

Larry Moore's Birth and Mickey's Illness

Glen Newton, April 25, 2020

Lawrence Victor Moore was born September 15, 1933, to Victor and Margaret Crammond Moore and died September 4, 1995, a few days before his 62nd birthday. His mother, Mom's younger sister, outlived him by seven years, living from November 6, 1909, to October 11, 2002. Larry was her only child.

On March 8, 1933, Mom (Dorothy Vernon Crammond Newton) and Dad's (Roy Newton) first child, Roy Jr., was stillborn. Their next child was James Covington Newton, born January 20, 1935, so Mom had no children of her own to care for when Larry was born. When Larry was two weeks old, Mom visited Mickey and Vic to help take care of Larry.

The text below is from a carbon copy of a letter Mom wrote, probably in January 1934. The carbon doesn't say to whom it was sent. A corner of the second page is missing, indicated by "... " below. Where I could guess the missing text, I indicated so with brackets. I've also inserted a few explanations within brackets.

Mom's letter:

Now that Mickey is out of danger and seemingly is recovering nicely I can write about her illness and not mind it as I would have a few weeks ago.

I spent a month visiting her and Vic in Somerset [*Kentucky, about 75 miles south of Lexington*] last May [1933] and she felt fine then. That was the time we moved into the house they now occupy. We had a grand time buying furniture and gadgets for the new house.

The baby was born September 15; weighed 9-3/4 – not fat but had a large “frame”. Mickey progressed nicely for the first two weeks; in fact, when Dad [*C. C. Crammond*], Mother [*Margaretha Heidecker Crammond*] and I drove down the first of October Mickey even ate with us in the breakfast nook (Vic would carry her out there). I stayed there after the folks left to go to their meeting in Columbus, Ohio [*probably a revival meeting, with Mrs. Crammond preaching*]. All the time I was there which lengthened into five weeks, I had charge of the baby and to show you what a good job I did (nothing like being your own press agent) I must tell you first that the baby lost three times as much as he should have normally lost after birth. We found out that the nurse had been giving him paregoric [*an opium preparation used to treat diarrhea*] and catnip tea when he would cry because of constipation; also, she put sugar in his water and did we have a time later getting him out of that habit! Anyway, we consulted a baby specialist, changed his formula, regulated his movements, and soon he started to gain. We kept a daily chart of his activities, weighed him every day, allowed no one to pick him up, and put him to sleep in a back nursery by himself, tried to keep the temperature of his room at 65 or lower. Well, he is a picture of perfect health. When we were down here Christmas, Vic could give him about an hour and a half of exercises a day. The baby would bridge himself on the table, supporting himself on this neck and heels, and then when we'd put him on his stomach, he'd pivot around on it, holding up his head and legs. He went in to see his mother a few minutes every day—more than that seemed to tire her. Almost forgot to tell you that his name is Laurence [*Mom's letter spells his first name “Laurence” but in other references it's “Lawrence”*] Victor Moore—they call him Larry. He's wearing a pair of rompers I took him Christmas that are size 3. He has more than a dozen dresses (some of which have never been put on) that are useless to him because he has grown so---beside any number of sweater and cap sets.

After the first two weeks, Mickey began getting worse. To make a long story short, puerperal septicemia set in and soon after, pneumonia. We think it was caused by the carelessness of that nurse, not sterilizing the pads on the wound and neglecting to cleanse her hands thoroughly before waiting on Mickey. We dismissed her shortly after Mickey became worse.

We had about eight doctors in all. She was given three blood transfusions, chemical injections, intravenous feedings. Her temperature went as high as 108 and for a long time was 105-6. The zero hour came when a famous diagnostician of Lexington gave her "five or six days to live". They had tried to give her another blood transfusion but could not inject it because her veins collapsed. A doctor who specializes along the lines of injections cut away her flesh on her arm and lifted the vein right up but even then could not succeed in getting it in. During the second transfusion Mickey was punctured about 50 times, ten of which were in her jugular vein, twice hitting the clavicle. Finally, the chemicals produced a positive response and the infection settled in her left lung. That had to be drained 7 times and at last, collapsed entirely. For about a month li... [life was a] nightmare, the doctors trying everything they... [could think of to] save her; Vic would talk to his brother in Mi... [Miami; Earl is] a doctor; there were a number of places in tow... [town ...] phone for news of Mickey so that they wouldn't... [... Friends] would bring in food daily; dozens offered their... [help...] one Sunday twenty people were down at the hospi... [hospital...] tested. Both Mickey and Vic are well known ther... [there for their] musical activities and they certainly have lots... [of friends.]

Little by little she seemed to improve, as shown by... [her temperature and] her blood count. She says now that she cannot rememb... [remember anything that] happened for about a month in the hospital.

Roy drove down twice during the first five weeks I was there a... [and one] time just after Mickey had been brought home from the hos... [hospital. He] and I drove on down to North and South Carolina to see his... [relatives] there and then came home to Big Rapids.

The folks were there several times but as there was nothing th... [they could] do to help, did not stay more than a week at a time. We wrote ca... [cards] to them every day. I had a negro girl to help me all the time and after I left, Mickey had her own special nurse, then the negro girl to wash, get the meals, do the housework, take care of the baby—and she certainly does a good job of it. Of course, Vic supervises it and a practicing doctor couldn't be more efficient about it than he is. It has long been his ambition to be a doctor.

Mickey is terribly thin. For a long time, of course, she had nothing but liquids to sustain her. Vic said she weighed about 60 pounds when she was brought home from the hospital.

We were there for a few days Christmas, but the excitement brought her fever up past 102 degrees so we didn't stay long. They were planning on going to Miami by plane so that Mickey could be in the hospital where Vic's brother is and benefit by the sunshine but she is not strong enough yet and might not be for a number of weeks.

Just got a letter from Mickey and she can take a few steps by herself now and has reached the stage where her daily enema is unnecessary. That is a great gain, and so we are hoping for the best.

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