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ENGL 377

[Essay #2 -Writing Place.](https://engl377.community.uaf.edu/2017/02/13/essay-2-writing-place/)

“Life at the Little Mulchatna Lodge”

"Mary buckled the dress over her swollen belly, standing tall in front of a full-length mirror

in the log cabin we both called home. "Her shoulders straightened up, belaying

the extra weight she carried gracefully." "Her body looked beautiful; after all, she was

giving birth soon." "My brain could barely understand how this had happened?" "After all, it

seemed only yesterday; Mary was a girl of 10, skinned knees, Ponytails, and chasing fish in

the river."

The King-sized bed where Mary’s night gown lay carelessly had an old tanned bear hide on

it and many pillows. The sheets where tucked precisely in hospital corners. The comforter

was placed very carefully on the bed not dragging on the floor. Then on top of all of this was

a nice warm old tanned bear hide missing its head and claws of course. Then placed neatly

at the top of the bed was four pillows in their neat starched pillowcases.

My breasts felt heavy remembering giving birth on this bed last month. Mary and I were

Only a month apart in our pregnancies and we both had chosen to give birth at home. This

Cabin held the best memories for both of us at the Little Mulchatna Lodge. It was simple

In its looks, but we had known every inch of it our entire lives. It was this same bed

I had given birth to a beautiful girl. My first born, Meghan who was now barely a month old.

She slept in her home-made Crib in the corner next to the bed. Sam an ever-watchful Black

lab with the most beautiful blue kind eyes was already laying by the Crib. Sam one of the

packs of black labs my family raised here had claimed her. He was only six

Months old still a puppy. But from the moment that Meghan was born, his puppy time

Seemed cut short as he was determined to be Meghan’s protector.

This place the Little Mulchatna Lodge in Like Clark National Park and Preserve in the

Preserve itself on Fish trap lake is the most precious place to myself and my cousin in the

World. It is the place where I have grown as a person, happy days of playing in the lake

Surrounded by family and friends. Planning our life and dreams together every summer

Was one of the things myself and Mary enjoyed doing together. We both vowed as children

That one day later in life we would have our children born at the Little Mulchatna River

Lodge. This was unusual because while we lived their full time all year round at least as

Little children, it was not usual to have the children born there. My mother had flown to

Anchorage to have me at Providence Hospital. Mary was born in Fairbanks, Alaska. But

We both wanted our babies born here at home.

Mary and I could not imagine a better place the Little Mulchatna lodge was only accessible

by Bush plane and our family has a green White Cessna 185 that was purchased the year I

was born 1969. This plane was sitting at Docks gassed up and ready to go if things turned

bad for Mary. But my father had flown in a friend, Norma who was a Mid-wife just

yesterday in this very same plane. They had flown approximately 180 air miles north west

from Anchorage taking about two hours. I had flown in with them as I had gone with my

Father for the day leaving my newborn at home safe with the family.

Our flight back home from Anchorage that Frosty March afternoon had been beautiful

and Breathtaking and freezing at a minus 20 below 0.

First, we flew over Anchorage itself leaving the tall buildings behind and

as my father flew us over the vehicles, they looked like ants. The Cessna 185 is a small

bush plane that can hold up to six people with little gear or four people with lots of gear.

In this case it was just myself, my father flying the plane and the Mid-wife with all her gear,

more supplies for the several people at the Lodge. Then we flew over the duck flats were

people had duck hunting cabins set up dotted all over the small lakes and rivers leading to

Ocean. Then we flew over Cook Inlet seeing the oil derreks pumping oil and the fishing

Boats and a few villiages along the way. Then it was my favorite part over the mountain

Passes.

We flew over mountains still covered in deep white on top like fluffy marshmallows thick

and breathtakingly beautiful. The glaciers looked like a gigantic man-made machine had

smoothed them over. The rows in the glaciers looked man made, looking at first glance like

someone had planned the deep natural blues perfectly. But it was simply mother nature

perfect and beautiful. We flew over the rivers still frosty covered with ice and snow.

As we swooped over one of the mountains, my father Stu Ramstad an amazing Bush pilot

Pointed and showed us getting the Cessna 185 closer to the top of one of the mountains in

The Mountain passes.

We could see a Beaver dam and accompanying lodge clinging to the side of the mountain

made of sticks, dirt, mud, fur and anything else the Beavers could find. These mountain

beavers had it tough my dad would explain after all they had a shorter time in the summer

to have kits, raise them and teach them how to build. In fact he explained that Beavers

typically stayed with their family unit for two years and sometimes would stay three years

or even four years depending on materials especially in these mountain places high above

the places where the river and the lake beavers would raise their families for two years.

Then we swooped through the mountain pass, on this day very little wind and no rain made

For a smooth flight on this clear sunny day. Then I started smiling for I knew we were

Almost home as we burst through the mountain pass to fly over a lake that had trees

Ringing its shoreline, its craggy edges covered deep in snow. Then a faint plume of smoke

Appeared in the distance, this was smoke coming from the fireplaces of the Little

Mulchatna Lodge.

