with Chris and Julie's baby and with our kids children).

I have thought of Virginia every day since she died. It hasn't been that long, but I have thought deeply about her and us and the kids. I wonder if there will ever come a time when I won't think of her. I want to remember her always, and believe I will. We had something very special. But I also wonder if I will always feel the emptiness and sadness.

Monday, January 29th

Things seem to be settling down and the week has been pretty good. Work has been going reasonably well. I am getting into the technical aspects again. But, Tim Tillson and I have been discussing what our respective roles are going to be. I will end up being the equivalent of a project manager - which is okay. I am of two minds on the job. In some ways I know I will be more effective as a lead or manager. However, I have enjoyed not having to worry about the responsibilities and hassle factors associated with management. I have also enjoyed getting into the technical aspects and being creative again (which has been difficult in management). I guess thinking about it - leaders can be creative but it is more problematic for managers. (It is a difference between setting direction and integrating effort.) Oh well - enough philosophic (or sophomoric) thinking about work.

The kids are still doing okay. They seem to have had fewer 'down' days this last week. I asked Mandy about her therapy sessions and when her next one is scheduled. She had sort of forgotten about them - a little. I suspect that within a couple of more sessions, she will be phasing out of them. She had a concert on the 22nd. They sounded okay. It has bothered her that the band this year sounds less good than when she was in junior high. We both think it is related to discipline in the band. The teacher is a good band instructor, but just doesn't keep adequate discipline (as opposed to the junior high instructor). She does spend a lot of time with Joe, but he is a good kid. He does get really animated, but generally it isn't a problem. His folks have gotten upset at him again and he has been coming over a little less than usual. Ben and I are doing fine. He seems to be keeping up with his homework. It was good to see Mandy helping Ben with homework. I still get upset with both of them and say and do stupid things. I can usually control my parental stupidity - but when I get tired or they have pushed me it comes out. I think that this is happening less. During the last week, we also had fun, horsed around and laughed more than we have recently. It will be 'interesting' to see what happens this summer.

I got several new (used) computers - one for me and one for Mandy. Ben, at least currently, has my old machine. I will be giving Ben's old machine to Angela. So, I have spent a fair amount of time moving machines around and doing system administration. The machine I bought is almost identical to Mandy's except for memory, disk and a built in TV tuner. This last has a lot of toy appeal - it is pretty neat. However, I have noticed that I have to turn it off fairly frequently because it interrupts my thought processes (like now as I am writing this). Playing with the

machines may explain why I have had a good weekend - getting to play with machines. It was surprising that I was going to buy a Pentium-based PC clone this weekend, but I couldn't find what I wanted (and I had real trouble with the sales people at the local stores). It probably also helped that it was 3 days long - I took off today (Monday) since Ben had the day off.

I have been thinking about the library stones for Virginia and came up with an idea for what to say. I came up with:

• IN MEMORY OF • VIRGINIA • MIKKELSEN • FOR ALL THAT • SHE TAUGHT US. •

It is very hard to come up with something that captures all that I want to say without tiling the entire library. This comes close to capturing what I want to say. I asked the kids and Lee about this phrase seeing if anybody else has any ideas. I have had a dream or two with Virginia in it, but I can't remember what they were about. I am still getting to bed too late - between midnight and 1:00AM (or later). One night, I was sitting on the couch upstairs (by the Nordic Track) and thinking. The clock on the television was ticking very loudly. It made me feel empty. It got me thinking about time ticking away - although this doesn't get to me the way that it used to. It made me feel empty because I thought about the time that is coming when both the kids are gone and me being in the house alone. I wasn't particularly sad about this, but it isn't something that I am looking forward to.

I wrote a bunch of personal letters to friends and family - Aunt Ella, Aunt Lil, Harvey and Laverne, Aunt Maxine. The one I wrote to Maxine (which is similar to the others) was:

Fort Collins Friday, January 26, 1996
Hi Maxine,
I just got a letter from a friend of my mother's in my home town. This triggered me to try to catch up on some letters that I should have written. I didn't do very well with Christmas cards this year either.
I was talking with Lee yesterday and she said that she and Art were going to try to get down to see you and meet Jimmy and Janet. They said the weather was getting bad, but were still hoping to try to make the trip. I hope they had good weather and made it down.
Things are going okay here. At least they are as much as is possible. The kids are doing fine. They both had good report cards. Ben got B's and one A. Mandy got a 3.5 GPA. I'm very proud of both of them.
Right before Christmas - on December 16th - we went to Virginia's graduation. Mandy and Ben accepted the diploma for Virginia. She graduated with her bachelor's degree in liberal arts. She also graduated Cum Laude - a very small percentage of the highest grade point graduates. The kids actually seemed to like

having done this - even if they weren't thrilled all the time. Virginia's folks and sister Vickie came out from Des Moines for this.

We had a pretty good Christmas. Virginia's folks came out (again - after the graduation). We all went up to the mountains to go skiing. I didn't want to stay around the house since it was hard enough getting through the holidays. (We had gone back to Des Moines over Thanksgiving.)

Mandy is driving. This is really bizarre. She got her license at the end of December. She is a good driver and it really helps me since she drives the Probe to and from high school. Somebody hit the car in the parking lot at school already and dented the passenger door. So, the last two weekends, she got to learn how to do body work and painting. (She and I did this together and it was fun.) It looks pretty good.

I am working 3/4 time now and have stepped down from my senior management job. I actually like this. They haven't taken away my company car or phone - yet. I don't really care one way or the other. I am on a 9AM-3PM work schedule - 5 days a week. I generally work at home one day a week. I also take off any day the kids have off. I am not sure how summer is going to work, but we will figure it out. I like being home when the kids get home and I enjoy cooking (most of the time). I'll stay on the part time schedule for a couple of years - probably. I want to get Ben solidly into junior high school. Junior high is a challenging transition and I want to be there to help him.

I hope that you are doing okay. We think about you, out here. It would be nice if everyone was closer together. Take care. I hope we can see you sometime this year - I am hoping to make it back with the kids to Iowa and we might be able to make the trip down to Missouri.

Tim

I mailed these on Saturday. Ironically, on Sunday, I heard from Lee that Maxine had an episode at the home and is now in a coma. They don't expect her to come out of it. The doctors said that she probably wouldn't last more than a few days. This is sad, but it didn't bother me the way it would have before. Maxine lived a good, long life. I feel most bad about this because Lee is losing another loved-one. Maxine is the last of the older generation family that she has. I told her that we would come back for a funeral, all she has to do is let us know. I suspect that there will be other older folks passing away within the next year or two.

I also sent letters to thank the people at CSU for their support in Virginia's graduation. They were very helpful. I also sent letters to Don and Jan Hanenberger and Gary Kent. These were very hard. Don and Gary were both groomsmen in Virginia's and my wedding. I don't think they even knew that Virginia was sick. The letter I sent to Don and Jan looked like:

Fort Collins
Sunday, January 28, 1996

Hi Don and Jan,

It has been a while since we've talked and I've been wanting to let you guys know what is going on and it hasn't been good. I am not sure how to start this and this isn't easy, I hope you'll understand. Virginia died in September, 1995 after fighting a high grade brain tumor since spring of 1994. I have started this letter a couple of different ways and I'm not really sure what to say.

I've included a note that I wrote up right after she died. It captures most of what I want to say about the last two years.

I'm, again, sorry about letting you know in a letter. I hope you understand why I didn't let you know sooner. From the start, all of my attention was on Virginia and the kids. After Virginia died, I was focused on keeping things as stable as I could for the kids. Only recently, have I had been getting to the point were I could do this.

We are doing okay - given the circumstances. The kids are doing well in school. I have stepped down several levels and am working 3/4 time at HP so that I can give the kids the attention that they deserve. The part time allows me to be home when they leave and when they come back from school. I want to do this until Ben is well into junior high (he is in 6th grade right now) so maybe another year or two. Mandy is in 10th grade and is driving - which really helps.

I'm sorry to send you a letter like this - as I'm sure you are aware. I hope you are all doing well. Take care of yourselves.

Tim

These letters were surprisingly difficult to write. It is very much like what Virginia and I both felt when people would ask us what happened to her - and we told them. It was like you had kicked them.

Wednesday, January 31st

It is the end of another month. Things are going okay for us, but we do have the rough spots. Mandy had a bad night recently with a bad dream where just Mandy and Virginia were in it, but Virginia was having a seizure. I talked with Mandy about this and I don't know if it is because of Maxine passing away or something else. I have gotten out for lunch with both kids - separately. They still seem to like this. I did get upset at Ben tonight because he tipped over one of the metal breakfast bar stools and scratched the floor. I am trying to fix it, but it will leave some sort of mark. I think I got annoyed about this because I had just told Ben about two hours earlier to be careful on the stools.

Art and Lee didn't really want us to come back for Maxine's funeral. It would have been nice to see a lot of the folks (especially Virginia's aunt and uncle - Jimmy and Janet - and their kids). I sent some flowers. It would have been nice to go, but it was something. Maxine left her estate to mostly family members. It turns out to have been a fair amount - probably around \$300,000. From this, 25% goes to Art and Lee, 25% to Jimmy and Janet and 15% to be split between their kids. Since Virginia

died, the will stipulated that the money would be divided between the surviving children. Art told me about this and said that there would probably be some discussion about it. I told him that it didn't matter to me - if we got anything or not. The one thing that I asked was that they don't give us anything if there is any comment or issue or concern. If we do get any, I will put it in with the rest of the college funds for the kids.

Today at work, I made changes in actual code, got it debugged and checked in. It was actually a lot of fun doing development again. I would liked to have gotten into this faster, but all things considered, I have gotten into it pretty well. Of course, the job that I will be doing is going to be a project lead - really a type of project manager. Whatever. There was a release dinner tonight, but I wasn't in the mood to go to it.

I've noticed that I don't watch as much television anymore. There just isn't the time. I need to start getting more sleep as well. My weight has been stable around 230 lbs. This is too much and I want to drop 20 pounds, and I would prefer 30.

February 1996

Wednesday, February 14th

It is Valentine's day, today. It has now been 5 months since Virginia died. I am consciously trying to do diary entries less often to try to get ready to finish up this diary and put it away. It has helped, but I think it could turn into a sort of a crutch and barrier. I get a lot out of writing this, but I think it could prevent me from working through Virginia's death - it is a type of a link to when she was alive.

I heard that Maxine's will is set up so that the other family members divide up the money. I am surprised by my reaction to all this - in a lot of different ways. I didn't think the money was a big deal. But this money and inheritance stuff is really a funny business. I find that I wanted for us to receive Virginia's share. Not for the raw money, I don't think, but for the sense that it was the fair thing to do. I don't know if there are other motives or emotions running around, but I am disappointed in how much I have thought about this.

I have been pretty busy at work and at home. We are in a routine at home. I want to do more fun stuff with the kids, but I find it very hard to do. Mandy is okay with me, but wants to do other things and spend time elsewhere. I find that I want to do stuff with Ben and do a fair number of things, but he is growing up and I think we are trying to figure out how to have fun together. I also get a bit upset with him because he usually doesn't get his chores done until late on Saturday.

I am still trying to get in a routine at work. I'm doing okay at work and I think I am contributing. I still get asked to help people in a mentoring sense - which I really enjoy. I know that I will get back into some real management job in time. The engineering lead role is often fun and I like playing in the technology realm again. But it feels strange not being in a pure or real management role. There have been some subtle changes as my official capacity has changed back to 'doobie'. However, I do feel that I have nearly as much influence on most people as I did before. This goes back to the concepts of influence and authority. In the HP and many work environments, the authority most often doesn't come from position but from influence. I tried to explain this to some people, but they felt it was the other way around. (They felt the reason that they couldn't get anything done was because they hadn't been made a 'manager' when in reality the reason they weren't a manager was because they couldn't influence people to get anything done.) I have been working on my evaluation - writing it up for my ex-boss. I don't know what to expect out of him on this. Working on this re-opened a lot of memories and emotions from the last year. In particular it triggered me to re-think the approach Virginia and I took on her treatment. Did I screw up on the treatment? In a large sense, yes, because Virginia died. In another sense, I don't know, because I don't

know if anything would have helped. I have to think that something would have, but I just don't know.

I actually started making some progress on the configuration management book over the last week or two. I did some writing and contacted some vendors for evaluation copies. I got quick response from two of three. This is pretty neat.

I packaged up Ben's old Mac LC and sent it to Angela, since we have all upgraded computers here. At one point Vickie and I had talked about them buying it, but I just gave it to her. I would rather she get some value out of it. I sent the system, keyboard, mouse, an Image Writer printer and a CD ROM drive. They needed to get a monitor. Angela seemed very happy to get it. I went to an auction last week and got a bunch of stuff and some Apple monitors. So I arranged with Art to sell him one of these and he would either give it to Angela or would (more likely) pass his smaller monitor onto Angela.

