

April 3, 2002

My dearest Jill:

Today is your twenty-first birthday. The age of emancipation. Twenty-one marks the true commencement of adulthood and the dawn of womanhood for a young female. Twenty-one is generally an age when the future stands before us as a pure canvas waiting to be painted with the vibrant colors of one's life experiences. Usually it all lies ahead.

But, my darling Jill, your birthday holds a very different meaning for me. These twenty-one years, since your birth, have been a lifetime unto themselves. The years since you were born have unfolded into a journey of remarkable growth, self-discovery, passionate learning and love. There has been exceptional achievement and true metamorphosis.

Your twenty-first birthday brings me full circle to an end of a story rather than to the cusp of a new one. This is my story, Jill. Your birth and life helped create my own. I am firmly convinced that giving birth to you, caring for you, and loving you the way I did, cast me on a new path. It was through knowing you that life was breathed into my own existence. Your birth was the catalyst that spawned my own development and independence.

The journals and letters I have kept over the past twenty-one years have chronicled lessons of intimacy, career exploration, transformation, empowerment and love ... all difficult assignments set before an already grown woman to embrace and explore. The journey has been recorded as if I could pass it back to you, my daughter, to teach you the normal lessons of life and of growing up.

Whenever I have told your story it has become inextricably linked with mine. I feel a deep sense of gratitude each time I speak of the unconditional love and memories of you. The quicksand of time has pulled most of the pain and sadness far from my conscious. What remains, instead, is the sense of joy that your life has had a true purpose -- a significance more powerful than most. Jill, I am so grateful for the gift of you.

Love,
Mom