The little Mulchatna lodge was built by my Father Stu Ramstad in 1958 in a perfect spot on

a small hill just overlooking the edge of Fish trap lake. The start of the Little Mulchatna

River hence where my Father got the name of the lodge leads in to the Big Mulchatna Lake.

In fact, the Little Mulchatna is in the Headwaters of Bristol bay without the waters from

Fish Trap Lake and the Little Mulchatna millions of fish would never make it to Bristol Bay

at all.

We flew over the lodge itself all its beautiful buildings so near and dear to my heart. The

Bath house with its long bathtub only used in the summer, the shower next to it and sink

as well. The chemical toilet in the corner and then along one side the wet sauna that kept

the place warm and toasty even in the winter. The only way to have a shower in the winter

here was to warm a five-gallon bucket of water in the Wet Sauna on the stove. The stove

could easily fit four five-gallon buckets of water. In the winter we took full showers at

maximum two maybe three times a week depending on what was going on that day. The

Five Gallon bucket full of warm/hot water would hang up top of the shower and a long

Metal hose would fit inside and outside the bucket. Then I would blow on the tube and

the warm water would flow out of the bucket on to my hair and body. I would get my hair

wet and body wet. Then shut the water off by removing the hose, after soaping my hair and

body. Then I would start the water again and rinse my body and hair, I would use a

combination of shampoo and cream rinse and rinse me completely clean. I liked

to use the entire bucket of water for rinsing and five gallons lasts quite a while. To save

time and water, I would brush my teeth in the shower, then grabbing my big fluffy towel

run the few steps still in the bath house to the only area that had heat. The warm dry sauna

where I would get dry after toweling off and get dressed. In the winter I always looked

forward to shower time. This meant always having to gather extra wood which was piled

high outside the Bath house and inside the front of the Bath house as well. After all a

combination of Wet Wood and Dry Wood is a perfect combination to keep the fire going

in all the cabins especially the Bath house. My baby was bathed every day in the

Kitchen of the main lodge kept warm all the time by the stove and by the propane oven. We

Had a small baby tub and she would be cleaned from head to toe carefully checked. This

was the warmest room in the main lodge.

To say in my eyes the lodge itself was and is perfect is an understatement. The sounds of

Laughter of our family rang out joyfully as we in the small Green and White Cessna 185

Landed on skis on the lake in front of the Lodge. The groceries and items were quickly

Transported up the hill and to the places where they would go. I hurried up the hill quickly

even though it had only been about ten hours since I had seen my baby girl. I was anxious

to hold her and to give my husband Adam a kiss. He was holding our baby girl smiling at me

as I burst in to the warm kitchen, the herbs from the summer hanging and drying above the

stove. The stew pot filled with Elk meat, onions and assorted herbs and other vegetables

and spices on the Wood stove. The extremely large Coffee pot boiled and percolated next to

the Stew Pot. The Table in the Kitchen already set for everyone to eat complete with Salad

and honey. The salad fixings all came from our own gardens grown in the summer,

tomato’s, lettice, carrots and kale made a great salad. A pot of honey from our bee hives sat

on the table next to the home made Mulchatna bread as it was called. The kitchen had

beautiful big picture windows that looked out over Fish Trap Lake and the mountains on

the other side. The mashed potatoes piping hot sat on the stove being warmed as well.

The family trooped in everyone sat down knowing their places around this large table that

Comfortably seats fourteen people and in a pinch eighteen people. The sounds of John

Denver song “Rocky Mountain High” playing in the background. John Denver being an

Old family friend of our family a toast to John offered up as the family clinked glasses

Together.

As I looked around at my Father Stu Ramstad, my Step Mom Wendy, my three brothers, my

Two sisters, my cousin who was about to give birth, her husband, my own husband and

Other assorted family members including the mid wife we fetched from town today. I

thought life does not get any better then this, just as the last bit of home-made Ice Cream

and Rhubarb Pie was being finished, my cousin Mary let out a sound and then said, my

water has broken. The family sprang in to action and quick as a flash, I handed my baby

over to my husband. Myself, my step mom and the mid wife sprang up to help her. We

hustled Mary down the cold path that was cleared and shoveled to the Cabin closest to the

lake in order for her to give birth to her own child here at the Little Mulchatna. My husband

followed behind carrying our baby in a warm papose close to his heart after all it was a

sharp -20 below 0.

We had little time to spare for this little one was in a hurry to be born on this frosty

evening. The little boy came in to this world all safe and sound on the same bed where I

birthed my own loving angel. His name is Hunter and I am happy to report everything

went very smooth. As the baby was born and showed us the family the incredible lungs as

the first cry, we heard not to far away a pack of wolves howling and outside only a mere

ten yards away down a short hill by the river, a bull moose paused as it crossed the river

perhaps hearing the noise of new life flying in to this world for the first time. This is my

life, my family my home. The Little Mulchatna Lodge on Fish Trap Lake Alaska.