I invited Cindy over on her birthday - she is 39 I think. I had gotten a cake and fixed steak. I didn't invite her until late on Sunday. I was curious if she would stop over or call at all. She did call, but after Lee told her that we had done something for her. She said she would be over, but she showed up later than I expected. Because I needed to feed the kids, we started eating without her. She is obviously doing better financially because she is saving up to buy furniture. She also wants to buy a new computer and is thinking about a cellular phone. We had a long discussion about her interest in a low-income house. I was trying to encourage her to buy one of these low income places. Even if it isn't great, she would at least build up some equity.

I tried to work out Mandy, Ben and I visiting Des Moines over president's day weekend (since we have Monday off). We all want to see Michael Anthony. I called and asked Julie, since I am trying to be understanding of her needs. She said it wasn't a good weekend - her relatives were coming in. Chris called that night and asked when we were coming. I said that Julie indicated that it wouldn't work and that either way was okay. He called back late the next day and said that it wouldn't work out. Julie got on the phone and was asking how the kids were and when it would be good to call them. I told her most anytime but I suspect that things will be too busy for her.

Lee called to see how I was doing. I think she knew that today was going to be hard on me. I appreciated this. She also mentioned that she doesn't expect to see much of Chris and Julie and the baby - because of all of the attention from Julie's family. I have to confess I have been wondering about the effect that the new grandchild would have on the relationship with Mandy and Ben.

I knew that some of emotions I'm feeling were going to happen, but all this stuff makes me feel very disconnected and lonely. I am really trying to keep in contact with Virginia's family, but it feels like things will slip away. I also feel disconnected

with a lot of Virginia's and my old friends. At work, a lot of my friends will talk to me about something and then say they want to get together for lunch - but don't. (It could be like all the parties that Virginia and I had - we were the ones who actually did things. They are waiting for me to call them up.) Only the Turley's and Ison's have really kept much in touch with us. (Which I do appreciate.) I suspect that this is normal - for the friends and for me. They probably want to be able to put Virginia's death behind them and I am a reminder. I suspect it isn't as bad as it feels right now and it is part of the process that I am going through.

I heard that Phoebe, my temporary secretary earlier in the year, was still holding me responsible for some of the trouble she had. I also heard that she had made a nasty comment when she heard that Virginia had died. To hear this made me very angry at first. Fortunately, I remember Virginia's opinion about this sort of thing. She approached it from the point of view that if somebody did something bad and you stopped liking or loving them, they weren't worth the effort to hate. Love and hate are very closely related strong emotions. So, the opposite of love is indifference.

A couple of nights ago, I was feeling very anxious and had a hard time getting to sleep and I woke up in the middle of the night. I don't know what it was from. Ben was upstairs reading and closed the door to the bedroom. He did this because he got scared because he thought he could see Virginia laying on bed - dead with her fingers blue. Ben obviously has some very difficult memories from the day that Virginia died. I have had a couple of dreams in the last week or two. I wrote down some notes on one of them that I can't figure out - and I can't remember the dream. It was something about a woman and an explosion. I have some cryptic notes about being worried about relationships. I had another where Virginia and I were in a bank in Missouri Valley. The bank was very inept. Virginia and I were getting ready for an international trip. I don't know if the trip is a metaphor for dying or if the dream means something about concerns about finances. I don't think I am concerned about finances. I had another dream just two nights ago with Virginia in it. I don't remember much except that it was romantic. The very clear memory I have from the dream is holding Virginia, feeling her and touching her skin. It was a very, very nice dream.

Valentine's day hasn't been as hard as I expected, but it hasn't been easy either. I notice all sorts of odd dates and trivia and reminders of Virginia. For example, it is oddly ironic that Valentine's day is 5 months since Virginia died. The 'fives' were a code word that Virginia and her high-school friend Karen used to refer to being amorous. (It was the 'fives' because 'horny' had 5 letters in it). I worked at home most of the day. I actually went down and smelled Virginia's hair. I know that seems pretty odd, but it brought back memories and a sense of her presence. It still smells like Virginia, but it seems to me to be fading. This made me feel sad - reinforcing the sense that things are fading and slipping away. Thinking about Virginia and us, I got a little teary eyed last night. Tonight I got sort of angry and blustery around supper time. All the stuff on the radio and television about Valentine's had gotten to me. I felt very lonely - and unfortunately vented around

the kids. I feel very flat and tired right now. Even though I am not doing too badly, I need to stop feeling sorry for myself. I need to move on and figure out what I want to do longer term and start proactively working towards it - even though it is very hard.

Friday, February 23rd

Last weekend, I got Ben out to see "Muppet Treasure Island". Both the kids wanted to see this, but Mandy stayed at home with Joe. I do trust them although the father side of me gets a twinge when I do this. Mandy knows that I am giving them a lot of latitude and that if they ever break my trust it won't be very good. The movie was okay. Ben liked it, but I thought that it was pretty marginal.

This last weekend was also the presidents' day holiday so both the kids and I had it off. We didn't do much. I got the kids out for clothes shopping. They both needed some stuff - especially Ben. Before that, we had gone through his room and gotten rid of a ton of stuff. On Sunday, I had wanted to do two things - build an FM transmitter with Ben and to watch "Mad About You" at 7:00PM. I had asked Ben to read first (before the transmitter kit) and he did his normal reaction - complaining about it. This upset me. I also had asked Mandy to get back from running out to do some shopping pretty quick. She didn't and we ended up eating when "Mad About You" was on. I got very angry and sullen. I didn't really look at them all through dinner and was very abrupt and went upstairs after supper. I eventually went for a walk. When I got back I dumped on them why I was so upset. Ben really tried to make me feel better afterwards. Mandy just got out of my way. I feel badly for having gotten so upset, but I don't feel like I put that many demands on them and it bothered me because I just wanted to do these two things - and I didn't. We got back onto a more normal state on Monday and had a pretty good day.

I got a call from Gary Kent. He had gotten my letter. He said that Don and Jan Hannenberger had gotten it as well. He didn't know what to say and was very sorry to hear about things. We talked about what we were both up to. He has 2 adopted children and is an engineer at Collins Radio in Cedar Rapids. It was good to hear from him again. I told him that he was welcome and that I would love to have him come out for a visit.

The monitor I sent to Art on Valentine's day got to Des Moines. Unfortunately, it was damaged in shipping and didn't work. So, I am trying to get the shipper to pay the insurance (but I didn't insure it for more than the minimum amount - not enough to get another).

This was a tough week because I had my trip to Seattle to visit Microsoft. This was the first trip since Virginia's death. It is also the first time I had been away from the kids since last June. Mandy was at Schendel's and Ben was at Turley's. It went well, but I was very worried. Schendel's had asked for a permission slip for medical care

purposes - they had previously had something happen with some other kid. The trip was okay. The Microsoft people are very cocky and full of themselves (but they also have the market share to back it up). I had another dream while I was on the trip. In this dream, I was kissing Virginia - heavy kissing. It was very erotic. It was very nice. It was a pretty long trip (in some sense) - three days for one half day meeting. The kids seemed to have done pretty well with the trip. I suspect that it bothered me more than it bothered them. I need to remember to get something for Jan Schendel and Joyce Turley to thank them for having the kids over.

I had talked to Mandy about how I am feeling these days - lonely. I told her that I have mixed emotions - I am lonely, but I don't want to go out and meet anybody. She said that she had been worrying about me and this. She had even talked to her therapist about it and my 'physical' needs (back in January). The therapist said that I would be okay. Mandy also said that she and Virginia had talked about me getting remarried if things went badly back before the summer in 1995. Virginia said to Mandy that it would be okay with her (or something to that effect). Not that I wanted to have that specific discussion with Virginia, but I would liked to have had more deeper talks with Virginia before she died. It would have given me a better sense of closure, I think.

Ben is not getting things turned in at school on time. I have been trying to make sure he gets his stuff done - and he does. But it seems that he doesn't have a good handle on when things are due and will just not get them turned in. I want to just rush in and help, but I am trying to use this as way to teach him planning skills and responsibility for his own actions.

I have also made arrangements for the library stones for Virginia. I went over today and talked to a lady at the CSU foundation. The stones should look something like:

IN LOVING	MEMORY OF	VIRGINIA LEE	MIKKELSEN -
FOR ALL THAT	SHE TAUGHT US,	SHE IS ALWAYS	IN OUR HEARTS.

The lady was very nice at CSU. It looks like most of the locations will be good (from a visibility and accessibility point of view). I made the suggestion that she might

consider selling duplicate stones. I would consider getting a set to put in a garden or someplace around the house. We talked for a bit about the kids - her daughters are about the same ages as Ben and Mandy. She mentioned that she had a bout with breast cancer during the last year and came out clean. She was also on tamoxifen.

I had also talked some more with the personnel person about trying to appeal the insurance stuff. I believe she was trying to be helpful, but she didn't really find out much. She said that I might be able to appeal the non-payment on the lab tests and administration costs. This might be on the order of \$1000 or so. I am just tired and worn down on this. It is painful to keep trying to fight this stuff. So, I've decided to just let it go. HP has picked a very effective, if cold, insurance administration organization.

All of this still doesn't feel real to me at times. I am not going to go off the deep end about it, but I fantasize about this not having happened. I think about how things might be now, if this didn't happen. I also think about if I could go back in time - to just about any point - and what I would do to change this. I have also thought about, in a more science-fiction vein, being able to swap with somebody from a parallel universe. This last one is a little problematic and not very rewarding from a fantasy point of view, because it would involve taking some other-self and putting them into this life - without Virginia.

Thursday, February 29th

It has been a pretty long week and I'm pretty tired right now. Last weekend went okay, but it was tough getting Ben to get his chores done. We didn't get much done, but got out on Sunday around 3PM. We went to old town and shopped. We stopped and ate at BeauJo's pizza. It was actually nice not to cook and to do it early.

Mandy has gotten a college survey done through a service at HP. She also got her draft schedule for next year finished. She also, after a fair amount of pestering, contacted the vet college about volunteering.

Ben and I have had a rough night, tonight, because he had several projects due tomorrow. I had been asking him all week about assignments and homework. He said he didn't. So, as hard as it is for me, I am not helping him much. He knew these were coming and I want him to learn about consequences and responsibility. He is close to getting done, but it is a little after midnight.

I had my evaluation on Tuesday. This wasn't too big of a deal. My previous boss, Davis, pretty much took what I had written (after some paring down). The weird thing was that he caught me afterwards and asked if I 'have a problem with him'. I think that this came as a 'shot' from the human resources person to get back at me for my feedback to her. I told Davis that I didn't have a problem. I said that there were things that I admired and things I didn't, but that we are all adults it wasn't a

big deal. This is, unfortunately, a warning sign. Davis tends to keep the opinions that he forms. If he thinks I have a problem, he will probably remember this as an issue. I will be okay were I am because I am far enough away from him, but it will be difficult to get back into senior management underneath him. I am not going to run off screaming, but I will be putting out some feelers about other options. I had an off-site meeting at the house on Wednesday. This went well, but I was really beat afterwards.

It is a real challenge trying to figure out where to invest the kids' college money. I am slowly transitioning the money out of money market accounts and into mutual funds. I have also been thinking about how soon I could pay off the house. I know it is not a good financial choice, but it gives me a real sense of personal control and freedom. I suspect that if I pay attention to what I am doing, I can get it paid off in 4 years. I know that I want to do something very different in 3 or 4 years. The next year or two I will probably be about where I am.

I have had some fun this week and did some technical stuff at work - adding some user interface aspects (buttons and call-backs in a Visual C++ program). I do enjoy this and am pretty proud that I am able to at least stumble around and do some stuff.

March 1996

Sunday, March 10th

Spring break has started and I am coming up on the six month anniversary of Virginia's death. It seems, mostly, longer ago than six months. It continues to feel more and more unreal.

I have been thinking about what to do with Virginia's remains. This has been hard. I sort of like the idea of having even just her remains near me. But, at the same time, I feel I should move on with some plans for her remains. I suspect it isn't healthy (mostly for me?). I have known that I wanted to do something here and something in Iowa. At one point, long before she was sick, Virginia said (jokingly, I think) that she wanted to have her ashes spread over a mall in Hawaii. I have wanted to spread some of her ashes in some fun spot.

I called an aerial dispersal business (it is actually a previous neighbor). They were okay, but they didn't really seem very helpful. I talked to some acquaintances about other airplane options, but it requires a bunch of permits and special modifications. So, most pilots won't do it. In talking with the kids they commented that Virginia had always wanted to go on a balloon ride. I've tracked this down and booked one of the services for Thursday the 14th, which is the six month anniversary. Several of the services were very nice about this, but only one of them was available on Thursday and had foothills experience.

