



My oil painting from a photograph of my mother, Avis
Carrie Colby Valley, holding me, Sylvia Nell Valley

Part One

LOVE : SHAME

When I was a child, I felt I was well loved, and my feelings about Lunenburg were pleasant. I just felt well protected and thought we had interesting things to do. But we didn't have much money, and of course my grandfather was such a hoot. His fooling around in town was shameful to everyone in the family, but not to me.

To do the laundry they brought in this ladder thing that folded up. When you wanted to use it, two ends would come down to form a counter about waist high. There was a place for two wash tubs, with the wringer between them. You washed the clothes, put them through the wringer and rinsed them, then put them back through to dry them as much as possible in another pan. We hung



Dad and me in winter

the laundry outdoors unless it was bitter cold. There was a clothesline in front of the barn between the barn and the road. My father had to shovel a path to the barn anyway. In the winter the pathways had probably a foot and a half rise of snow on either side. Hated it!

I hated the snow, though I enjoyed sliding when it was good. When the teams went past the house down to the village with cans of milk for the creamery or with loads of wood, those thread runners left very slick, two-or-three-inch wide marks in the road, so it was good sliding. We lived on a little hill, and on good days I could slide almost all the way to school. Go belly bump. You had to listen to be sure a car wasn't coming down back of your house to hit you at that turn. My father'd say, "Listen!" And of course, the cars made more noise than they do now. I never had any close calls.



They had two years of high school in the village at that time, and a high school teacher, and so the high school boys and girls would slide. They had a traverse sled my father might have made with two smaller sleds hitched onto a long board making a flat

top where you sat. The front sled had a pin that would pivot, so you could steer it a little bit. Lunenburg being on a series of hills,



Holding one of many dogs we had

it was fun to slide down one hill and go up the next a little ways and slide back down. There wasn't much traffic around. Somehow or other, when the teacher was riding on the sled, it tipped over and she broke her leg, so I was never allowed to go to the village. Even when Rheba was staying with us to go to high school they wouldn't let me go. Rheba could go sliding but she was five years older.



I loved Lassie, our airedale

I was five or six years old when Aunt Olive and Uncle Jim lived up the road. In sugaring season, when the days warmed up some in March, but the nights were still cold and the sap started to run, they wanted to tap our maple trees. For that, they would give us some syrup. So it came about that they had made the syrup and Aunt Olive had a half gallon jar of syrup for us. She asked if I could carry it home. I said, "Sure!" I went from her house across the road diagonally through our field. In front of the barn, right near where the shed began, there was this piece of granite sticking up. I got by there and that jar smashed on that rock, and I never remember hearing anything about it. I don't know whether my mother told Aunt Olive what happened. I'm sure they didn't give my folks any

Aunt Max gave me a green wool jumper for Christmas—it was way long for me—and a short-sleeved blouse. Well, my father wouldn't let me wear that short-sleeved blouse in the middle of the winter, so I had to wear some old sweater-type thing instead. The jumper was too long, and Aunt Matt said,



Gram hanging out laundry on a Monday

“Well, you change tonight and bring that down to me, and I'll fix it for you.” She was teaching in the primary room, but she wasn't my teacher then. I was in the upper grade room. I don't remember that anybody ever did shorten the jumper. I don't know why I didn't take it to her. I just said it was all right.

It seems as though any time I wanted to go anywhere my clothes wouldn't be right. Parts of what I had to wear weren't clean. And my shoes—I didn't have many pairs of shoes, and

they were always wrong. I didn't want to complain about it to Dad because I thought he felt bad enough about everything after my mother died. In the twenties when I was smaller and times were good, he used to like to take me to the store and get nice shoes and other nice things. Not much money in the thirties.

For many years, Dad worked in the fall, through the winter and spring at whatever mill Don had; Don and Luke's father, Clark Colby, owned the mills. It was a job. Dad wanted to work, needed to work, and he could do anything that was required. He built the mills and cottages for the workers' families. He knew how to scale the logs and look after that part of it.



Bobbin mill located in the Pierce District, built by Don Colby in 1924. The mill produced bobbins and speeders for twine and rug manufacturers until 1939.

