

Rainey Morrissey's Story: Letters from a Maine Tuberculosis Patient



Rainey on graduation day, 1943



Class picture, Rainey is at the top right



Nursing advertisement that Rainey kept in her scrapbook



Rainey Morrissey

Lorraine Eleanor Morrissey (Nickname: Rainey)

Birth: 12/02/1924

Death: 04/02/1945

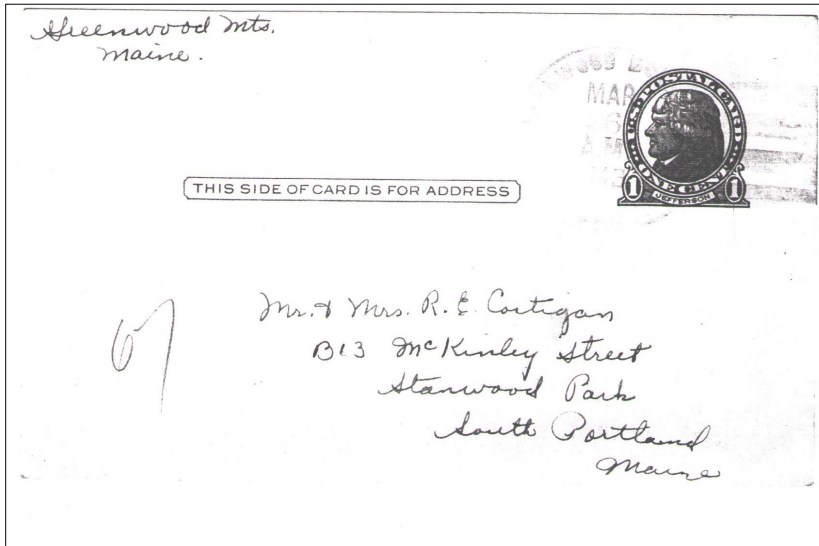
Lived in South Portland, Maine.

Rainey graduated from South Portland High School in 1943, where she played four years on the girls basketball team and took college prep classes. Her parents were Hugh and Lavinia Morrissey. She was the youngest of five siblings.

We do not know if she was able to attend college after graduating, but we have a clue from her scrapbook that she may have been interested in pursuing a career in nursing (see advertisement above).

In early 1943, Rainey was diagnosed with tuberculosis. She was treated at the Maine State Sanatorium, Greenwood Mountain, Hebron, ME. She wrote letters to her family about her care (see postcard and letter). After about two years of treatment, she died of tuberculosis at age 20.

1943 Postcard from Lorraine Morrissey



Greenwood Mts. Maine.

Date stamped: Mar. 26, 1943.

Mr. & Mrs. R.E. Costigan
13 McKinley Street
Starwood Park
South Portland
Maine

Hi Ginny and Ron,

Have only a few minutes
so a card will have to do. I
hope you won't feel slighted.
It's only 8:30 and we don't
go to bed till 9:30 but the
night nurse opened the window
(top of the door) wide and its
freezing so I've got to get
covered - but quick. We
had more blood tests today
(I had 2 cause he didn't take
enough the first time) and
Another x-ray. I'm in Class 2
so I'll be out of here before
you know it. Well, must
close. Will tell you more news
in a letter.

Bye now
Love to both
Rainey

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1943 Letter from Rainey Morrissey, Page 1

Greenwood Mt.
Maine
Wednesday P.M.

Hi Ginny and Ron,
I guess I've been sort of neglecting you with only a card but gee, it's so darn hard to find a chance to write. You're probably wondering what I do with all my time? To tell the truth we don't have much time to ourselves, just about a half hour before each meal and a little while before we go to bed. All the rest of the time is "rest periods":

This is one right now but it's a little warmer today so I ventured out. Honest to gosh! it's been so cold here. I just stick my nose out and believe me - does that get red!

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1943 Letter from Rainey Morrissey, Page 2

Oh by, gosh, I'm even wearing
my brown wool socks in bed - and
you should see them. Br. & white
now, there's so much lint on 'em.

We have flannel sheets - Mom's
pet - but do I hate them. We only
get our beds changed once a week
and my day is Sunday - wouldn't
you know it? Also we get bathed
only once a week - can you im-
agine that? But it's often enough
for me. Wow - do they splash
water - she clean's the room as
well as you. And the alcohol
is slapped on and wiped off.

Oh - what a system. The nurses
aren't very nice, I mean they're
old crabs. They fuss and fume about

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1943 Letter from Rainey Morrissey, Page 3

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The kids have written to me regularly. One of my roommates Lucille, sent me one of those "hankie of the month." Gee, it's cute. Sweet of her wasn't it.