During all the looking and discussing, the kids reminded me that Virginia had asked to have her ashes spread in Saint Thomas in the U.S. Virgin Islands. This was after she was sick. This really surprised me and I would have thought I would have remembered her telling me this. Apparently, this was when the four of us were together. I was probably in denial at the time and didn't want to think about it. So, I have called the travel agent about shifting from Disney World to the Caribbean. I also talked to Art about the Iowa part and what, if anything they want to do. I view the balloon ride is for the kids and myself. Iowa is for Virginia's family there and the Caribbean is for Virginia. (I will do a third in each place.) Art will talk to everybody back there about this. I didn't want to bring it up with Lee in case it would upset her. It does strike me as appropriate that it would be in the Virgin Islands and in Des Moines on Virginia Place.

I have been looking for jobs in HP in northern Colorado over the last week or two given the GM's comments and my concern about the division's general health and morale. My preference is a job share, so I have talked to Tim Tillson (my current boss), Paul Beiser and Carol McKennan. They are all interested in at least exploring the possibility. I have heard back from a couple folks and there are at least some

jobs out there that are of interest. Tim and I went to Loveland to explore one of the options. Tim has turned out to be much more interested in this than I thought.

In spite of this, I am continuing to work pretty hard and make progress at work. I had a sub-team off-site at the house on Friday, March 1st. This went pretty differently and people have concerns about what we are doing. We got together about this on Monday, the fourth and talked with Tillson. He was receptive and we made some changes in our approach. I have also been working on the relationship with Microsoft.

I talk to Virginia from time to time. But I suspect that I am talking more to myself (in the sense of I use these as a way to work out what I am going through). I do wonder what comes after life - and hope that there is something - good.

I have been having at least some dreams. One of these was at CSU. It was a long and convoluted dream (in the sense of feeling like I was in a maze). Towards the end of this I ended up with a lady professor (no one that I recognized) and was kissing her. This bothered me a great deal. I have noticed that I have been looking at and thinking about other women. And it bothers me that I would be interested. I have thought about this some and I could imagine never being involved but I could also imagine dating again. But this is very painful to think about because I feel that I am being unfaithful - if not to Virginia, then at least to her memory.

Along these lines, at the end of the week, a secretary I know was having a bad day because of personal problems. I offered to help and listened to her. She is thinking about leaving her husband because he is a schmuck. But, she is concerned about being older (38) and alone. I tried to help her and I hope I did some good. I tried to get her think about this and if she loves him and what is it that she needs. But, I know how she feels about part of this - feeling older and being worried about being alone. She commented on the lack of available guys to date. I got annoyed at myself about some of my internal reactions - because at various points I was wondering if she was or might be interested in me. I didn't like myself for thinking these things. (I wonder if I am going to go through this diary when I am done with it and delete some of the things that I don't like - like this entry.)

I got the tax information ready and dropped off at the accountants. This was sort of hard thinking back about the year again. I got my eyes checked and everything is okay. They are actually a little better. I do need new glasses - just because the old ones are very scratched. I have had them for a long time (in excess of 4-5 years I think).

I have had a sense that the house is getting shoddy and worn down in the last few days. I don't think it is, when I sit and reflect. I suspect that part of it is that the house was always in constant change before - because of Virginia's efforts. The last major change was over two years now. I hope to get my office rearranged this coming week. I did re-arrange the stereo and CDs (and moved the records and

phonograph turntable downstairs). Unrelated to all this, I did switch cleaning services.

Ben and I went out for supper tonight (Sunday), late. Mandy was at Joe's. We talked about a bunch of stuff. During the conversation he said that he would give anything but Mandy and I to get Virginia back. I told him that I had thought about this as well and felt the same. I would give anything - including my life - to have her back. But I wouldn't give either of them. I told him that he and Mandy were the "physical embodiment of Virginia's and my love". He thought about this and really liked the idea. We talked about how this is what all children should be, but are not always.

I have also talked with Ben about his occasional outbursts of anger and rage. I have been worried about him and these emotions. This is something he had before Virginia got sick so I don't think that Virginia's illness and death are a trigger. In trying to talk with him about this, I think I have found that it is because he bottles up his emotions and then he flares up. I am trying to help him get stuff out soon. After a few days of this, I noticed that I do the exact same thing (on different topics) with the kids. So, I am trying to let them know early if something is eating at me. (How can I get him to change, if I can't deal with the same problem myself?)

I still miss Virginia so much. I sat down in the kitchen and closed my eyes and just thought about her face. And how she looked. And how it felt to touch her face. It made me smile and relaxed me to think about her.

Thursday, March 14th

Spring break has been going pretty well. We didn't do too much on Monday. I did take the kids out to see "The Bird Cage" with Robin Williams. This was fun. I did make some more investments for the kids college funds). In the next month or two, I should be done getting funds and will start adding additional funds to these existing accounts. I have also been buying a lot of CDs - several of them with songs that meant something in our lives together.

Mandy and I went up to ski on Tuesday and Wednesday. We had a really nice time. We drove up and skied a half-day on Tuesday at Loveland pass. The snow wasn't great, but it was sunny and we had a good time. We went shopping afterwards. Mandy talked me into a new winter coat (my old one was hideous). We watched "Get Shorty" on the TV in the hotel - and we both liked it. On Wednesday, after I finally got Mandy to wake up, we skied at Copper Mountain - until about 2PM. The morning was warm and we were not too bundled up. We finally got too cold and decided to come home. Ben had been with the Hoxmeier's and did fine. He had remembered to take out the garbage - which made me very proud.

It has been six months since Virginia died. I don't like the sound of this, but I don't have any better way to say it. I had arranged for a hot air balloon to take all three of

us up today so we could spread some of Virginia's ashes around the foothills. Unfortunately, the weather was too bad (snowing). Both Mandy and I had the same thought that this was Virginia's way of saying - no she didn't want a hot air balloon. We both dismissed this thought - mostly. I took the kids out to the Egg and I restaurant and Ben remembered that the last time he was there was with Virginia.

I cooked a turkey for dinner and it turned out pretty well. Ben and I watched a movie (while Mandy, Joe and Brittany talked downstairs). The movie was "Chances Are" about a man who dies and 20 years later comes back and starts remembering things. Ben said he would like for this to happen - with Virginia remembering her life - so we could have her back. An aspect of the movie was that the man's wife had not gotten involved with anyone (or had 'relations') for the 20-some years. Ben went through and was figuring how many years I would live and was telling me how long I would be going without being involved (he came up with around 60 more years). If I do ever get involved with anyone again, I am worried about how hard it could be on Ben.

Saturday, March 23rd

I finished up spring break last weekend by buying new shelves for my office (of course, they went on sale this weekend). I am happy with the layout of the office. Originally, I was going to move out my oak desk. But, unless I see something that will work really well, I will probably just replace the computer desk. This weekend, I moved a bunch of shelves around (from the upstairs to the main level). I think this all looks pretty good. I still miss and would like Virginia's opinion, but I am able to do this stuff without getting too sad.

I also ordered my new glasses last weekend. I got two sets - one like my old pair and one very different. Mandy said that the new pair looks very good on me. They are 'old-fashioned' green titanium frames. I think that they make me look older - but Mandy says they don't. Ben and I built an FM transmitter kit last weekend too. It turned on the first time. This went very well and I think we both had fun doing this.

Work has been okay. The more I think about it, I think it is time for me to find something new. I have been around too long and the character of the division is not a lot of fun. I had a blood test on Wednesday (at home) for the new HP life insurance (to add to the Allied policy I recently got). This went fine, except that my blood pressure was very high - 156 over 104. The nurse took several and it came down to 144 over 84, which is better but not great. I need to loose some more weight and watch what I eat better.

I am looking forward to next week at the conference. It should be interesting. I am also really looking forward to the kids coming out on Thursday and having a mini-vacation in San Francisco. I think that they both will have a lot of fun.

I don't like saying it this way, but I am getting sort-of used to being without Virginia. I still think about her a lot - every day. It still all feels really unreal. I still get flashes of memories some good, some of some painful memories from the last two years. I still struggle with the feelings that I should have been able to do more - I should have been able to something else. At times I think about if I will find someone else. I get upset at this because it feels like I am not being faithful to Virginia - or to Virginia's memory.

Sunday, March 31st

It has been a busy couple of weeks since spring break. At the end of spring break, I bought some shelves for my office and rearranged it. I think it looks pretty good, but I do miss Virginia's help and decorating touch. I learned from her, but I don't have her style. I have asked friends and relatives about their opinions, but generally, I will get their opinion or at least their view of Virginia's style - which is not the same thing. I know that the house will slowly become less 'Virginia' or the two of us. But as I noted a long time ago, keeping the house static and unchanging would not be Virginia's style either. I ended up moving a lot of furniture around in the process. I finally took out the old shelves out of Ben's old bedroom that I had built when Mandy was born. They were very dated.

Work has been okay. I am really getting to the point of being ready to move on to something else. I think that I have been at SEDS too long and I am not thrilled with the general character of the place anymore. I don't have a problem with the general manager, but my approach and values are different from his. I am also very worried about the amount of attrition that is going to be happening.

I also wrote up a paper for the 'Technical Women's Conference' which is coming up in May. I tried to capture some of what I have been doing. It felt strange because I think most mothers and single parents would have gotten further than where I am, but I gave it a shot. The current draft looks like:

Tim Mikkelsen
18 March 1996
Work/Life Balance

Balancing life and work as a single parent

Abstract: The point of this note is to share my experiences in trying to achieve work and life balance. The

fundamental approach for trying to achieve work/life balance is through prioritization and task and time management. The results are unclear since I am only a handful of months into this new balancing act.

I have recently gone through an experience that has made me a single parent of a sixth grade son and a 10th grade daughter. My children are my most important priority followed by work and other needs and goals.

Saying my children are my top priority is rather flip - the decomposition of the responsibility is very difficult. This involves not only financial and physical care aspects, but the more difficult and equally important emotional and personal aspects as well as educational support and teaching them values.

Previously, I was a functional manager. I felt I needed to step down from this position because of the time, stress and travel needs associated with a functional management position. I wanted to transition to a job of lead or managerial character because that's where most of my current skills and interest are. Because of local division organizational needs, I ended up taking more steps down than what I originally hoped would be possible, but it is working out okay. I really appreciate the company's flexibility that allows me to do this.

I also felt that, for at least the next few years, I should work part time. In thinking about this, I chose to work 3/4 time. There were several aspects driving this decision. First, it allows me to be able to see my kids off to school and to be home when they get home. It also would allow me to financially support my kids in the manner they deserved (and I wanted). The actual net effect (for me) is that my net take home income dropped slightly less than 25% (positive impact from taxes and some deductions; a negative impact from increased insurance costs). This is not a bad trade off. A key aspect of 3/4 time is that it is the lowest point at which the company provides, at some cost increment, full insurance including the Income Protection Plan (IPP).

In terms of my work processes, there are a handful of components and techniques that I try to use. These are not "rocket science" and they can or do apply in normal situations.

- monthly objectives
 - * checked weekly on Mondays
 - * prioritized with honest estimates of effort
 - * review of results and estimates
- keeping a calendar/to-do (actually on a 200LX)
 - * keep both work and family appointments
 - * keep both work and family to-do's
 - * liberal use of repeating to-do's, appointments
- keeping priorities in mind
 - * think in terms of key job requirements
 - * think in terms of monthly objectives
 - * remember the difference between urgent and important
- work at home one day per week
 - * for writing
 - * for tasks which require real thought
 - * to catch up
 - * (I'm trying to do this, but limited success)
- minimize meeting time whenever possible
 - * understand agenda
 - * make sure that attendance is important
 - * make sure I'll really add value
 - * go prepared and help ensure others are as well

In terms of trying to organize the family and household, the techniques are:

- the kids have responsibilities and chores
 - * homework
 - * being kids (have some fun, life is more than school & work)
 - * cleaning up their own rooms
 - * taking care of the pets
 - * setting or cleaning up the dinner table
 - * they also do their own laundry - much to their chagrin
- family calendar (in the kitchen)
 - * have kids write down their activities
 - * ask them if they have activities coming weekly

- * copy over to personal organizer (200LX)
- grocery and shopping list
 - * if the kids need something, they should write it down
 - * if the kids use the last of something, write it down
- monthly home tickler file
 - * preventive maintenance - doctor visits
 - * preventive maintenance - vehicles, home, etc.
 - * birthdays and family events
- picking times to do errands when things are least crowded
- using a maid service (every other week)

One other aspect of the home life is cooking and eating (one of my personal favorites). Even though it is possible and sometimes easier to eat out, we cook and eat at home most of the time. We only eat out or carry out one night during the week. I feel this is important so that we maintain good nutrition. I also think that it is important because it is time we spend together (setting the table, cooking, etc.). It is the time where I can talk to them about their day. I am also trying to get the kids to cook supper once a week with limited success.