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When Don Colby, Grampa's brother, had the mill in Victory, Vermont, and at least three of my uncles worked for him—Ellis, Ern Peavey, and Howard—they all lived in Victory near the mill. They produced rough-cut lumber that was sent somewhere else for finishing. When a team brought in a load of logs, mill workers rolled them off the sled and “twitched 'em” into the hot pond, a cement pond with a boiler system to soften the bark. Then men with cant hooks pushed the logs toward a pulley to haul them into the mill. A chunk of log was put under a steam-powered machine, and like a huge knife it sliced the logs into bobbin-sized pieces. They produced tons of bobbins for silk mills in the South.

Don would come back to Lunenburg at night, and of course my father wanted to also, so they went back and forth to Victory together. Sometimes I would ride over with them early in the morning and stay all day. This was after my mother died in 1933. I'd visit with Shirley, and I'd see Howard's wife, Iola, some, too, and Verna, Ellis's wife. A lot of the time I was playing with Shirley's son, Quent, babysitting, taking him for a ride in the carriage. Shirley had to feed me, have me around. She was awfully good to me.

Dad and his sister Julia. Once Dad caught this marvelously long brook trout, about a foot long, the biggest one he'd ever caught, and he was some proud of that. He immediately got some white paper—I don't know where we had the drawing paper—and drew around the trout very carefully. He used my colored pencils or crayons and colored it; it was very realistic and he had it framed. I don't know who in the family has it; I wish I did. Dad also won a prize at the Grange for drawing the best pig. He could draw quite well.

I was also influenced by Aunt Julia, Dad's sister, and her bout of painting Jesus. That was her thing—doing watercolors of Jesus. She gave us a painting as a Christmas present one year. It was a picture of Jesus standing with his hand out, like they might have pictured him saying, "suffer the little children." My father said, "Just look at how she did that hand." It was so real. He was very impressed. I think that's why I became interested in drawing. I thought that if my father admired that, I'm going to try to draw well also so he'd think I was important.

When I went to Lyndon Normal School, I took an art course for the first time. I had to draw a face, I think. We were



Posing with the girls who lived in Bean Cottage

supposed to learn proportions, and I found that I could do it quite accurately, and I enjoyed it. Even when I was a child, I loved to paint faces in watercolor from a magazine or catalog. I tacked them up around my room, and my

cousin Polly came and laughed at them. She thought they were so funny looking.

The Lyndon Institute, the Normal School, and the big three-

story yellow and white dormitory were at the head of the park in Lyndon Center, a small village across a little brook or river from Lyndonville. Across from the Institute was a store and a library. We would often study at the library, and we could buy food if we wanted or needed to at the store. I didn't stay in the dormitory; I stayed with the self-boarding students in Bean Cottage.

Oh, I had such a good time at Lyndon! Best time I ever had in my life! I loved living in Bean Cottage with the girls and having so much fun, simple things with all girls giggling and fussing about something. We had to sign up to take turns to wash and wipe dishes and clear the table and put away the food.

We supplied our own food. My father always brought a pie, cookies, cake. He was good on desserts. I don't remember where he got them, maybe from our neighbor, Inez Stuart. He bought milk there anyway. I don't remember what I had for meat; Dad probably brought some chicken. Then we had to buy food at the store when ours ran out towards the end of the week. My friend Lois DeFrest's mother used to can sausage in glass jars, probably some other meat, too. I thought it was very unusual to can meat. Lois lived in the middle of Vermont on a great farm on a plateau way up on a mountain. Her brother had an airplane. I wanted to go up in it and I didn't want to go up in it. I knew my father would have a conniption fit if I did, and he knew about it, so I didn't go up in it. It made me cautious; both of my parents had made me cautious. Bad. I have never been up in a plane.



I played basketball at Lyndon, and I loved sneaking in to get the ball when someone was dribbling. Then I had to stop. The gym teacher wouldn't let me play because I was losing weight. She kept track. She was from New York City, and she was a humdinger. She wanted everybody to be moving. She urged the girls, if they walked over to Lyndonville to walk between one set of light poles and run between the next two and do that all the