I lost my mother a long time ago. I was about six years old. We lived in France outside a military installation. My father was stationed there, while in the United States Air Force.

Mother was a sickly woman and had to spend months in the military hospital. Alan, my brother, and I would pretty much, be on our own from time to time. My father would do the best he could, under the circumstances; however it became difficult to try care for two children and remain fully active on the job.

She had other military friends that would pitch in to help my father as he tried to raise us up, but they too, only had just enough time to lend to the family.

The bulk of the family routines for taking care of everyone fell onto the shoulders of a little girl, named Theresa.

When my mother returned from her long-term, hospital stays, she would be irritable. She had little patience, in those days and expected my brother and I to maintain a code of silence.

She spent a lot of time in extreme pain, due to her illness and in love and respect; we tried to honor her request, as best two young children could.

My father’s eyes would light up when he brought her back home from her hospital stays. You would not think that if you knew how much they would argue. Nonetheless, on those days that he would pick her up and drive her back home, he was as happy as he could be.

Many times, he acted like some sort of male nurse to her. “Are you all right, barb?” he would say. He would also make sure that we would not disturb her as she recovered.

As I look back, I realize that they were an unusual couple. They argued when they disagreed and they laughed and had fun together when things were going well.

The hardest part for me, as I grew up was the long stays at the many hospitals. Wherever we were stationed, my mother ended up back into a hospital.

All of the comings and goings were hard for me to adapt to. As far back as I can remember, she would leave. Little did I know that she would return after she got better. At times, there were murmurs amongst her friends that she might not make it this time.

So with that thought in mind, I grew up wandering every time that she left for a hospital, if this would be the last time that I would see her.

Back in those days, with the hustle and bustle of daily life, there was no time for sympathy for the two of us, my brother and me. When my mother left, since it was so regular, everyone would say, “Okay, come on. Snap to it. Get your stuff. Let’s go. You can handle this. She will be back.” That was it. No tears allowed. No, please do not go. No, intimate good-bye’s like in the movies. I think that is why I tear up now during a good-bye scene in a modern day movie. I use to wish that someone could have allowed us the opportunity to say our good-byes just like in the movies.

Years later, my mother took us out of school one afternoon and brought us over to our new two-bedroom apartment, way across town far from my father. This was the afternoon, which she planned to leave him, for good. By now, she had another young baby boy, Charles Jr. When she left, she had to one baby and two young children under her care.

We were as surprised as he was to know that she was, fed up with all of their dealings. She moved us out of our comfortable suburban home, into the only location that she could afford.

This moved, changed my life exponentially. Not only did I lose the intimate surroundings of my bedroom, but I also lost all my friends from the school that I was taken from. Since we were, moved to the other side of town, we were, also enrolled into another school during the school year. So, we had to adapt to many new surroundings.

We no longer were, taken to school. We now had to catch the school bus. In addition, our economic environment changed because the breadwinner, Charles Sr., was no longer supporting us in the same manner as before the separation.

However, the biggest change for me was my experience during the first time, my mother became ill after she had left my father. Since, he was no longer around, when she fell ill and had to contact an emergency service, my brother and I were left behind, once again. This time, we did not have my father to rely on.

She had severed ties with him after she separated from him. For a while, she allowed, Alan and I, to go over to his new apartment and spend the weekends, every now and then. Then, something happened, and she stopped the visits for good. We never found out why. Later, that year, he received orders from the United States Air Force. He moved to Cleveland, Ohio. I never had a chance to see him after that. He died about four or five years later.

My mother, on the other hand, would practically live in the Loma Linda Hospital near San Bernadino, California. The pains from her illness became increasingly regular. Social services had a program, which allowed young girls, age seventeen/eighteen to live with the children of severely ill patients, in their home, until the patient recovered fully.

Ms. Norma, was the young lady assigned to our small two-bedroom apartment, while my mother was away. She was tall, young, and had no tolerance for small children.

Her preference for discipline was a strong slap across the face whenever she got angry. She was a very angry girl. Most of the time, I would look out for my smaller little brother, because he was just to young to fend off her anger. When he cried to be changed or for food, she would become irate.

During the days, that we were out of school, she would put us outside in the morning and tell us not to return until supper.

Those were the days that my brothers and I learn to explore the wooded area, walk trails, and yards of our neighborhood.

We made the best of our situation during those days. There were plenty of good times and there were a few bad times.

In the end, we remained a family. I may have lost my mother a long time ago, but as the years went by, I gradually got my chance to find her again.