Because of what I am trying to do, whenever the kids are off of school, I take time off. Also, when it is appropriate, I have been trying to get the kids to come along on a business trip or at the end of a trip.

In general, this all seems to be working. However, it is a bit early to tell. The kids have adapted pretty well to this and are very helpful - most of the time. I am very lucky that I have very good kids who are very helpful. I do still run late about half of the time and my normal day averages out to be 7 hours.

There is always something that needs to be done at home, so one big challenge is to not over-organize at home and have nothing but chores.

(At times, I'm sure the kids think I'm from the Gestapo.) In the over-all scheme of things, having fun with the kids is important - they will be gone soon enough. The other ongoing challenge is to find time for myself for either hobbies or fitness.

In the process of writing this up, I looked at the difference in take home salary and found that net pay went down 22%. It is still okay, but it is much more than I thought it would be.

I got new glasses - based on suggestions from Mandy. One pair is identical to my previous set (which was converted into sunglasses). The other is an updated variation of a very old-style pair of glasses. Mandy says that they look good. I am getting used to them and I think they look nice, but they still look pretty different to me. I also picked up the tax forms from Bill Cheedle - our CPA. Things came out about even - paying in an additional \$250 or so into federal and getting around \$100 back from the state. This is what I have been trying to do - to be about even. The thing about the taxes was that we had around \$8000 in medical expenses (mostly the chemotherapy). This would have been enough to trigger some medical deductions, except that I had to exercise and sell stock options to have enough money to quickly pay for it. This kick up my income considerably and this triggered things so that the medical stuff fell below the line. I found this very annoying. I notice that in writing about this I am using 'us' or 'we'. I still think of myself as being part of 'us'.

The last week of the month, I went out to San Francisco for a developer's conference. This went pretty well. Overall it was very useful for me. I had arranged for Ben and Mandy to come out on the 28th (his birthday). I was a little worried about this (while I waited in the airport - worried about all the bad things that could happen). But, they made it out just fine. Mandy is very mature, capable and responsible. We had a great time out in San Francisco over the weekend. We ate out at Planet Hollywood, the Hard Rock Cafe and Chef Chu's. We walked all over and got to Fisherman's Wharf, Pier 39 and China Town. We rode on the cable cars (and Ben got bumped by a taxi) a couple of times. We toured the Exploratorium and a submarine (that had just been in a movie that Ben and I saw). We drove down to Fry's and Weird Stuff in the south bay (electronics stuff for Ben and I) and also shopped in the Haight-Ashbury district (unusual clothes and accessories for Mandy). Mandy laughed the whole time over there and we all tried not to touch anything (or anybody). Mandy pointed out all the gay guys who were checking me out. We also drove over the Golden Gate bridge and back through to Lombard street (with the crooked street).

I did have some dreams with Virginia in them while I was out in California. I can't really remember them very well now, but one night seemed to have pretty good dreams. Another night's dreams had vampires. It was one of the dreams that seems to go on for a long time - struggling to get away - pretty strange. While I was out in California I bought a couple of books and the amount added up to \$55.55. Although it may be a little silly, it triggered me thinking about Virginia.

During the week, I started trying to write up some of my priorities and values. I came up with a model for what I'm trying to do that seemed to help me a bit. It breaks down into a sort of compass and map - for lack of a better metaphor. The

compass includes priorities and values. The map, which I'm still thinking about, includes milestones and experiences.

Dave Packard (one of the two co-founders of HP) died during the week. It would have been interesting to see the memorial service. Hewlett and Packard both achieved some pretty amazing accomplishments over the last 60 years. An acquaintance, Ken, also died this week - of kidney complications from chemotherapy for colon cancer. This was the Ken of 'Ken and Felicia' who Virginia had been at a dinner party with almost a year ago. We had also seen them at Dr. Fangman's at least once or twice.

It was a great weekend even though we are all really beat now. I am just glad that this coming week is a short week (with Good Friday off for all of us and me taking Thursday off with the kids).

April 1996

Sunday, April 7th

It has been a very busy week. The work week was just 3 days long and we have all been pretty tired. I took Thursday off with the kids - since it was a school 'in-service' day. Friday was Good Friday and we all had it off. On Thursday, the kids and I got up early and went out flying with a friend - Randy Bailey. This was a lot of fun and both the kids got some flying time. We flew over to Greeley and then back over our neighborhood. The only downside to the flight was that both Ben and I got nauseous when Randy did a 'roller-coaster' a couple times simulating zero-gravity (with a pen floating through the cabin).

On Friday, the kids and I flew to Des Moines to see Chris and Julie's new baby - Michael Anthony. This went well. We got to see quite a bit of Michael, who is very cute. We went out on Saturday and saw Angela in a horse-riding competition. She seemed to do very well. While I was there, I was able to track down the problem with the monitor. It turned out to be not a problem with the monitor itself, but with the cable. It was the one piece of equipment that I did not try out. (I didn't think it was necessary.) We had to get up at a terribly early hour to catch our flight (coupled with the change to day-light savings time). We got back into Fort Collins at 9:30AM on Sunday.

Another acquaintance, Marcel Meier, died this week. He had liver cancer and had survived around 16 months since diagnosis. I sent a card to his widow, telling her that if she needed someone who understood to talk to, to let me know. They had been together 20 years and had a 9 year-old. Unfortunately, I do understand. The service was Saturday, so I wasn't able to attend. Too many young people are dying.

I have been thinking about my job and what I want to do. I am still working through a lot of this, but I think I am going to take the job down in Loveland. I really have been in SESD too long. I don't think that I am doing myself or the division any good in my current position. It will be interesting to see if or how Jim Davis reacts to this.

I think I am doing okay these days. I do, at times, feel a little numb. The recent set of deaths is too bad, but I was not as bothered as I expected to be. Maybe I am getting fatalistic. I know that I don't want to die, but I am not terrified of death (which I used to be). It is part of the normal cycle of life. I know I miss Virginia and still think of her a lot. I had received a grief survey from CSU (through Hospice). As I started on it, I needed to stop and think about the early questions since my immediate reaction wasn't always the honest one. (One of my reactions to the survey was a desire to send in a note with comments on the survey style - having done some sociological research myself.)

I still have about equal pleasant and sad memories. Ben has been doing okay, but still gets very upset about school and chores. I think I mostly dealing okay with these, but it is hard sometimes. He has asked about death and dying a couple of times recently. He really wants Virginia to be alive or in heaven or something. (Of course, so do I.) Mandy seems to be doing fine and is just about done scaling down on the Prozac.

I am not looking forward to April 15th - the 24th anniversary of our first date. And coming up quickly after that is Virginia's birthday and mother's day. I miss her.

Monday, April 15th

Well, I have decided to quit SESD and move down to a job in Loveland HP. It actually feels pretty good to be moving on, although I am sad to be leaving the division. I was promoted to R&D section manager when the division was formed about nine years ago. This was the same time that we moved into this house. It is mind boggling how much has happened since then. I think it will be good for me to get into a new organization. I will be working for Bonnie Stahlin - someone I've know for a long time. The key reasons I decided to go were that I wanted to work 3/4 time but also be a manager or some other high value job. I had told my previous boss (Jim Davis) that I wanted part time management (or some other high-value job) several times. My impression is that he doesn't think that you can work part time and have a high-value job. I am taking my current boss, Tim Tillson, with me in a loose job-share arrangement. Jim Davis took the news without much reaction at all. It seemed that it really didn't matter. In talking with a bunch of folks, it really strikes me that there a bunch more people who will and others who might leave. It is getting to the point where the division could implode.

I had a meeting at school with Ben's teacher, school counselor and others about his recent assessment. He tested out as being very bright (combined IQ of 122). His scores went up drastically from April of 1993. He is very high on math concepts. He was slightly below grade level on calculation and reading according to the tests. All in all I was very happy with the results and tried to stress with Ben that he is, as I have said all along, a smart person. The people at the meeting were suggesting some special help or courses, but I am disinclined to do this. He has been doing better with less 'special help'. I worry that I might be doing him a disservice by not signing him up for some of this stuff. But, I have to make the best decisions I can for him. And a big step that I am trying to help Ben with is responsibility. With some of these things, it gives him an out. But, I still struggle with all of this. I am still very proud of him and know how smart and capable he is. Some of the things we are going through are very hard, emotionally, on both of us. But, I feel we have to go through some of these struggles in the short term for a better long term.

I am planning on having a big party on the 20th for my leaving SESD. I am inviting anybody who has ever worked at SESD. However, there are some I really don't want at the party and so they might get invited 'late'... It should be fun.

Ben and I went out to see the movie "Braveheart" on Saturday. Mandy had not wanted me to see this. There were some sad parts in it. One scene that got me a bit was when the Mel Gibson character kissed his dead wife goodbye. This brought back my memories of doing this.

Today is April 15th and the 24th anniversary of Virginia's and my first date. This is a hard month or so starting with this and then going into Virginia's birthday (May 3rd), when she collapsed with the tumor (May 13th) and Mother's day. I am feeling rather empty and drained, emotionally. At times I feel like the memories are slipping away. However, this morning as I woke up, it almost seemed like I smelled her or some sort of perfume. This was rather nice. I really would like to have and remember some dreams with Virginia in them. I did go out tonight and buy a single rose. Every year on the anniversary of our first date, I used to buy flowers - the same number of flowers as the number of years. I put the single rose in a vase and put it up in the bedroom by the urn with her remains. Life is indescribably lonely without Virginia. There are so many times, I want to talk with her about things. We were separate people, but we were also one hell of a great couple. I do sometimes still talk to her - either a picture or the urn or just looking around.

Saturday, April 27th

It has been very busy over the last couple of days. I've been more and more happy that I am moving on. I had a party on Saturday, the 20th to thank everybody who has worked in SESD over the years. The turnout was pretty good - lots of current folks and quite a few original SESD people. I think between 60 and 80 people showed up. I do feel a bit sadden moving on, but it really is time. I am rather worried about the people and the division - I think there is a chance it could implode (from additional people leaving). It was very strange cleaning out my desk and files - I've never really done that before. It does look like I'll be able to keep the car.

Keeping the car is good, since Mandy had her first car accident on Friday, the 19th. She was not at fault - but was hit as she was trying to turn left from Troutman onto College (by Target). The car was totaled - it would have cost more than the car's value to fix it. It was pretty bad getting a call from Joe that they were in an accident and that she was on her way to the hospital. I drove over to the accident scene and talked with the police and Joe and a witness. I then headed over to the hospital. It brought all sorts of memories of Virginia and the original tumor event back. Mandy was in shock a bit and was crying and worried and shaking when I finally got to the hospital. They gave her an EKG and a chest X-ray to make sure the accident hadn't hurt her. She was fine - but shaken up. It is ironic that her accident was very similar to Virginia's first accident. I am just happy that she is okay - I don't really care about

the car or any of the other stuff. I don't think I could stand it if anything happened to either of the kids. I am thrilled they were in Mandy's Ford Probe and not Joe's mom's VW Rabbit. Mandy would probably have been seriously injured.

I gave Ben his late birthday party on Saturday, the 20th, before my work party. I took Ben and too many of his friends out to have pizza and to watch James and the Giant Peach. (I have discovered that 8 5th-6th grade boys is about 2-3 boys too many.) I baked Ben a funky angel-food cake the night before (blue and white cake with green and yellow and white sticky frosting). I have been struggling with Ben and getting him to take responsibility and get things done. I have explained to him my expectations and I am working hard not to jump in and help him, but to let him learn that he really is responsible. It is very hard. I have a better appreciation of how hard it has been for Art when he jumps in and helps Cindy.

I was talking with Ben's special education teaching at school, Mrs. Saunders, about Ben and some classes for seventh grade. At the end of this, Mrs. Saunders told me that she was trying to finish things up before she goes in for a bone marrow transplant. She is not doing well, apparently, because of side effects of radiation or chemotherapy treatment that she received a few years ago for breast cancer. I know I regret not doing stuff earlier with Virginia, but it doesn't seem like there are any clear choices with this stuff yet. She asked if I would be willing to talk to her husband, if things go badly. I told her that I would. Apparently, I must look like I am doing okay.

The other different thing going on is that we have not been watching television since Wednesday. The idea is not to watch any until next Wednesday (May 1). So far, I sort of like this. I have been able to have more contact time with the kids. I have also been getting more done - I think.

Tuesday, April 30th

It is the end of another month without Virginia. I don't think there is any time that won't bring up memories of Virginia, but this time is especially hard. The slightly rainy weather reminds me of when Virginia and I first started dating. Tonight I went for a walk and I really wished that we were walking arm in arm. But I am walking alone and much faster than the leisurely strolls we used to take. Even though, with the kids, I am not alone, I do feel lonely.