You know that d--- Ossy took away all the kids overnights and late leaves because they flunked at test. But lucky! our bunch were the only ones that passed - fishy too - 95's + 98's.

I haven't ~~it~~ worn the bed-jacket yet. I'd love to, but ^{there's} ~~there's~~ no sense. No one sees me here except the nurses. And I don't

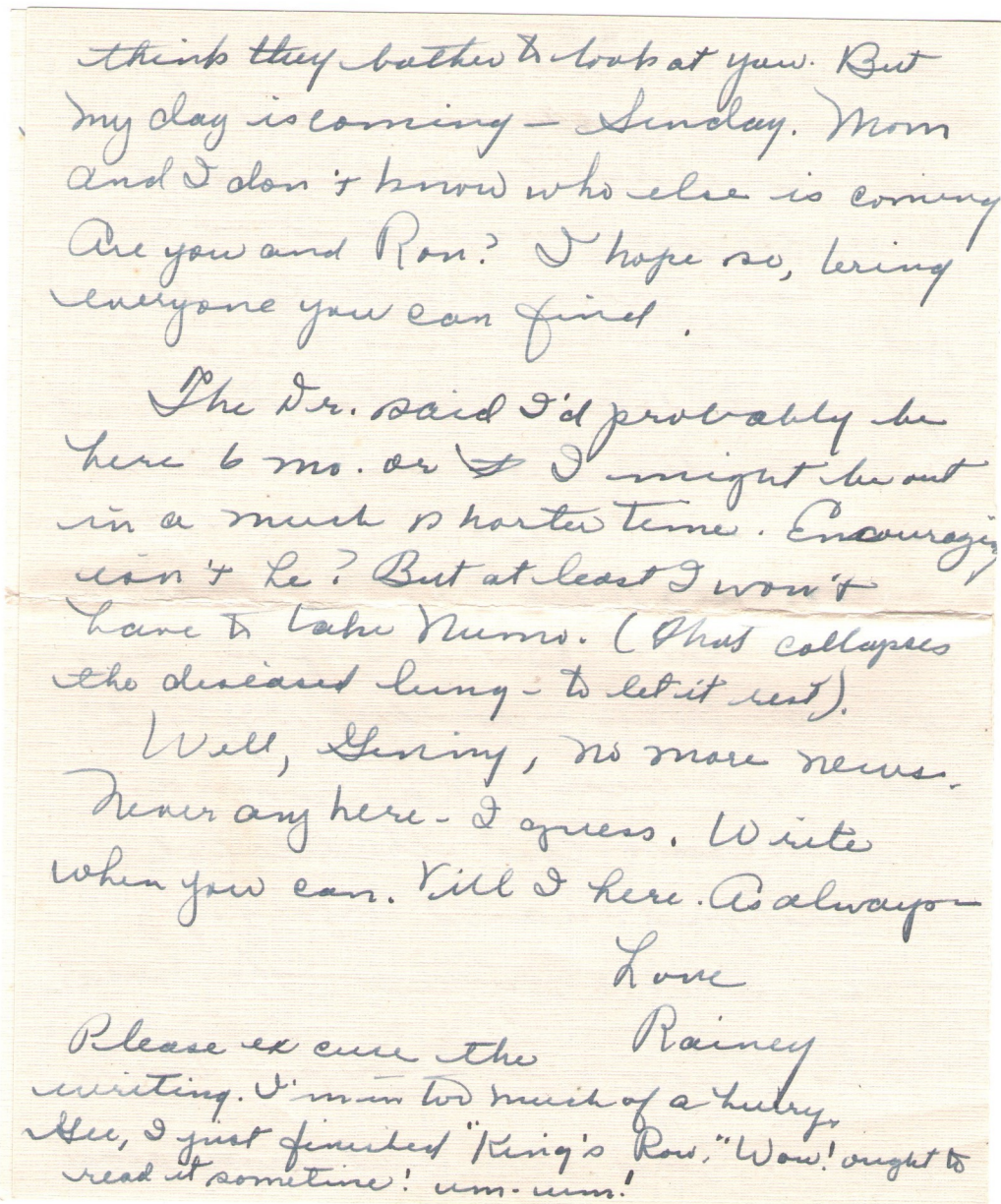
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1943 Letter from Rainey Morrissey, Page 4



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The Dr. said I'd probably be here 6 mo. or I might be out in a much shorter time. Encouraging isn't he? But at least I won't have to take Neumo. (That collapses the diseased lung - to let it rest).

Well, Ginny, no more news. Never any here - I guess. Write when you can. Kill I here. As always -

Love
Rainey

Please excuse the writing. I'm in too much of a hurry. Gee, I just finished "Kings Row." Wow! ought to read it sometime! um - um!

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