1990

Wish You Were Here

Maryann Connolly

St. John Fisher College

How has open access to Fisher Digital Publications benefited you?

Follow this and additional works at: http://fisherpub.sjfc.edu/angle

Part of the Creative Writing Commons

Recommended Citation

Available at: http://fisherpub.sjfc.edu/angle/vol1990/iss1/29
Wish You Were Here

Abstract
In lieu of an abstract, below is the essay's first paragraph.

"Dear Family:

I wish you were here.

I wish you were here to walk the dusty roads with me, and visit the shacks along the way."

Cover Page Footnote
Appeared in the issue: 1990.
Dear Family:
I wish you were here.
I wish you were here to walk the dusty roads with me, and
visit the shacks along the way.

From the road, we recognize the stench of garbage, and as we
reach the foot of the hollow, see it scattered throughout the
area. Several small children, diseveled and filthy, play in the
leftovers. With a basin of rain water, a barefoot, weary mother,
aged beyond her years, washes clothes.

I wish you were here to see the nine children who live in
three rooms. They shy away as I sit on their porch. Only one
tries to smile – an older girl wearing a checkered dress at least
three sizes too large, and held together with rusty safety pins.

Sitting beside me, garbed only in a long T-shirt, a 4-year-
old boy urinates on the steps. A blond 2-year-old plays with a
hammer in the corner of the porch. Covering his leg is an open
wound, obviously days old as the blood is dry and hardened, and
the flies flock to the infected area.

I wish you were here to spend an afternoon trying to get an
11-year-old to a doctor. Bobby has cut his foot deeply. He is
rapidly losing blood, and needs several stitches. The only doctor
in town refuses to look at the injury because the patient has no
medical card. I wish you could see the love and concern of the
neighbors in their efforts to think of a family who has a phone,
or a car to take the child to the hospital (30 miles away). But,
most of all, I wish you were here to see the tortured look on the
mother’s face as she says quietly, "My son cannot have stitches
until next week." She looks at the blood-soaked towel and,
holding back her tears, tells us she has no money.

I wish you were here to take over one period of recreation
to teach these children how to play, realizing you must teach
them again tomorrow.

Children who have never played an organized game before.
Children who don’t know how to follow rules, or let another
have their way.
Children who quit the game before they dare lose.

Children who are rough, bitter and resentful.
Girls who are tougher than most boys we know, who must be to
survive in this atmosphere.

I wish you were here so that you could return home with some
concept of what life in Appalachia is like. To return with a new
awareness, a new encounter, and so much more – a new sense of
gratitude.

To return to thank God every day - or several times a day -
for the blessings he has given our family. To thank Him because
we have not had to grow up in an atmosphere such as this –
one of poverty, filth and ignorance.

I hope before you put this letter away, you can take one
moment from your busy lives, and thank God that we have had
parents who cared so much for us that they taught us, mostly
through example, how to love, how to give, how to care for one
another. And pray - yes, pray hard - that we may never take these
blessings for granted.

Yes, dear family, for a few weeks, or a few days - O Lord,
just for a few short hours - I wish you were here!

Love,
Maryann