I have started my new job down in Loveland. It is going okay, but it is hard to start someplace new. I think both Tim Tillson and I are struggling with the change in job and pace. I think I will do fine, but it is an adjustment. I really do need to figure out what I want to do (for me).

I have been having a rough time with Mandy and Ben. Mandy is stressed out by school and the accident and Ben and I (at least the interaction between the two of

us). She has felt that I have been snapping at her. I sat up with her tonight and tried to calm her down. I am glad school is almost over. We all need a break and to have some fun. Ben and I have been struggling with the homework and assignment stuff. He brought home poor midterm grades (3-4 F's). The problem is not turning in homework. In going through his binder, we found much of the homework. He is learning the material and is smart - he just can't get himself organized and turn in his work. I have, again, required him to keep a daily assignment notebook. And, until I see him acting responsibly, he will be doing this for quite a while. (I will expect him to do this in junior high school.)

Roger Ison called and asked me tonight about the symptoms Virginia had right before we found out she had a tumor. He has been having some recurring headaches. I told him about the change in sensation and taste and the seizures (that we didn't know were seizures). I encouraged him to get an MRI. It is cheap in the overall scheme of things. I would gladly pay for them weekly if it would have prevented what happened to us.

May 1996

Friday, May 3rd

Today is Virginia's birthday. She would have been 43 this year. Still a very young age. I find it very hard to believe that it was just two years around ago that Virginia, the kids and I all went down to Castle Rock and bought Virginia the Nordic Track for her birthday. She was tired a lot, but things seemed normal. As I was going through the disease process with Virginia, it seemed to take forever. So, it seems so much longer ago than two years. But it is very odd because at the same time, the 16 months we had after her collapse seems so short.

Joyce Turley, Cindy Hoxmeier and Susan Ison all went out for lunch today (remembering Virginia). Susan used to exchange birthday gifts with Virginia. I had rescued Cindy from a talkative neighbor on Wednesday night and she invited me along. I would liked to have gone, but I probably would have been intruding somewhat. I had already made arrangements to take out Laura and Janie - administrative assistants - from SESD for a late secretary's week lunch. Rick and Joyce also invited the kids and I out for dinner and a drive in movie. This was very nice, but I wanted to have dinner with just the three of us.

The kids and I went to Bisetti's (which Virginia really liked). I got a parking place directly in front of the restaurant. We had a nice time, but I did get a little quiet during the meal. I had ordered eggplant parmesan and was surprised at how big the meal was. On several occasions, Virginia and I had split an order. After dinner, Ben and I went to see the plays that Mandy was working as a stage crew member on. This was fun. After the play, we went out for some frozen yogurt.

Things are moving along okay, but I feel very flat. I wore my wedding band on my right hand today. Ben commented on this and asked me if I was going to start wearing it. He said he wanted me to so that I wouldn't get 'hit on'.

Sunday, May 12th

It has been an okay week. Last Saturday was a party at Joe Mueller's. He is one of the people in SWTC - my new organization in HP. The party was okay. The new organization has some issues, but they are not too tough and the people are all pretty good. During this last week at work I had my one-on-one discussions with my new team. One fellow is logged out and looking for a job. I think we could work this all out, but if he is really ready to go, it is generally best to let him go.

This last Thursday was pretty busy. I was hosting an internal job candidate so I had to get down to Loveland early. I ran back to Fort Collins for a play at Ben's school. He didn't have a big part, but I wanted to be there. I then ran over to the Fort Collins HP site for a meeting and then out to lunch. Paul Bame and Suzanne Pherigo took Tim Tillson and I out for a 'going-away' lunch of a sort. They are also interested in keeping contacts open (given SEDS's general health). That evening, I went out with Dennis and Sheila Vetter for pizza and a movie. We went to see ' Fargo '. This was done by a couple folks who make very quirky movies. It was very dark, quirky and gruesome. I don't know if I liked it, but it will leave an impression.

On Friday, I talked with Bonnie and made sure that I was on the right track on my job and she seemed happy with what I was doing. The SWTC organization took Mike Peper out for a going away lunch (he is who I replaced). I also exercised a bunch of stock options to be able to pay for my company car later in the year (since stock seemed to be pretty high). Saturday, Mandy and I went out and test drove Saturn's and a Taurus. That evening was Dan and Marty Osecky's house warming party. I picked up a plant (from Turley's and I) as a gift. The party was fine, but I did not have a great time. There were some folks there that I knew, but I felt very unattached and extraneous. I went home early, mostly because I needed to feed the kids.

Today is Mothers' Day. The kids and I got out and biked over to Boston Market for lunch and did some shopping on our way back. This was pretty nice. I think we have all been struggling with the day. Mandy and Ben didn't get to sleep very early Saturday night and Mandy seemed to have been crying this morning. I have been torn between keeping the day low-key or being more explicit about Mothers' Day. Ben would like to have done more, but Mandy preferred not doing much.

I did call Lee and wished her a good day. I had worked out with Vicky about a present. I also sent a card, a CD (mostly as a joke - "The Ballads of Madison County") and a note pad. The note pad is significant in that it was one that Virginia had purchased at CSU shortly before she got sick for Mothers' Day. (So it was sort of appropriate - this was a gift that Virginia had bought for Lee.) It is especially ironic in that the pad has the phrase "Motherhood is not for wimps" and a picture of a chicken on top of a pile of eggs with one broken egg on the side. I sort of worried about this bothering Lee. I didn't make any comment about it in the card. But it was something that Virginia bought for Lee.

Joyce called today to check to see how we were doing. Rick and Joyce have been a real constant source of support through all of this.

I have been having some dreams - some with Virginia. One was about us shopping at the mall. Everything seemed fine and normal. Then, part way through the dream, Virginia started falling down - the tumor was happening all over again. The early part was nice, but the rest of it really got to me. Mandy had a dream the same night. In hers, she worked at a clinic of some sort and got a call from Virginia (even though

she knew that Virginia was dead). She rushed somewhere and saw Virginia - as a star in the sky - flash up into the message "I love you with all my heart". Mandy generally seems to have nice dreams. I also had some strange one unrelated to Virginia that involved tanks and military vehicles - like we were at war. It was very strange.

I do really well sometimes. I feel, when I am doing good, sad but satisfied about how good our life was together. Then, I get the bouts of loneliness and sadness and flashes of memories of some of the hard parts of the last two years.

Monday, May 13th

Today is the 'anniversary' of when Virginia collapsed. I didn't really do anything special today. I went off to work and had a pretty good day. The kids did pretty well and didn't comment on the day. We went out for some errands after school and ate out at a fast food Italian restaurant. Ben was complaining about a headache after supper and I had him take some aspirin and lay down. He finally started to feel better and after some homework, we headed out

I think that I am thinking about myself too much and how Virginia's death has affected me. I do know I sort of wanted someone to call me - even without saying anything - just to call. I need to think about the kids reactions more. I know that I am probably doing okay, but I still worry about this.

Ben has been pretty angry and emotional recently. So, I have signed him up for a session with Rachael Moriarity (the therapist we previously saw - in January). He has been rather upset about this. He feels that this means he is crazy or needs help and so on. I have tried to make him less concerned, but it hasn't helped much. I won't force him to go for a long period, but I do want him to go at least a handful of times. In the discussion about this, he understands and admits that he likes to argue. I have tried to explain that this is okay, but that there are times that it is inappropriate. I am hoping that Rachael will help him understand his emotions and how to deal with them. He doesn't, yet, see how she can help.

I do feel very disconnected at times and wonder if it is time to move on. This is just a passing emotional response. "Sleepless in Seattle" was on last night (for Mothers' Day). Virginia really liked this movie. In the first few minutes of the movie, the lead character's wife dies and he goes through grieving and then moves to Seattle.

It seems very surrealistic that it has been two years.

I still struggle when talking about Virginia with how to talk about her. I don't like saying things like ".....my late wife.....", but I have. Most of the time, I just talk about her without any reference to her death - although most people know.

I find myself looking at a lot of the old pictures of Virginia and thinking about all of her attributes and character and personality. She was smart and pretty and funny. I love her and miss her.

Saturday, May 25th

Last weekend, I broke down and bought a PC. I have needed one for the configuration management book and have been looking. I finally found one that was reasonable (but I know that prices are going to continue to drop).

I took a trip to California - out Monday and back Wednesday. I left the kids home by themselves - to see how this would work. I didn't like leaving them, but I know that they are mostly ready for this. The first night they apparently got upset with each other, but Tuesday night went smoothly. It also felt strange on the trip because things felt quasi-normal - like Virginia should be at home and everything should be okay. I had a few 'grief spells' while I was out there - but mostly I was too busy.

On Thursday morning, I went to an HP-sponsored technical women's conference (this year it was in Fort Collins). I gave a paper on work life balance. The presentation seemed to go pretty well with a fair number of questions. Thursday afternoon was Ben's graduation. This went well and I thought it was pretty cute. After that, I got Ben's grades and I was not happy. Even with the assignment notebook, he got 2 D's, 2 C's and 2 B's. I was bothered by this because the problem was that he was not turning in assignments again. So, I am signing him up for a study skills class in seventh grade. I told him that I would do this and he obviously needs it. He is smart and capable about a lot of things, and I know he can do this - he just needs to be responsible and motivated. It really isn't the grades, it is that he is not learning how to get things turned in - and is getting worse. I was also pretty unhappy with his teacher over this. I had asked her to call me if there problems looming - and she didn't. When I asked her after the graduation ceremony if I could talk to her for a few minutes she responded with a clear indication that she would prefer not to. I did talk with her for a few minutes and found out about the missing assignments (although it was pretty obvious that she did not have a very clear recollection about what the specific problem was). I closed off the conversation as politely as I could without being rude, but I was not happy about her level of interest in talking about this. It clearly made her uncomfortable.

The place in HP that I work is going through a slight re-organization. I will be getting 3 more people and a new requisition (and one of the current team is leaving). I will end up with 8 people reporting to me. I can handle this, but I will not be able to do much deep technical stuff while I am working part time. I am planning on going to 80% (working 4 days a week) since I have not been very effective at getting out from work early. I struggle with this if I am easing back into full time - which I don't want to do.

On Friday, after work, Ben, Mandy and I had a session with Rachael. Ben went into this very upset about going. Mandy and I stayed in the session. The first part of the session was pretty rough and Ben was mostly quiet - shredding tissues in his lap. I told Rachael that Ben wasn't happy. He finally became a little more engaged. One thought that came up was that Ben should try poetry or drawing to express his anger. Ben did mention on Saturday that he thought it would help him - going to see Rachael.

Mandy did get accepted at the CSU Veterinary Hospital for a summer volunteer position. This is really neat. It is sort of strange because she was placed in, of all things, oncology. In thinking about this, if they did it consciously, it makes sense because of Mandy has been through. She will be able to be understanding having been through Virginia's illness. She will also not get as emotionally 'racked-up' about it - I think. The other weird thing is that the fellow doing the interviews was the police intern at Mandy's accident and recognized her name during the interview.

So far, the Memorial Day weekend has been pretty rainy and cold. We mostly have just puttered around today doing chores. We did go out to eat but came home to watch some movies we rented.

I have been noticing women recently - it has felt weird and wrong. I will always love and miss Virginia and I hate her being gone. It feels inside like I'm betraying Virginia when this happens. A lot of my emotions are really tangled up about this stuff - being lonely and sad and still in love with Virginia. An example of this is that in the paper, I normally look at the obituaries, the wedding announcements and the anniversary listings. It almost feels like these map - the obituaries are for the sadness, the wedding announcements are for the loneliness and the anniversaries are for my love for Virginia - that we should be there, celebrating some big number anniversary.

I did a have very strange dream recently. In it, a nuclear explosion occurred somewhere. I don't remember much, but I do remember that I just tried to deal with the implications of the situation. It almost seems like I was telling myself that I try to deal with just about any terrible situation and then just keep moving ahead. I think that the meaning of this is that I am proud that I can deal with all sorts of terrible things, but I guess that I am disappointed that I am not grieving more - more devastated. Or maybe the simpler explanation is that I equate Virginia's death with 'end of the world' sorts of events.

Friday, May 31st

Mandy went to her first volunteer session today (Friday) at the vet hospital. She is a volunteer nurse - she gives shots, walks animals, helps with equipment and so on. She seemed to really like it. I really hope she gets a lot out of it. She sounded like

she would want to continue doing this during the school year (of course after just the first day...). I told her that, because I want to encourage this and because of its value, I would pay her \$2 an hour in addition to her normal allowance. This is a much more useful thing for her long term than some part time job. I have actually been surprised that the kids haven't been bugging me for more allowance or money related stuff. The normal allowance doesn't seem like that much. Even the \$2 an hour seems sort of small in some sense.

Ben seems to like his cello. He is still getting very upset about things. He has not been drawing or writing about these things. I have also noticed that a lot of the things that get him are what I would consider pretty minor injustices but he really gets upset. This applies to Mandy, my perception of the two of them and also his friends. He will remember some of these things for a long time and they still bug him. I also wonder if there is a bit of a competitive streak buried in all of this as well. I still struggle with how to help him help himself out of this.

The poems that I had talked about (that Ben wrote) included this one:

Loneliness seems light gray.
Like the summer storms that make us think about life.
I see the rain hit my window and start to bead.
I hear the thunder rumble the ground.
I can smell the wet trees that are swaying in the wind.
I touch my cold window thinking of life.
I taste the drops of rain that get through my open window.

Another one was:

Death seems so black.
Like the pitch black nights that spring brings on.
I see the light coming from ahead.
I hear the voices of people that I once knew.
I smell a bitter sweet fragrance.
I touch my mother for we are together again.
I taste all but death.

There were several others and most of them are pretty sad. I think they are very, very good and I am very impressed by his ability to write and get emotions out. This frustrates me, though, because he won't talk about his emotions most of the time - but he still gets angry.

I have officially shifted over to 80% and will work 4 days out of five. So today (Friday) was a day off for me. I didn't do a lot, just some PC and yard puttering. It was nice and I think I'm going to like it. It certainly is working better being at work full days (since I was almost there anyway). An old acquaintance (and neighbor) sent me some email. She had read my paper in the Technical Women's Conference

proceedings and was wondering what was up - if I had gotten divorced. I responded that I would have preferred something else, but told her what had happened.

Ben and I went out to see a new movie (Dragonheart). At the movie, there was an ad for an upcoming movie. In the ad, a man asked a woman if she would love him until he died. She responded that she would love him until she died. It is an accurate description of how I feel and what I am continuing to go through.

June 1996

Sunday, June 16th

The first of the month, I went out with some friends from SESD (my previous division) and played paint-ball. I hadn't done this before and thought it would be interesting. It was very different - tromping around in the woods and shooting CO2 paint-ball guns at people. It isn't the sort of thing I would do all the time, but it was fun and I'll probably try it again. But I would want to do it with a crowd that I knew (mostly). I played this for a couple of hours and then needed to go take Ben to get his hair cut. I got hit a number of times (and it does hurt) - in the chest and on both arms.

My 25th high school class reunion was yesterday (the 15th). I had really struggled with whether or not to go. I didn't. I have regrets about not going, but I would not have had a great time if I went either. Also, it was the night before father's day. I didn't want to be gone and traveling back on father's day. At the last couple of these, most of the people I would like to see would not have been there anyway. As a matter of fact, Don McCurley and his son Dan were coming this way last Monday on vacation. They stopped in and spent Monday night. Don hadn't been sure if he would make it, but it worked out. I would liked to have spent some more time doing fun things in the area with them, but since I didn't know if they were coming for sure, I had to work (getting ready for a division review).

In general, work is going okay. I like working 4 days out of 5, but I'll have to see how it goes this fall with Ben back in school. Suzanne and I are starting to make progress on the book again. I am anxious to get it done by the end of the summer.

Ben and I have been at the therapist twice. This has been a real struggle and challenge. Ben does not want to be there, but he is upset and angry a lot of the time - it isn't getting any better (with summer here to relax). I have gotten a lot out of the sessions understanding Ben. His anger is really related to pain that he is feeling and he can't or won't talk about it or let it out. Rachael and I suggested that he draw or write a poem to allow the emotions out. During the time after a session where we talked about that, he wouldn't do it. It is becoming apparent that this is related to Virginia's death. He was talking about how much he hurts inside. It strikes me that his hurt is how he shows Virginia and the rest of us that he loved her and still does. So, the next time we suggested he write a letter to Virginia letting her know how he feels. He wouldn't do this so I suggested writing a letter to someone who could read it - Mandy, me, Art, Lee or his kids. He thought his kids was a good idea. It is ironic that I wrote how I felt when my dad died so my kids would know what went on (in 1973). He wouldn't write - so I had to force him (which I didn't like). In the discussion I had with him about this, it became apparent that not only is the pain

from Virginia's death, but also that he is still in the early stages of grief - he's stuck. So, on Rachael's suggestion, I'm taking him in for Prozac. I hope it helps. I also hope going back to Iowa and spreading some of Virginia's remains helps.

Mandy seems to be doing fine. She has overslept a couple of times. She has also gone through a tough time with one of her and Joe's friends (Greg) putting the full court press on her. (He wanted to be her boy friend.) It has been hard on Mandy. She seems to be doing really well at the vet school and really likes it. This seems to be working out really well. I am hoping to go see where she works on Friday.

Today was father's day. It was okay. We went down to the Renaissance Festival, south of Denver. It was a struggle getting going and Ben got upset a handful of times. Mandy got me a cake and a card. When we got back, Ben and I had a talk about rights, privileges and responsibilities. This went surprisingly well - but I still need to help him with his grieving.

It has been 9 months now since Virginia died. I didn't really remember on the actual day that it was the 9 month anniversary, but I remembered shortly thereafter. I do still think about her every day and there is still the sense of emptiness and loneliness without her. But I think that I am to the point where I am not sad and grieving big chunks of time (but it does still hit me).

I had a dream during the last week about Virginia. It was not a good one. I dreamt that things were sort of like they are now, but that Virginia was in a nursing home. I did not like this at all. I think that part of it was my reaction to being as sad - I have guilt about this. Maybe this guilt is my reaction to my internal emotions where Ben's reaction is the pain and emotional explosions. I think the other part of the dream may be my thinking that Virginia would not have wanted to be in a long down-ward spiral (i.e. things could have been worse). (But I could just be rationalizing.)

Sunday, June 30th

It has been a very busy couple of weeks. I really like the Fridays off from work. There was a big review at work on the 20th, with a lot of preparation before hand. This went really well. I had to go out to Spokane for an overnight trip right before the review - which was a real pain. But all in all, work is going pretty well. I am doing a pretty good job, I think, but I think I am balancing work and life better.

Ben got prescribed Prozac and started on the 21st. It has actually helped a great deal. I am surprised and happy that it does. It also bothers me that I didn't see Ben's depression as clearly as I should have. But he is doing much better. We only get upset at each other on the order of once a day and it doesn't last as long as previously. I have noticed that Ben has been actually bubbly. I have also noticed that I am not usually in bubbly moods.

Mandy, Ben and I have started a pottery class on Saturdays. This is really a lot of fun - 'throwing' pots on a pottery wheel. It is pretty challenging. I still worry about not having enough for Ben to do this summer. He has been doing cello lessons, watching a lot of TV and playing with his friends quite a bit. I guess that isn't too bad. I would like for him to read a little more. We did start on building his short-wave radio kit. I also have a bunch of stuff to give him for activities.

A good friend from MOT, Theresa Dempsey, was out in northern Colorado for work (she works at Boise HP) the week before last. She called and I invited her over for supper. It was very strange watching Ben's reaction - he mentioned Virginia in about every sentence for the first 10 minutes she was at the house. He finally settled down when she started talking about her child (about one and a half years old) and husband. Theresa and I went out for ice cream and talked. It was really nice talking to her. While we were out, Marilyn Heckendorn saw us and I said hello and sort of introduced them. Robert sent some email later and asked who it was.

Mandy continues to like the vet hospital work. She is really interested in getting a dog. She hasn't been pushing too much, but she does mention it a lot. She and Joe are getting along fine. I have been snapping at her and I don't know why. I suspect part of it is that she is growing up fast and is transitioning into her own life and it makes me feel lonely. I think that the other part of it is normal teenager behaviours that get on my nerves. (For example, she wants me to buy a car for her soon. I have asked her to call some people about their ads in the paper. I'm trying to get her to be involved and take some responsibility. But she won't do it. This does annoy me a bit.) She asked about getting another earring - a third hole. I am balking on this a bit. I know that I am just being overly conservative.

Suzanne and I are making progress on the book again. I think we have a pretty good shot at getting it down by the end of the summer. I sometimes think that leaving HP and trying to write as a general job direction sounds good. It, of course, makes sense to finish the first one and see what happens there before I get too fired up about this.

I still get real pangs of loss. They usually come during a song on the radio or when I go for a walk alone. The last day or two, I have been in some pretty bad moods - feeling lonely and sorry for myself. I also notice that I really have a hard time having fun and just letting go (i.e. getting into the spirit of things). I really need to have a vacation at some point - for myself.

July 1996

Sunday, July 14th

It has been ten months ago, today, that Virginia died. I still think about her every day - mostly about what we had and how I miss her. I think I am doing okay, but I know that I am missing so much without her. I do, at times, feel that she is slipping away from me and that I need to do more to remember her. I do intend to finish going through the pictures and to get some reprints of pictures made.

I am finishing up the arrangements for our (Mandy, Ben and my) trip to Aruba this Thanksgiving. We will be spreading some of Virginia's ashes there. We are going to be in Iowa the end of this week and we will be putting some of her ashes on a tree in Des Moines. I have been thinking about what I am going to say - and I want to say something. What I have so far is:

I knew when I first met Virginia, she was someone very special.
I knew when Virginia and I first dated, that I loved her.
I loved Virginia through all of our lives together.
And I know that I will always love her.

I can bear Virginia being gone somewhat because I know
that I was lucky enough to have been part of her life,
that we had a great life together filled with love,
and that our love lives on in Amanda and Ben.

Ben and have been talking about this - the ashes. He has been doing much better recently (on the Prozac). It has been 3 weeks since he started. He doesn't get as upset and snaps out of it faster. He is, of course, still a pre-teen boy struggling with all the normal changes (and all the additional ones that Virginia having died has caused). He commented that he did not cry at the memorial for Virginia when she died. He seems to be starting to move on - emotionally. He also commented how things were starting to feel normal. I think these are all good signs. We did have a real emotional discussion one night when I really was pushing him on why he was reacting badly to me (and to Mandy). He didn't like this discussion and was crying, but it seemed to help getting him to think about some things. I hope that I am doing a good job on the kids. It is very hard.

We are going back to Iowa. I took Ben to the airport today and he is flying back early to have some special time with everybody. I was a bit concerned about Ben having to change planes on his own, but he did just fine. Mandy and I drive back on Thursday. Then Ben and I will come back on the following Wednesday. Mandy will

fly back on the 30th. It already feels strange that Ben is not home. I know they both needed some time away from each other. I am looking forward to the trip. It should be fun.

We have had a pretty busy month so far. I had some friends over on the 4th of July. Ison's, Tim Tillson and his kids, the Turley's and Heckendorn's made it over. It went pretty well, but I still sort of expect Virginia to be around to be part of it all. Tillson's and Turley's stayed late and we set off fireworks in the driveway. Mandy was gone with her friends most of the day.

On Saturday, July 6th, Ben and I went for a ride in a B-17 that was at the Fort Collins airport. This was very expensive (\$300 each), but it was a lot of fun. I had thought about this last year (when the B-17 was here previously), but things didn't go well that weekend and we didn't do it. We both had a great time. I think that in 30 or 40 years, Ben will be able to say to his kids or his friends - "you know, I actually flew in a B-17 with my dad...". They are not going to be flying for much longer. Flying in the B-17 had a really neat sensation - very massive, almost lumbering, and powerful. We had to strap in for take off and landing, but then had the run of the plane. There was an opening in the top of the plane directly behind the radio room that you could stick your head out (into 160 mph air stream). The neatest seat was the bombardier's station in the front of the plane. It was in the Plexiglas bubble with a bird's eye view of the ground. We flew from downtown Fort Collins over Horsetooth reservoir down to Loveland and back up to Fort Collins. The pilots flew the plane rather low. It was really neat. Some of the passengers (there were 8 on our flight) got nauseous, but Ben and I were having too much fun.

I had a dream recently, but again not a pleasant one. In this, Virginia was dying. I suspect that I am dreaming a fair amount, but I don't remember them. I would like to remember more better dreams. However, I also suspect that some of them are troubling because some mornings, I wake up on the other side of the bed and the sheets are pretty messed up (I have been tossing and turning).

I talked with Mandy tonight - showing her what I was thinking about saying. This was sort of surprising to me. When I had talked with Ben about this earlier today (but I didn't have anything written down), it seemed that this made sense to him. When I showed the words to Mandy, she seemed sort of bothered. She said that she didn't understand why I would want to say anything. I think what is going on is that Ben needs some sort of ceremony so he can get some closure. He recognizes spreading the ashes on the tree as a ceremony. Mandy, I think, is beyond this and doesn't see the need. I tried talking with Mandy about her reaction, but she didn't seem to want to talk about it.

Later on, she commented about how I don't do things on the spur of the moment. This bothered me somewhat. I recognize this in myself. I think part of it is that I feel the need to plan ahead and make sure things are worked out - since I'm the only one to do these things. I think part of it is that I don't think I should have fun quite yet.

Another part is that this was a role that Virginia played - the driving force for fun and spontaneous things. I'm sort of surprised by my reaction. I also think that I do try and do things - and this is the other thing that caused a reaction in me - but Mandy is out doing things with Joe or when I start to set up something with Mandy and Ben she has made previous plans with Joe and I didn't know. I guess I need to re-read the 'dealing with teenagers' books again.

The kids and I have been out to several movies recently. Ben and I saw "ID 4" (Independence Day) - the summer block-buster science fiction action film. A bunch of friends from work also went to it. It was a lot of fun. Mandy, Ben and I also just recently went to see "Phenomenon". It looked like it was going to be an interesting fun movie with John Travolta, who, after what looked like a UFO or other event, started getting smart and acquiring magical powers. Half-way through the movie, the 'event' turns out to be a brain-tumor - an astrocytoma. We watched the rest of it, and it was a relatively good movie, but this did not thrill us.

Wednesday, July 24th

It's been a busy couple of weeks. Work has been pretty busy - getting things in reasonable shape before I take off for Iowa. I have been have some 'challenges' with one of the people that reports to me. He is not communicative and acts pretty immature. I wasn't thrilled leaving while some stuff with him was brewing, but vacation comes first! Mandy and I drove back to Iowa on the 18th - Ben had flown there on the 14th. Ben had been sounding pretty tired on the phone and said he was a little home sick. On the drive, it was pretty nice having Mandy do a big chunk of the driving. She drove a little over half of the time. It also helped that the speed limit was 75 miles per hour most of the trip.

We had a good time and kept pretty busy. On Friday, Art, Lee, Ben, Chris and I went out to the Ankeny Air Expo. This was mostly a 'radio-controlled model' air show with some very large remote controlled airplanes (up to 7-10 feet in wingspan). They also had a real B-25, PBV (Catalina) and a U.S. Marines Harrier jet. It was pretty neat. I bought Ben a kit airplane (without motor or radio stuff). It should be fun to build. It was pretty hot, but it was fun.

On Saturday, I went out with Lee and Ben and did some antique shopping. (I'm still looking for another table for my office.) While we were there, Lee and I found some locket/necklaces for Mandy, Ben and Lee to hold some of Virginia's remains. Later, we went out to the lake where Chris has his sail boat and played around there. This was fun, but the weather turned bad part way through the afternoon.

Sunday morning, we all went by the tree in Waterworks Park that Art and Lee had donated in Virginia's name. I sprinkled some of Virginia's ashes around the tree. This was pretty hard. It was very strange sprinkling Virginia's remains. Ben was surprised when some of the remains came out looking like pebbles. I explained to

him what the 'ashes' really were. I didn't go into any detail about the process. People got teary-eyed or cried a bit. I ended up not saying anything. I had thought about it, and I don't think Virginia would have wanted anything as formal or sad sounding as what I ended up with.

After this, oddly enough, we went out to the Adventure-land amusement park for the day. It wasn't very crowded and we had a good day. (It was hard being in that much heat and humidity.) On Monday, Mandy and I went up to Iowa State to look around. I showed her the various parts of the campus and some places that were special - where I first kissed Virginia, our dorm rooms (in Converse and Hutton houses in Friley), the place where the restaurant (an Original House of Pies) used to be where we sat after the first kiss and just looked into each others' eyes, where we lived in married student housing, and so on. It surprised me how many memories came back walking around. Some deep and very connected to our lives, but some were very odd in that they were minor events and they came rushing back. Appropriately, it started raining while we were there. (It was appropriate, because when Virginia and I started dating, it rained a lot.) Mandy seemed to like the place. It is still a very pretty campus. That night, we went out for my birthday dinner. This was nice, but it felt odd, without Virginia.

On the drive back, with just Ben since Mandy is staying until the 30th, we stopped off and visited a bunch of relatives. The first stop was in Harlan - to my folks graves. The grave site was okay, but not as nicely taken care of as previously. The next stop was a bit of surprise - Ben and I went to my great-aunt Lil's house, but she wasn't there. The neighbors (who are Lil's niece and nephew) came out and told us that she had been put in a nursing home just yesterday. Ben and I drove back to a small town called Elk Horn to visit her. This wasn't a lot of fun - she has been losing weight and is confused. She knew I was somebody she should know, but couldn't quite remember - she asked which one I was. I think she knew I was one of Tom and Tim, but I'm not sure. We just stayed for a while. I guess we should have stayed longer, but I found it very difficult because Lil is 'getting ready to die'. At least that was my understanding. Also she was having trouble remembering who Ben and I were. Ben did okay, but I didn't want this to get him (or me) depressed. It is too bad, but I have strange emotions about this. I am not overly sad - she lived a good and long life and is 93 years old. What makes me sad or depressed is the idea of sitting in a home and wasting away - sad for Lil or for me or for anybody. Next we went to visit Mildred, my mom's friend. She had cooked us lunch, even though we were a bit late. She is doing fine and we spent a fair amount of time there talking. In retrospect, it was strange, because I didn't even drive around Missouri Valley - there really isn't much left there for me. Next we stopped off at my Uncle Harvey's house. We had a long talk and he showed us pictures of their family reunion. It was hard to recognize some of my cousins - it has been so long since I have seen them. We had supper and Sheryl (one of Harvey's kids (kids! - I think she turned 50 recently)) and her youngest son came over for supper. This was nice. Ben was getting a little restless, but he did fine. We headed out around 7PM, but I made good time and we got into Fort Collins around 2AM Wednesday morning.

I haven't had any dreams that I can remember, but I know I have had some. But I think they were pretty generic. I remember nothing in them about Virginia. I still do miss her so much. It is going to be strange when I have spread the last of her ashes. I don't know how much this is going to affect me. (Art and Lee and Mandy, Ben and I are going to Aruba over Thanksgiving. This is where I will spread another portion of Virginia's remains. I am planning on spreading the last of her remains in the mountains - at land I have yet to find or buy.)

Wednesday, July 31st

Well, another month has passed. Things are going reasonably well. Ben and I had a pretty good week together. We went down to Denver and then up to the mountains on Thursday. We went to an electronics store and a laser disc store. We made it up to the mountains in time to get on one ride at an alpine slide. We went shopping at the outlet mall in Dillon and we both got some shoes. Ben didn't want to spend the night so we came back (we had packed for spending the night and brought our bikes along). On the way back we ate at BeauJo's in Idaho Springs. All in all, it was a good day. We rode our bikes to breakfast the next day - which was a lot of fun. I also checked out a car for Mandy. It turned out to be a friend - Joe Gersch - who is going to France on an HP foreign service job. Ben and I went out to see a movie - "The Frighteners" - which was good.

On Saturday, I called up Joe and bought the car - a maroon Saturn. Saturday was my birthday. I fixed myself an angel-food cake. Ben and I did some shopping. Later in the afternoon, Cindy came over to help pick up the car. After this Cindy, Ben and I went out to the Rio Grande for supper. This was fine, but it felt odd since the last time I was at the Rio was for the dinner after Virginia's memorial service. We came back and watched one of the laser discs - "Jumanji". I really enjoyed being off from work a long chunk of time. I think that this was one of my longest vacations. I wasn't really ready to go back.

Ben and I went down to get Mandy on Tuesday. She was really ready to come home and both she and Ben said they missed each other. However, they were upset at each other for something within an hour. Mandy likes her car, but still needs to practice with the stick shift. I haven't driven with her yet. Art and Joe both have been showing her how a stick shift works.

I am doing okay. I went out to lunch with Rick today and we had a good conversation. I asked how I was doing (again) since I don't always feel very grounded. Virginia and I provided feedback to each other and I often feel this way without her. Things still often feel very unreal, but I recognize that this is just the sense I have of things.

August 1996

Wednesday, August 14th

It has now been 11 months, today, since Virginia died. It seems so strange writing that phrase. It still doesn't feel real some of the time. I at times get a sense that Virginia is just away and will be returning shortly. In some philosophical sense that may be true, but I know that am without her and will have to accept the memories that keep her in my mind. I still miss her so much, but I am doing okay. I still think about her every day.

Early in the month, I took Ben and Mandy and Joe up to the HP picnic. This was okay. I knew a fair number of people, but not lots. Rick and Joyce were there (because he works in Loveland). A lady who used to be a neighbor came up and said hello and gave her condolences about Virginia. Her son and Ben had played some together when they lived in the neighborhood and she asked Ben how Virginia was doing.

I have been trying to work on the configuration management book, but it has been slow going. Suzanne and I got together and made some progress. However, the Fort Collins HP site people turned off my access. Apparently, the personal data base changes came through and indicated that I had terminated. This prevented door and computer access (as well as deleting my old phone number). This is very annoying because I had specifically arranged for this all to stay enabled. So, I'm still in the process of getting it re-enabled. The annoying thing about this is that they only had to ask before they shut me off.

I've been trying to get the kids ready for school - buying supplies and clothes. I've been making progress but I'm sure that I am forgetting stuff. I worry that the kids aren't getting the attention and things that they need and will get into school unprepared.

We went up to the mountains last weekend and stayed at Butch and Cindy's condo in Frisco. We headed up on Friday. We had a good time. Friday we went on the alpine slide and had Chinese for supper which was surprisingly good. Saturday, we slept late and swam and went shopping. After shopping we went for a bike ride which was nice. I was a little worried about the kids because they both didn't feel great part of the time. I think it was the activity and the altitude. We ate in Keystone and went back and watched a movie in the condo. I got a chance on Saturday to drive out and see what some of the areas with land for sale looked like. I was hoping to do more on Sunday, but the kids were getting a little grumpy, so we just headed back home.

I've been struggling with Ben and his reactions and attitude. A lot of it is just normal adolescence, but it still gets to me. He has lost a library book and I made him pay for it. He had also gotten upset when someone called him a liar, and he broke a neighbor's fence (Skip and Sylvia's). So he got grounded (from friends) for a week. He also had to go and apologize and paint the new board. I was glad he told me. Then, the day he got off of being grounded, he started a small fire in the garage. He said that it was an accident, but I doubt his story. He said that he had accidentally spilled some gasoline and then shortly after accidentally dropped a box of matches which accidentally ignited. There is a small chance it could have been, but it is so incredibly unlikely. However, I pushed him and he still said it was an accident. He finally did say that he had earlier lit a match. (But he said that was earlier than the fire.) He had been told not to play with matches before, so he is now grounded for that. He can't play with friends for a week or watch TV at all for two weeks or watch TV in his room for three weeks.

I have noticed that Ben asks me how my day was - even if he has been with me. After reading a book from Dennis Vetter on 'Time-Shifting', it finally struck me that in asking me that, Ben was probably trying to reach out and connect. It might be sort of like his way of saying 'I love you'.

Mandy has been having a pain in her side. I took her to Dr. Merkel to see if he could find out what it is. Most of the stuff he thought of was along the lines of what I had thought of (bladder or kidney infection, gynecological, some other infection). There wasn't anything definite and I am taking her back tomorrow. I talked with Lee and she thinks it is bladder or kidney. Mandy went to a CSU vet hospital volunteer banquet and got an award for working enough hours. She still seems to like it. She likes her car and is doing well with the stick shift (and I did get to ride with her). She had the car for all of a week or so and she and Ben wanted to go for a bike ride/roller-blading. Ben tried to put his bike in the Saturn (because she doesn't like driving the mini-van). He scratched the rear bumper. I saw this later on and asked about it. They then told me what happened. This bothered me - not the scratch, but that they didn't tell me. Afterwards, Ben said that Mandy told him not to tell me.

I have had some more dreams that I remember. One dream was that Virginia and I were shopping for houses. In this dream, Virginia had the brain tumor. I had another dream, but I can't remember what it was about now. In the last of the dreams, I was asking someone out on a date. This was a pretty strange dream, obviously. I guess that I'm trying to tell myself that I am about ready to 'move on'. I have been struggling with this sense. But I do get very lonely without Virginia. It is surprisingly hard to write these feelings down. It feels like I am being untrue to Virginia. It also seems that if I don't write them down or say them, even if I do feel them, they won't be true - I'm trying to hide or deny them. When I had lunch with Rick recently, we talked about this briefly and he asked what Virginia would want for me. I know, given all the times she asked me (before she was sick) what I would do if she died, that this was something that she had thought about. A lot of the

discussion we had was semi-humorous sparring, but I guess she would want me to be happy. But, even though I am thinking about his, I am still not ready for it.

Saturday, August 31st

It has been incredibly busy these last couple of weeks. The good news is that Mandy seems to be getting better, but it has been a concern. I took Mandy back in on the next Thursday (the 15th). Merkel did not have any new information and was heading towards 'irritable bowel syndrome'. This does happen, but Mandy's symptoms were not consistent with this. So, I wasn't willing to accept this. He agreed that an ultrasound made sense. We scheduled it for the following Wednesday (the 21st). (In some ways, I felt like a bad parent - because Wednesday was more convenient than Monday.) We went in for the ultrasound and the results were negative - there were no cysts or other unusual things going on. It was annoying because I had to request, at the hospital, that they do a lower abdominal scan (uterus and ovaries) in addition to the upper abdominal scan. Merkel had intended for both, but there had been some miscommunication. When we got back with him, he did a vaginal examination (which hurt Mandy because she is so young and was tense). Everything looks fine. (He didn't think of taking a sample to test for infection before he did the exam.) So, he gave us antibiotics - on the assumption that it is a low-grade infection in the reproductive area. If this turns out not to help, we will go back to specialists (urinary and gynecological). However, she has said in the last couple of days that she is feeling a little better. I am hopeful that this will take care of it.

I got out with some friends for a bad movie night. I had them over to the house for pizza and then we watched "Escape from New York" and then went out and watched "Escape for LA". It was almost the same movie - appropriate bad movie faire.

Work has been okay. I have been very busy - trying to move ahead on some projects and get interviewing done. I am not happy with what I am doing, but my expectations are still set for a full work week - not 4 days out of 5. I have also been spending some time on some 'challenging' engineers. It has also been a challenge with the time I have taken off to get the kids ready for school. I also had a project initiation going on - and ranking (relative performance ranking of the engineers).

I went through the process of getting some of Virginia's credit card accounts canceled. I also got the death filed at the county clerk's and voter registration offices. This is what it took to get Virginia off the roles and to transfer the house title. I did not like this, but it was about time to do this. These were the last of the things that I had written down in September of 1995 on my 'to-do' list after Virginia died.

Ben and I went to his back to school night and got his locker and schedule on the 22nd. We met all of his teachers. He was and is very excited about school, which makes me very happy. He started school and really likes it. He is in a special

resources class - primarily for his problems getting assignments turned in. I am hopeful that this will help and he can get out of the class. He and I rode bicycles to school on Friday. At the end of the day, I went back over to ride back with him. While I was there, I talked for a bit with two of his teachers. They both said that he seems to be doing fine. I'm trying to keep in touch with what is going on.

He did get grounded again for a couple of days. He went over to Charlie's house when he didn't have the things done that he was supposed to get done. And, he didn't leave a message - since Mandy and I were out. I think that he is finally getting the idea that I am serious about this stuff. I surely hope he is getting the idea. It has been pretty interesting watching Ben get excited about school. One aspect is getting back with all his friends. Another is that he has been bored. But a really cute aspect is that he has a serious crush on a girl - Carly. He got very excited about the back to school night when I reminded him that Carly would probably be there.

I got both of the kids ready for school pretty well. I took off the first day of school (the 26th) off to relax a little. I needed this. I still had a bunch of chores to do and finally got done around noon. I was so tired, that I actually took a sort of a nap. I have what are, basically, maternal instincts. There are a lot of times that I would really love to quit HP and become a full-time parent. It would be so nice to be able to take care of both Mandy and Ben the way that I want to take care of them. I do realize that in a lot of ways this would not be the best thing for them or for me, but it does have a lot of attraction.

My Uncle Harvey had a heart attack recently and I have been talking with him, his wife and some of his kids. He is as stubborn as my mom and my Aunt Ella and he had been doing too much with some heart problems (lifting things). In talking with my cousins, it sounds like things have gotten very strained between them and Harvey. I tried to listen and to help. Mostly, I just encouraged them to love him and not let any of this get in the way of whatever time they have together - whether it is short or long. During the discussions with my cousins, it sounded like Harvey had changed some with his kids. Given what they said about the 4th of July get-together, I think it was best that I wasn't there. I hope that they can all get to a good place with each other and not waste their time together. Harvey did get home just a few days ago. I sent him a printer in hopes that it will be something new for him to play with for a while.

I miss Virginia a lot. I still think about her every day. The kids seem to be doing okay. I mostly do okay. I do sometimes get very sad about all this. I still want to come in the door and tell her about things that happen to me.

September 1996

Saturday, September 14th

It has now been a year since Virginia died. This feels so incredibly strange and, I guess the word is, wrong. In some ways this is a big milestone. I have been able to keep things together for a year on my own. Things are certainly not perfect, but we are doing okay. Things are busy between home and work. I still don't feel like I have much time to relax.

This labor day weekend, the kids and I went up to Estes Park and stayed at the company park - Hermit Park. Mandy brought Joe and Ben brought Charlie. It was pretty fun. We only stayed one night. After breakfast, we went into Estes Park and shopped around and had lunch.

I had to head out on a short trip to California right after Labor Day. Ben stayed with Hoxmeier's and Mandy stayed home. The trip was pretty good, but I wasn't thrilled about it because I want to be around for Ben as he transitions into 7th grade. He and Mandy got into arguments a couple times while I was gone. Although this was fairly normal, it really got to Mandy because she has gotten very stressed by his reaction to her. Mandy asked Joyce to come down to talk with her about this.

I was hoping to get up to the Scottish Highlands Festival in Estes during the next weekend. Unfortunately, Mandy didn't really feel she had the time to go. So, we just puttered around the house. Mandy's side is better, but it is still bothering her. I will probably be taking her back in to see a specialist (urinary or gynecological) in the next week or so. She has also been having some pain from her wisdom teeth. I will probably do that pretty soon as well. I have noticed that Mandy is acting as a parent towards Ben. Unfortunately, I do end up asking or needing her to act in that role from time to time. But, I think it is one of the big problems - he doesn't see that she has or should have that role, she thinks she does and he doesn't respond. I sat them both down and tried to talk about how much they get after each other. It didn't do much good. Another part of all this is that they are siblings and I think there is a 'base-line' of friction that just naturally occurs. Unfortunately, Ben had to call me this week to inform me that he was behind on assignments. He got some light grounding and got most of it done that night. If I can not get him organized and doing better, I will end up going to a reduced daily schedule (as opposed to the one day a week).

I have been very busy at work, but I think I am doing well keeping things in balance. Suzanne and I have been making good progress and we are getting close to a full first draft of the book.

I still miss Virginia a lot. This last week has been pretty hard and strange given that we are coming up on the anniversary of Virginia's death. The kids have been acting a little stressed or strange. I know I have been trying to maintain an even keel, but I feel the effects. I cried a little one evening while I was listening to a song from the play "Chess". One of the lines goes something like "Wasn't it good. Wasn't it fine. Isn't it madness, he can't be mine." This really caught me thinking about how good Virginia and I had it. But, it is gone - except for the memories. I also struggle with the memories because the tough ones (while she was sick) are the ones that seem to come unbidden while it takes effort to remember all the fun times. I know it is just perception, but at times I feel like I am unable to remember a lot of the fun that we had. It feels like I am forgetting and that is one thing I do not want to do

This last Friday was another Friday 13th. So this was a double whammy week. On Friday, it had been 2 years and 4 months since Virginia collapsed - and this entire chaotic situation started. I actually thought about doing something different, but I ended up making pizza for supper. This felt strange because we had pizza the night Virginia collapsed. Ben and I went out and rented movies. I watched "Bell, Book and Candle" and Ben watched "Wiz Kid".

On Saturday, I got up and did a bunch of errands, fixed some muffins and worked on the book some. Ben slept very late (around 12:30PM). I thought I would cut him some slack. We went out to the Rio Grande restaurant and had supper with the Ison's, Hoxmeier's, Turley's and Cindy Heckle. Joyce brought some flowers and put them up by the urn. Ben did not, at first, want to go. But it turned out well and it was nice - getting together to remember Virginia. I gave a short toast to Virginia. Afterwards we went to an ice cream shop and Cindy Heckle did a toast to me, which was very nice. We all came back home and sat around and talked. It was a nice night.

I miss Virginia so much, but it is very strange. At times it feels so much like a bad dream. I would like so much to wake up and have her with me. But I know that this is the reality of the situation that the kids and I are in. Even though I know a lot of people care and will remember Virginia, it has felt very much like it is just Mandy, Ben and I.

When I get done with this diary entry, I will be going out to put some of Virginia's remains on a rose bush in the front yard. I would like to do something more, but I don't know what it is.

Epilogue

I did put some of Virginia's ashes on the rose bush. I also walked around the neighborhood with her remains (in the urn). This should sort of strange, but I miss taking walks and talking with Virginia and I feel that it is one of my last chances (at least in this life). I also finally decided what I want to do with the rest of her remains. Driving home recently, I saw the big open area - Kathy Fromme Prairie. This seems like a clear choice. Virginia and Kathy were good friends and the open area is a place that will be public and not developed (with housing). I am surprised that I didn't think about it before. So, we have already put some in Des Moines. We will put some in Aruba. And sometime - maybe this fall or maybe on Virginia's next birthday - the kids and I will put the rest here in Fort Collins. I will probably keep some in a pendant (similar to what Mandy and Ben have).

The kids and I are still trying to work through all of this. It is real and won't change (even if we want it to). But we all still are dealing with and will be dealing with our sadness and grieving. Mandy and Ben and I are doing pretty well. We have our rough spots, but I am very proud of both of them.

One thing that I worry about and work against is forgetting parts of Virginia's and my life together. I won't forget Virginia, but I don't want to forget any of our life together. It is all very important to me and every little detail matters. I still have a lot more to do with all of the pictures (sorting through them and labeling them).

For quite some time now, I had been trying to decide how and when to close off this diary. I had also been struggling with whether or not to read and whether or not to make any changes. I have, as I write this, gone through and read the diary. I did this is as much for a sense of closure as any other reason.

I really struggled with whether I should leave every thing I wrote in the diary because I worried about what I wrote when I got upset with the kids or with various relatives. I didn't want to hurt anyone, especially Mandy and Ben. I have decide to leave the thing the way it is - with minor spelling changes. It captures how I felt and what I was going through at the time. I am somewhat worried that it may bother Mandy and Ben to read it - just to be reminded of this dark time and also some of my reactions. I hope they understand that these were the things I was struggling with and that I was and am very proud of them and how they have done with all this. I expected that the diary would capture much of what I had felt. I also expected it to show the stresses in various ways. I thought that it would mirror the various phases of grieving that I went through (both for the original tumor and after Virginia died). Given some of the stresses, I thought that I would end up repeating myself a lot.

I was surprised after I read it for a variety of reasons. It did, indeed, capture aspects of what I went through, but in little pieces and snippets - especially at the start. I

was also surprised at how clearly I was driven for everything to get back to 'normal' for all of us. I guess at some level didn't appreciate how much of a life changing event all of this was going to be. My trying to get back to work was part of this. I also think it was a type of denial that I was going through. I can clearly see that much of the time I was upset at people. I don't know how much this showed through and I am not proud of this. Much of the time the stress was directed at Ben and Mandy.

I can also see how frantic I was. I was pushing too hard on getting things done - for myself, for the kids and for Virginia. I do wonder how things would have gone if I hadn't been so frantic. In thinking about this, I am surprised at the lack of small details - I thought that I had put down all sorts of things. I recognize that I was using work and the promotion as a kind of escape from the situation. It wasn't really apparent to me at the time. This is clearly one thing that I wish I could have done differently. I don't think I should have accepted the promotion. It really does seem that I have a general trait of getting in a track and following it through to the finish - for good and bad.

The mental shift from trying to hold on to some chance or hope of recovery over to getting ready for the end seems, in retrospect, to have happened very quickly. In re-reading this, I had forgotten that Virginia died very soon after Ben got home from his school trip to the mountains - like she was making sure that he wasn't gone.

I also noticed in reading this that over the last 6-7 months I was very compelled to 'move on' and get back to 'normal'. I suspect that I was not giving myself the space and time to really be sad and work through the grief. And I am just now starting to have time to sit and really reflect.

At times I get wishful and think that by finishing this up and coming to closure that everything thing will just disappear and things will go back to the way they were. I know that Virginia coming back can't happen, but I still feel those dreams and fantasies. Even though I would change a lot of things if I had a chance, I would not give up the time Virginia and I had together. Like I said in the note I wrote last October... She was my love, a great mother, a great friend and a caring, intelligent, wonderful and funny person. She should have had more time, but she still had a great life - if only in 42 years. She will leave an immense emptiness in my life but not in my heart...

I will always love Virginia.

Tim Mikkelsen
October 19th,1996